An Ornamental Tapestry of Literary Devices: Stylistics in Jeremiad Prose and Poetry

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Jeremiah – Focus on Judgment in Prose Tradition

The poetic tradition of divine judgment remains deliberately and artistically elusive. The prose tradition of Jeremiah brings us closer to the politics of the sixth and seventh century B.C.E. and it is to be noted that the prose tradition of Jeremiah is rhetorical. The book of Jeremiah follows a Deuteronomistic tradition. Deuteronomistic tradition centers on total unquestionable obedience and allegiance to Yahweh. Therefore, the judgment that the prophets speak against Israel presents a radical 'either / or' of Torah, which is the Jewish book of law that requires implicit, wholehearted obedience. In his famous "Temple Speech" from chapter seven of the book, the prophet gives a series of conditions. Even in the requirements given in that chapter, the opening verses leave room for a possibility of remaining in the Promised Land, but in the later part of the chapter, we see, it is in a derivative rhetoric style, closing the option given earlier, with a definite declaration of destruction and divine judgment on the land. After this the prophet is commanded not to intercede any longer for the city (Jeremiah 7:16 and 11:14). In a parallel fashion, Chapter eighteen presents a symmetrical 'either / or' that makes an offer to return to Torah obedience; but in verse twelve of the same chapter we see that offer is defeated indicating that the disobedience of Israel is beyond reversal and judgment is irrevocable. The autonomous plans however justifiable outwardly, end in destructiveness. This certainty of the approaching destruction is very clearly enacted by Jeremiah in the parable of the loin cloth which is buried in mud and then when dug up, is soiled and "ruined and good for nothing" (Jeremiah 13:7). Jerusalem is compared to the loin cloth and that will be good for nothing.

Yet Israel would not listen. This, "Not Listening" is an ultimate affront to Yahweh and the Torah. Finally, the conclusion is drawn in chapter nineteen of the book. Here the image is that of a potter and the clay; the potter representing God and the clay Israel. The pot displeases the potter…….. so it is smashed, broken……. beyond reconstruction. Still these harsh verdicts remain figurative. Only in chapter twenty, the prose tradition of Jeremiah draws the reader to the sixth century B.C.E imperial threat, by Babylon. It is here for the first time we see the name

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Babylon mentioned and after this the rhetoric of the book is dominated by Babylon and we are aware that Babylon will be the agent of Jerusalem's destruction, and it is mentioned explicitly. It is to be mentioned nevertheless in the analysis of the prose tradition and the style of the prophet that even in the earlier chapters, Babylon's shadow though unnamed looms at the background of the forth coming judgment as the organizing principle John Hill has put forth this argument in his book – 'Friend or Foe' presenting Babylon as the organizing principle.

"The analysis of the figure of Babylon in chapters two to twenty consisted of two phases. The first was the study of chapter 20:1 to 6, the first text in the book which mentions Babylon explicitly. Within these verses Babylon was identified as a metaphor for being landless, and as such represented a reversal of the patriarchal traditions about the gift of the land. As a place it represents death for the exiles. In the future of its King it was presented as the one who invades, captures, exiles, kills and plunders Judah and its people.
(John Hill, Friend or Foe, Pg. 71&72)

The second phase of the analysis was the study of Babylon as an organizing metaphor within chapters two to twenty. The figure of Babylon in these chapters is that of a metaphor around which the network of metaphors associated with Yahweh's judgement is organized. In particular, it subsumes the metaphors for invasion, banishment and death by the sword. The foundation of such an understanding of Babylon is the link between 20:1 to 6 and previous passages in chapters two to twenty about Yahweh's judgment on Judah.

Because of the position of 20:1 to 6 within chapters 2 to 20, the figure of Babylon as a metaphor points both backwards and forwards. In its function as an organizing metaphor it points backwards. After reading 20:1 to 6 the reader is sent back to the individual metaphors of judgment and can interpret them in the light of Babylon's function as an organizing metaphor. In these chapters, there are threats of the invasion and captivity of Judah, but the invader or captor is never identified. There are threats of banishment, but neither the agent nor the place of banishment is identified. There are also references to death and destruction, but the destroyers and plunderers are not identified. Then in 20:1 to 6, near the end of chapters ii to xx, the figure of Babylon appears, drawing together and representing the disparate metaphors for judgment which are otherwise unorganized and often unrelated. As an organizing metaphor the figure of Babylon gives a focus to the material in chapters 2 to 20." [Hill, Friend or Foe? 71 to 72, Leiden: Brill, 1999]

The Jeremiad prose tradition has at its core the assumption that Babylon is a tool of Yahweh in the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and it does not act unilaterally.

Babylon becomes a necessary strategy and device. The prose material of judgment mirrors the way in which Yahweh through Babylon executes harsh judgement over Jerusalem.

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Jerusalem's final King Zedekiah begs Jeremiah to petition Yahweh for a miraculous intervention for the deliverance of Jerusalem from Babylonian threat. This royal request to the prophet serves as a narration to show the deconstruction of failed royal authority and to commensurate the elevation of prophetic authority. The irresistible power of Babylon is the defining fact on the ground.

Although the poetry of Jeremiah is vivid and concrete, it is quite elusive about the actual character of divine judgment. In contrast, the prose however becomes very explicit concerning Babylon as the agent of judgement. In particular, reference to this is in chapter 37, verses 5 and 6; we see Nebuchadnezzar is the faction of divine sovereignty. As John Hill points out, the operative word is "serve" ('bd). "But if any nation or kingdom will not serve[ō'-ya'abdû] this king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and put its neck under the yolk of the King of Babylon, then I will punish that nation with a sword, with famine, and with pestilence, says the Lord, until I have completed its destruction by his hand" (Jeremiah 27:8).

Note the same operative word once more – "serve" ('bd). "I spoke to King Zedekiah of Judah in the same way: Bring your necks under the yolk of the King of Babylon, and serve [wě'ibdû] him and his people, and live (Jer. 27:12, NRSV). With this, the account of divine judgement ends, and the account of Babylonian oppression will be total. However, in chapter twenty-seven there is also a 'repeated rhetorical maneuver' that makes the judgement upon Jerusalem pronounced in a twofold manner, spoken and then enacted yet, it is also penultimate, thereby making it not the final absolute end. Here we see the adverb, "until" ('ad) is used three times in a way to reiterate that it is not a complete end and gives room to make the divine judgment of Jerusalem less than ultimate. "All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until ('ad) the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great Kings shall make him their slave" (Jer.7:7, NRSV).Then verse 8,which was mentioned earlier, has the same adverb 'until' and also in verse 22, we see the same adverb, 'until'. "They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall stay, until ('ad) the day when I give attention to them, says the Lord. Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place" (Jer. 27:22, NRSV).

Through this 'repeated rhetorical maneuver' the Jeremiad prose tradition limits the punishment of Jerusalem, reverses field and begins to anticipate the ultimate divine judgment on Babylon too. Thus, the judgment of Jerusalem is displaced and over-ridden through this 'rhetorical prose style' of Jeremiah by divine judgment on the great empire that had imagined it to be autonomous and accountable to no one. It is to be noted that the adverb 'until' ('ad) has three implications; the 'until' of 27:7 - anticipates that Babylon will be reduced to servitude. The 'until' ('ad) of 27:22 – anticipates that Yahweh will reverse fields and attention and restoration will be given to the Jews of Babylon. The 'until' ('ad) of 27:8 – indicates that Babylon's task is over with the destruction of Jerusalem, after that, there is no more business for Babylon, in the play of history of which Yahweh is sovereign.

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Following this, the stage is ready for the 'Positive Topai' in literature which is labelled as the 'motifs combined with a theme', in this context the theme is of restoration and hope for Jerusalem and the Jews, which in reversal is the judgment and destruction spoken against the neighbouring nations including the great power Babylon. This proves Jeremiah's call, to be a prophet to the nations, and it makes the book of Jeremiah finish with a very large scope, ending with a note of hope in the midst of hopelessness seen around.

The dismantling of Jerusalem and then of Babylon has been accomplished just as Jeremiah prophesied. There still lies another phase of Jeremiah's prophetic vocation which includes a mandate to 'plant and build'. This mandate is enacted in a performative speech by the prophet. So, we have two pairs of verbs in Jeremiah's initial call in chapter 1:10, which are programmatically sequenced in chapter 31:28, displaying the beauty of Jeremiad prose rhetoric. "And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down……so I will watch over them to build and to plant   " (Jer. 31:28, NRSV). The verbs, 'to pluck' and 'to break' is first mentioned in chapter One of the book and it has its sequence in the final chapters of the book too.

Prose Beyond Destruction

The prose texts scattered along with poetry look beyond the destruction to the restoration of Jerusalem throughout the book. Even in the earlier chapter 12:14 the verb phrase, pluck up, is used twice in a casual fashion – Now 'my people Israel' are to be "plucked up" from among 'my evil neighbours', that means from Babylon from where they are deported. Again the same verb phrase "pluck up" is used a third time indicating that in compassion Yahweh will bring back the deportees. However, that homecoming is qualified by the "if" of the Torah obedience; which should be understood as, "If" the people unconditionally turn to the Torah in obedience, then homecoming is possible. This text anticipates a recovery of obedience reflecting Deuteronomic influence.

The second prose text is in Jeremiah chapter 29 where the reference to seventy years of exile is mentioned which reflects the "until" strategy already cited. The "until" strategy makes divine judgment penultimate implying clearly the residency in Babylon is limited and the promise of homecoming is assured on Yahweh's part as His sovereign plan for Israel. This statement is programmatic and includes the key phrasing that occurs in the hope of restoration. The third prose text is, Jeremiah chapter 42, where we see the promise of hope and restoration, and it is clearly conditional. Therefore, it offers a parallel of positive and negative "if – then" phrasing. Here the "if" used makes the well-being or restoration possible not due to a return of Torah obedience as mentioned earlier but a specific decision to stay and remain in the land of Israel awaiting Yahweh's compassion and restoration, instead of running to join Egypt to ask for aid and help from there. We can conclude that the text is addressed to those for whom the

options are Jerusalem or Egypt. This is about the remnant that remains in the land which submits to Babylonian occupation of the land and rule and preserved by them; the fool-hardy negative counterpart are those who want to embrace the Egyptian option and run to Egypt for aid.

Jeremiah – The Book of Judgment and Hope, Poetry and Prose

The poetry of Jeremiah is poignant and compelling even though it is sometimes complex and unclear. There is of course, alongside poetry, a body of prose material which at times parallels, sometimes supplants and at other times comments on the poetry. The prose material of Jeremiah is more didactic and functions in a thematizing way, whereas poetry in its very articulation resists any thematization that goes in the direction of explanation.

The themes of the prose material clusters around the themes of judgement and hope these two themes of the book govern the book in its comments on the 587 B.C.E crisis of Israel. The theme of judgement concerns the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians and the theme of hope is a pondering of the book of Jeremiah about what happens in the future. The theme of judgment is mediated and enacted through the historical agency of the Babylonians. The theme of hope, that can be termed as 'the conviction of things not seen' is an act of buoyant imagination beyond evidence. It is purely a work of imagination. This two-fold theme is very old in the conventional, covenantal tradition of Israel in which the book is grounded.

In the tradition of Deuteronomy, with its symmetrical pattern, both blessings and curses are meted out in strict response to obedience or disobedience. So, in Dueteronomistic tradition the prospect of blessing by God depends on the condition of return to obedience. The book of Jeremiah thematizes the poetry of the prophet around judgment and hope. This the prophet accomplishes in the most vigorous articulation around the six verbs that forms the prophetic-call narrative in the opening chapter of the book.

"See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant". [Jer. 1:10, Authorized Version]

The four negative verbs – 'pluck up', 'tear down', 'destroy' and 'overthrow' refer to the context of Jerusalem's destruction–the demolition of the temple and the city. The two positive verbs 'plant and build' refer to the restoration of the city and the temple after the destruction. Jeremiah's role is not only to report these two actions verbally but also to demonstrate these two actions by performed utterances. In his prophetic discourses, he does what he says. These set of verbs are used in multiple ways in various circumstances to accent different points in the whole framework of judgment and hope.

The poetic utterance of the prophet is more indeterminate suggesting an imposed thematization. In Jeremiah, the convergence of poetry, political criticism, and scribal work is

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rooted in political opposition to dynasty and the temple. The core conviction here is, the way to survival is submission to Babylon. Thus, the passionate conviction of this convergence to opposition is beautifully articulated in the book. We have taken few aspects of the text to illustrate, even though the poem itself is complex yet rich with interpretative possibilities. The book which commences in judgement against the land culminates in hope for the land in restoration but at the same time judgment to the enemies who razed and ravaged the land.

"Thus says the Lord: I am going to stir up [mēîr] a destructive wind against Babylon and against the inhabitants of Lebqamai: and I will send winnowers to Babylon, and they shall winnow her. They shall empty her land when they come against her from every side on the day of trouble. [Jer. 51:1 to 2, Authorised Version]

The "stir up" entity is here left unspecified but elsewhere in the second book of Chronicles, a citation of Jeremiah gives concrete identification of Cyrus the Persian as the one who defeats Babylon and crushes it. Secondly this poem concerning Babylon recycles material indicating that the prophesied judgement against Babylon is in fact an important echo and counter-action matching and reciprocation of the judgement against Jerusalem. Thus, a poetic unit in Jeremiah chapter 6 which anticipates the invasion of Judah is actually quoted once more, but only this time it is concerning a threat against Babylon.

The inference we come to is through prophetic consciousness; the prophet emphasizes on ultimate vindication, legitimately termed as, 'measure for measure'. The very same poetry that was addressed to Judah is now spoken against Babylon, to emphasize that in the theme of hope and restoration the roles are completely reversed; the enemy is avenged totally, routed, and finally paid back in the same coin and measure.

"Look, a people is coming from the north; a mighty nation and many kings are stirring [yē'ōrû] from the farthest parts of the earth. They wield bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy. The sound of them is like the roaring sea; they ride upon horses, set in array as a warrior for battle, against you, O daughter Babylon!" [Jer. 50: 41 and 42, Authorised Version]
Irony and Lament in Jeremiah:

Irony is understood here as including elements of incongruity which discloses hidden relationships that can be deciphered only by means of the viewpoint that irony affords. Here, in this case, the prophet of Israel, Jeremiah, is the one who experiences the "pathos of the middle" in a situation which for him and for an entire culture or nation has become anomic or what can be explained from the Greek root of the word as 'lawless'.

Prophetic experience and consciousness are integrally related to forms and devices of prophetic utterance.

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Irony as a means of expression employed by the biblical prophets has received relatively little attention. However, the prophets of ancient Israel were skillful poets, and they were 'caught in the middle', between God and people and between vision and reality. It is worth considering whether irony is one of the features of prophetic speech and experience. Irony can be considered as an interpretive concept and also as the pathos of the middle. There are two kinds of irony, namely comic irony and tragic irony. The tragic irony resides in the fall of the heroic person beneath the inexorable necessity of faith, whereas the comic irony "lies in seeing the pretentions of the imposter which is exposed as folly…" (Good, E. Irony in the Old Testament, pg.17). It is a simple principle that irony always includes a comic element. "A comic situation is proved to be an ironic one if a hidden relation is discovered in the incongruity" (Niebhur: viii). The appropriate response to irony is laughter and understanding.

Irony originates in a conflict. In classical Greek comedy, this is the conflict (agon) between (alazon) the buffoon, the imposter and the (eiron) the dissimulator, known as the balloon pricker (Frye, N. Anatomy of Criticism). The confrontation between these two figures stems from a conflict between pretence and reality.

The ironic strategy is two-fold, one is tricking the imposter and the other is bringing the audience out of pride into humility. (Hopper, 1962, pg.35f.), and pointing the audiences ahead to a new or transcendent reality which is envisioned.

Irony and the Breakdown of Symbol System

The creator of sustained irony has experienced a collapse of meaning in the present state of things, a collapse which his audience too, has probably felt but has not brought to consciousness (Williams, 1971:238). In another context, the book of Job may be read as an irony. It is apparent from the poetic dispute commonly called as the dialogue that Job's world is 'anomic' and his symbols are broken. Job's world has disintegrated so that in his desire to know, he is driven back to his personal experience and reflection. The crisis of Job has been given various labels such as innocent suffering, faith in contrast to magic, anthropodicy, but there is no question that the book of Job witnesses the collapse of a worldview. Job regains his health and receives a new vision and understanding of God only by means of the greatest of ironies which is a double exposure (Williams J. G, Mystery and Irony in Job, 1971:239-251).

The general point to be noted here is in the interpretation of texts and contexts; literary form and style are integrally related to experiences, the symbolic visions of order that maintain them and the anomic events that threaten the symbolic order. If the latter is threatened every text may become a pretext for overturning the traditional wisdom.

As for the prophets of Israel they were rooted in their respective traditions, yet also

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rooted in an experience of the Word that is like a "dread warrior" (Jeremiah 20:11); the word which would uproot the old Israel and plant a new Israel. The prophets are radicals.

The prophets are caught between their convictions of the divine judgement and identification with their contemporaries and they achieved certain liberation from their dilemma through the use of irony. To support and clarify this concept focus is given on the hôy-utterances– as a natural call / hail or call attention to–of Jeremiah. These hôy-sayings are divine prophetic laments over the death of Israel. In these laments the prophets announce that the accepted images of life are becoming the grim images of death by the word of Yahweh. We shall also focus on the poetic forms and methods of the prophet.

The Prophet as Ironist

The prophetic form here has commonly been called the 'woe-oracle' or the 'alas-utterances'. It has been understood as a form of speech whose original life-situation is that of the cultic curse. It can be also argued that these alas-utterances are a form derived from the rites of lamentation. It follows a definite pattern: the opening exclamation hôy, followed by some adjectival form, either a participle or an adjectival noun. The participle or substantive begins an indictment and a degree of judgment is always implied, if not explicitly stated.

"Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains
        Behold,
the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the North Country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.
[Jer. 10: 19, 20 and 22, Authorised Version]

The alas-form does not focus on future calamity as it expresses a lament over a present loss. Therefore, strictly speaking, it is not an 'oracle' but an utterance. It is especially an appropriate form for the prophetic lament of Israel's present condition and imminent death. The alas-form bemoans the sickness unto death. The alas-utterances of prophet Jeremiah:

"Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.
And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." [Jeremiah 14: 2 and 3, Authorized Version]

"I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from

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them."

"We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of help and behold trouble"
[Jer. 8:13 and 15, Authorised Version]

This picture depicts the death of the people and the fertile land without water, and it is as an act of divine judgement, appropriately connected by the prophet whether or not both were originally spoken in the same address. The Day of Judgement is to be a day of trouble and not of peace and it is a day of darkness and mourning. This will be indicated again, and it is a characteristic of the prophetic alas-form; the repetition of the initial image concerning those for whom lamentation is made. The image however is reiterated in such a way that it becomes ironic, that is, the 'apparent' meaning of a word, phrase, or description is reversed usually at the end of the utterance, or the popularly accepted understanding is changed so that an unexpected faith is portrayed.

"They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."
[Jer. 16:4 Authorised Version].

Alas those living in Jerusalem are unaffected by these utterances as they feel secure and they are sick about the ruin that is come upon them. Israel's leaders are the notable men of the nation. They engage in luxuries, revelry and with the finest perfumes they anoint themselves. They love to enjoy the finest; and therefore, it is in the coming judgment as mentioned by the prophet they will not hear the voice of mirth or the voice of gladness or celebration or feast. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the bride" (Jer. 16:9, Authorised Version).

The alas-utterance laments over the people of Yahweh, who are abandoned and are left desolate. The picture of Zion abandoned is one of haunting isolation and vulnerability. Yet later in the book, we find Zion's abandonment reversed and she is shown favor because of Yahweh's compassion on her and even during her siege and captivity a pitiful remnant left back in the land is a sign of Yahweh's compassion on iniquitous Israel.

"Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work. That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion."
[Jer. 22:13 &14, Authorised Version]

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This alas-saying once again has the repetition of images of exploitation and unrighteousness. Those over whom this lament is made are the ones who build their houses by exploiting others and by unfair means. They don't pay the workers their wages and boast about building houses of cedar and vermilion. These land-grabbers are not mentioned in the verdict but the picture is full of irony; for their fate will end in their houses becoming desolate, large and fine houses empty without inhabitants. They make merry and feast and indulge in revelry. The wine flows, the merry makers open wide their mouths to take in the delicious morsels and while this is going on, these ignorant ones do not see what is really happening: death and destruction await at their gates to consume them and to make an end of them.

Irony in Poetry and Prophetic Consciousness
The hôy-form, derived from life situation is a highly stylized form of speech which was loosened and expanded in the prophetic utterance (Muilenburg J., Form Criticism and Beyond. JBL 88: 1 – 18, 1969). It is loosened and expanded in that Yahweh's decree is worked in although sometimes a decree is given only by implication. Often Yahweh is not explicitly represented as acting, or involved, and the end-scene is simply presented. We are dealing here with the 'mixed' form. The alas-utterance is the prophet's and Yahweh's personal lament over Israel and often no distinction is made between the prophet and the divine speaker. The basic ironic device of the hôy-utterances is the repetition of images whose 'apparent' or 'expected' meaning is reversed. The prophets in other words take images of life such as acts of rejoicing, feasts and sacrifice, light and day, place and land, habitation, oils and perfumes, appetite, spoils of war and they change them into images of death such as acts of lamentation, darkness and night, exile, captivity and abandonment, spoil and prey.

Language for the prophets are founded and based on the acts and reality of Yahweh. The images of Presence which inform Israel's life and consciousness are preserved through royal or cultic institutions, but they are reinterpreted even turned on their heads completely by the prophetic word. What once was life to Israel has now become death, but the prophetic word of death is nonetheless the prelude to life. The new words (paroles-- deḇārîm) may then ironically become apparently life-giving, but they are in truth the face of death when they are routinized and institutionalised. So, thus the cycle goes on.

Prophets generally use various means to bring about irony in poetry. One basic principle is the use of poetic devices to bring about this ironic effect. One prominent poetic feature which Jeremiah employs in numerous places interspersed throughout the book is Paronomasia or generally referred as the, 'play of words.' In this research, importance is given to this poetic device as it not only evokes an ironic effect bringing about the desired tension in the prophetic consciousness, but it intends a rhetorical effect to the whole proclaimed oracle. Irony tends to bring about the deep sense of pathos that rends the heart of the prophet-poet, whereas pun or play

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of words drives home the effect of what the prophet intends for the listeners of his day as well as the readers in the present-day context. It assists in the retention of thought and aids in remembering what was conveyed originally. Probably that is why Prophet Jeremiah made ample use of this device throughout his book.

a)   **Paronomasia – The Play of Semantics**

In literature non-humourous puns are used as a standard poetic device. As a rhetorical device, word- play serves as a persuasive instrument for the author or the speaker. This device is used in the book to create an ironic effect in the prophet's proclaimed utterances to his people. This form of word play suggests two or more meanings by exploiting multiple meanings of words or of similar sounding words. Intentional use of homophonic, homographic, metonymic or metaphorical language produces pun or play of words. Prophet Jeremiah would have been quite familiar with this device, as it is a very well-known effective tool in communication even during his time. Puns and play of words were found in ancient Egypt, where they were heavily used in development of myths and interpretation of dreams.

The prophets of Israel like ancient Israelite narrators loved the kind of wordplay which juxtaposes the same or similar words in such a way as to produce irony. Many instances of the ironic repetition of images involve paronomasia which takes a number of forms.

1)   **Reversal of ordinary or accepted meaning**

"O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin throughout all thy borders."
[Jer. 17:3, Authorised Version]

"And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting."
[Jer. 48:33, Authorised Version]

2)   **Juxtaposition of the same or homonyms**

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying Jeremiah, what seest though? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree."
[Jer. 1:11 AuthorisedVersion]

The Hebrew word for almond tree is saqed while the word for watch or be awake is soqed. This play of words to impress upon Jeremiah that Yahweh is ever awake to watch over his word and fulfill it.

"The days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will raise up for David, a righteous branch,

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and he shall reign. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: The Lord is our Righteousness." [Jer. 23: 5&6, NRSV]

In this verse, according to scholars, we should expect an oracle on Zedekiah, the last king of the land before it is completely devastated, and its citizens deported. This is the king who is not strong and bold to speak against his nobles and royal advisors, yet in this time of dire need, he goes to Jeremiah for advice. At that time, the prophet branches off and digresses, looking into a distant future and proclaims an oracle of ultimate wellbeing and restoration. The rulers who ruled the land so far have been like wolves devouring the flock; the humble harmless dwellers of the land are just used and exploited by the authorities to cater to their own lifestyle of luxury and indulgence. For this, according to the prophet's utterance, in the future, they will be recompensed and the land and its inhabitants will see days of justice, peace and righteousness for which the assurance of a new king – 'a real king', 'shall reign as king'. This king shall not be a weakling like King Zedekiah. This king will be a 'righteous branch'. The Hebrew word used here is 'semasaddîk and the play on the word sedek, which actually is the first part of the king's name Zedekiah, which means, 'the Lord is righteous.' When the righteous king comes, there will be deliverance, more wonderful with total restoration and the land will be free of all violence and blood-shed. His Name will be Yahweh Sidhkenu, which means, 'the Lord is our righteousness'. "Go up to the land of Merathaim; go up against her, and attack the inhabitants of Pekod and utterly destroy the last of them", says the Lord; do all that I have commanded you."
[Jer. 50: 21, NRSV]

Here is a beautiful play upon words employed by the prophet. Merathaim is 'nar Marrtim', which is in the southern point of Babylon's border, while Pekod is 'Pukudu' is another place to the East. Merathaim in Hebrew vocalized to mean, 'double defiance' or of 'double rebellion'. Pekod means 'punishment'. One word stands to denote the character of the people and the other word to refer to the consequence that follows such a character or attitude of heart, which of course is punishment, which will be its ultimate portion. The smasher of nations which is Babylon the Great will be smashed soon; she is trapped like a wild beast in a snare and it is Yahweh who ordains it to be so. The same destructive force and violence that Babylon leashed out upon Judah is given back to her in similar fashion and means. In a way, we can say, the sameness of the judgement ended in the tameness of the terrifying foe.

3)   **A third type of word-play we see in the book is, a similar juxtaposition of the same word, we find juxtaposition of the same root word to bring about ironic effect:**

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the sun of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter ...." "......And shall say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and the city, as on breaketh the potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in

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Tophet, till there be no place to bury. Thus, will I do unto this place, saith the Lord and to the inhabitants thereof and even make this city as Tophet."
[Jer. 19:6, 11 and 12, Authorised Version]

"Topheth" is an Aramaic word, meaning "fireplace" and it so sounds very much like the Hebrew word meaning "shameful thing" which is in Hebrew Tophet, and it is in this place Tophet, in the valley of the sun of Hinnom that people sacrificed their children by throwing them into fire. The Greek word "ghenna" means "hell" comes from the Hebrew root, "ge'hinnom", the valley of Hinnom.

"When this people or a prophet or a priest asks you, what is the burden of the Lord?" you shall say to them, "You are the
burden, and I will cast you off, says the Lord"
[Jer. 23:33, NRSV]

This verse appears to belong to the final period of the siege. The false prophets are all silenced, as they are careless and disrespectful in their attitude to obey the true message from God, and they distorted the truth and made it appear what they wanted it to mean and deceived common folks, as if they too had received an oracle from the Lord.

Therefore, Jeremiah is the man to whom they turn. The Hebrew word here is 'massa', which means 'burden'. So, it is actually, 'what is the burden of the Lord?' Does God have a word for us? Burden is from the root word nasa, which means, 'to lift up'; when enquiry is made of the priest or prophet, he lifted up his voice, and gave a response or oracle. In this context, the response is the final word of doom, which is, "you are the burden (massa) and I will cast you off," says the Lord.

b)   **Attribution**
A common device of the prophets is the ironic quotation of what others have said or have purportedly thought (Blank, S. Irony By Way of Attribution 1970).

"How do ye say, we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain………"

"We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of
health, and behold trouble!" [Jer. 8: 8 and 15, Authorised Version]

c)   **Exaggeration**
Satirical caricaturing of those indicted (Wolff, 1964 B: 83).

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"How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley, now what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

A wild ass used to the wilderness that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I love strangers and after them will I go"
[Jer. 2: 23 – 25, Authorised Version]

Divine Attributes and Prophetic Consciousness

1)   Irony and the Prophetic Tension
The prophet represents the voice of the Divine. Prophetic forms of expression are indicative of prophetic experience and consciousness. Prophetic irony may be viewed as the prophet's situation in the "middle" – between God and his people. He is caught in the situation of extreme tension and is threatened by a split of his being as he tries to reconcile the elements of individualization and participation, freedom and destiny and dynamics and form (Tillich, P. Systematic Theology. Volume I, Pages 163-185, Chicago, University of Chicago).

Jeremiah is a prophet par excellence of the pathos of the middle. He is isolated due to the divine command (Jeremiah 15:17); he may have no wife or children, nor may he mourn or rejoice with others because of the word that came to him (16:1-9). He is filled with the divine wrath (6:11), and Yahweh is with him as a dread warrior (20:11). On the other hand, he seeks to constrain the divine word, but cannot (20:9). He has tried to be Yahweh's shepherd, and has not desired the 'day of grief' and identifies himself with his people (17:16). He has been an intercessor for Israel (18:20), though he was commanded by Yahweh not to intercede again (7:6, 14:11). His mind is broken (nišbārlibbî) within him, because of Yahweh (23:9), and yet he –or is it Yahweh? – is "broken" over his people:

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I may weep day and night, for the slain of My Daughter, my people"
[Jer. 9:1, Authorised Version]

If Jeremiah is the supreme example of the pathos of the middle, this pathos nevertheless is present in other prophets also. The ironist prophet enjoys a temporary advantage over his problematic and ironic utterance, is the way he liberates himself from his predicament "in the middle", between pretence and reality, blindness and sight, history and providence. However, "the moment humility enters the picture, comedy becomes a possibility" (Hopper, S. Irony – The

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Pathos of The Middle, Crosscurrents 12: 31-40, 1962).

The elements of humor and paronomasia are deadly serious alas-utterances which could not have been there apart from the prophetic conviction that Israel would eventually be brought back to life again, so that the suffering of Israel and of God would be ended. And here we come to our final point, the end of irony.

2)   The End of Irony

The prophetic word is one which may transform received images from the vital to the deadly; further, the prophet transcends his audience in proclaiming a message of judgement.

What prevents the process of being senseless? That is, if accepted norms and institutions can be turned around, if they are viewed as only death in disguise, where does the process stop? What are the limits so that radical skepticism or simple cynicism is avoided? What is the controlling factor in prophetic irony? The limits are Israel and God. We have already indicated that the prophet is not only filled with the divine word; he is attached to his people, and if he gives up his role as intercessor, he does so with reluctance.

In acknowledging that he belongs to the 'enemy', as it were, he acknowledges that he is not apart from his audience but is addressed by the same as they. Kenneth Burke has described this as "true irony", "humble irony" (Hopper, 1962:36). The very fact of the prophetic lament form is a sign of "humble irony". This sort of irony requires sympathy and discernment of virtue in the one lamented.

It is not only the prophet who is attached to his people. God also is attached to Israel. This is the end of irony. Israel is the continuing condition of God and there is hardly any other way to construe the divine laments and complaints. Yahweh himself is caught in the pathos i.e., he experiences the pathos of the contradiction between Israel as she is and as He intends her to be. Many biblical scholars have objected to, or ignore the idea of Divine pathos but Abraham Heschel in his book The Prophets, points out that the bias against this misunderstanding stems from a western metaphysical tradition going back to Parmenides, a tradition which has transmitted the two fold concept of being as perfect and immutable, so that being can necessarily have nothing to do with becoming or coming "into-being". The biblical philosophy and teaching however, it is not being as such but the mystery of being, not the given but the creation of the given, not being as ultimate but God as ultimate.

Prophetic consciousness is informed by sympathy with a Divine pathos. In the prophetic laments, as well as in some of the more peculiar prophetic forms such as oracles, it is often impossible to distinguish between the prophet's word and God's word. This is because they are not two separate words: the word arises out of the prophet's sympathy with a Divine pathos as

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stated by Abraham Heschel. All forms of criticism are but the study of the conditions of the divine word. In the prophetic utterances we find the pathos of Divine love now expressing itself in anger over injustice and at times in disgust with sacrificial worship. And sometimes as lament over virgin Israel, in recounting continual efforts to bring Israel back to him by pointing out how he wooed her in the beginning, led her thus far. Whom else has Yahweh "known"? Such instances of divine pathos are sited in other prophets also over and over again.

"I remember thee; the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown"
[Jer. 2:2, Authorised Version]

Jeremiah places a case before Yahweh (Jer. 12: 1-4): "Why do the wicked prosper? Why does He plant them (perhaps referring to those persecuting Jeremiah)? They should be slaughtered. How long shall the land mourn? Yahweh's response is a rebuke and a challenge to Jeremiah (Jer. 12:5-6). But what is Jeremiah's suffering compared to God's?

"I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.
[Jer.12:7 AuthorisedVersion]

Could Yahweh give up Israel, the "girdle of His loins?" (Jer. 13:11). Perhaps this Israel in her present state, but not the Israel as she will be in the future after restoration. This could be seen as the reuniting of the houses of Israel and Judah, the divided kingdoms in a new covenant (Jeremiah 31: 31-34). But whatever and however Israel shall be, she shall be God's! This is where irony ends, where comedy enters in, for even God resolves to turn things around and His love for Israel is unending and He makes Himself humble to meet Israel. He needs Israel. Irony is finally broken by the divine power and need to reconstitute Israel. The divine pathos requires a joyous ending in hope and restoration for his beloved people.

The theme of confession is another feature in prophetic consciousness which is discussed, along with prophetic gestures in chapter two of this research, in the context of the prophet's call and vocation.

Narration and Description in Jeremiah
In his work, 'Narratology' An Introduction, Wolf Schmid defines and describes narrations and descriptions as follows:

A literary work has both narrative and descriptive modes. Descriptive texts are the opposite of texts which are narrative in a broader sense. Descriptive texts represent states; they describe conditions, draw pictures or portraits, portray social milieus or categorize natural and

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social phenomena. Descriptive texts also represent a single moment in time and a single state of affairs. Description is also found in texts which represent more than one state of affairs if those states of affairs lack the double bond of similarity and contrast or, are not connected to a single identical agent or element of setting.

Despite the clear theoretical contrast between the narrative and the descriptive text, the boundaries between them are fluid and deciding the category of a given text is often a matter of interpretation. Also, a descriptive component is necessarily present in all narration. The initial and final status of a change in narration requires a certain amount of description. It is also to be noted, that any description can employ narrative means in order to focus or amplify a particular aspect of a situation.

"Therefore a text in descriptive or narrative in nature depends not on the quantity of the static or dynamic segments in it, but on the function they have in the overall context of the work". An example is given below taken from the biographical prose narrative section of the book of Jeremiah.

"Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things" "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord" [Jer. 20:1&2, Authorised Version]

In this example, based on the functionality of the overall context, we can assume that Verse 1, is a narrative text and verse 2, can be considered as descriptive, as the segments of the text consists of detailed description of the treatment given to the prophet: Yet this punctuality is of a hybrid character; and this hybrid nature can be observed in the above example also. In most texts, the closest we can get to a definitive classification in identifying the dominance of one of the two modes, either narrative or descriptive, which then again is a matter of interpretation. When a text includes no more than the description of two situations, then it can be interpreted equally as descriptive or narrative.

Tomashevsky includes works of travel writing in the class of descriptive texts, "If the account is only about the sights and not about the personal adventures of the travellers" (Tomashevsky1925; tr. 1965, 66). Still a description of travel can become a narrative without thematizing the traveller's internal state; generally, a tendency towards narrativity develops in descriptive texts if a describing authority makes itself apparent in them.

"For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword".   [Jer. 20: 4; Authorised Version]

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This verse given above can be taken as a narrative text, since the describing authority of the text who is 'God' here makes Himself apparent in the narration.

Therefore, this narrativity is related not to what is described but rather to the presence that describes (or) the narrator who describes, and the way in which it is done. The changes that take place here are related to the exegesis as it refers to a narration with the narrator's comments, explanations, reflections and meta-narrative remarks that accompany it. They are changes in the consciousness of the describing authority and constitute a narration on the level of discourse, a 'discourse narrative'. The book of Jeremiah is a discourse prophecy consisting of a connected series of utterances.
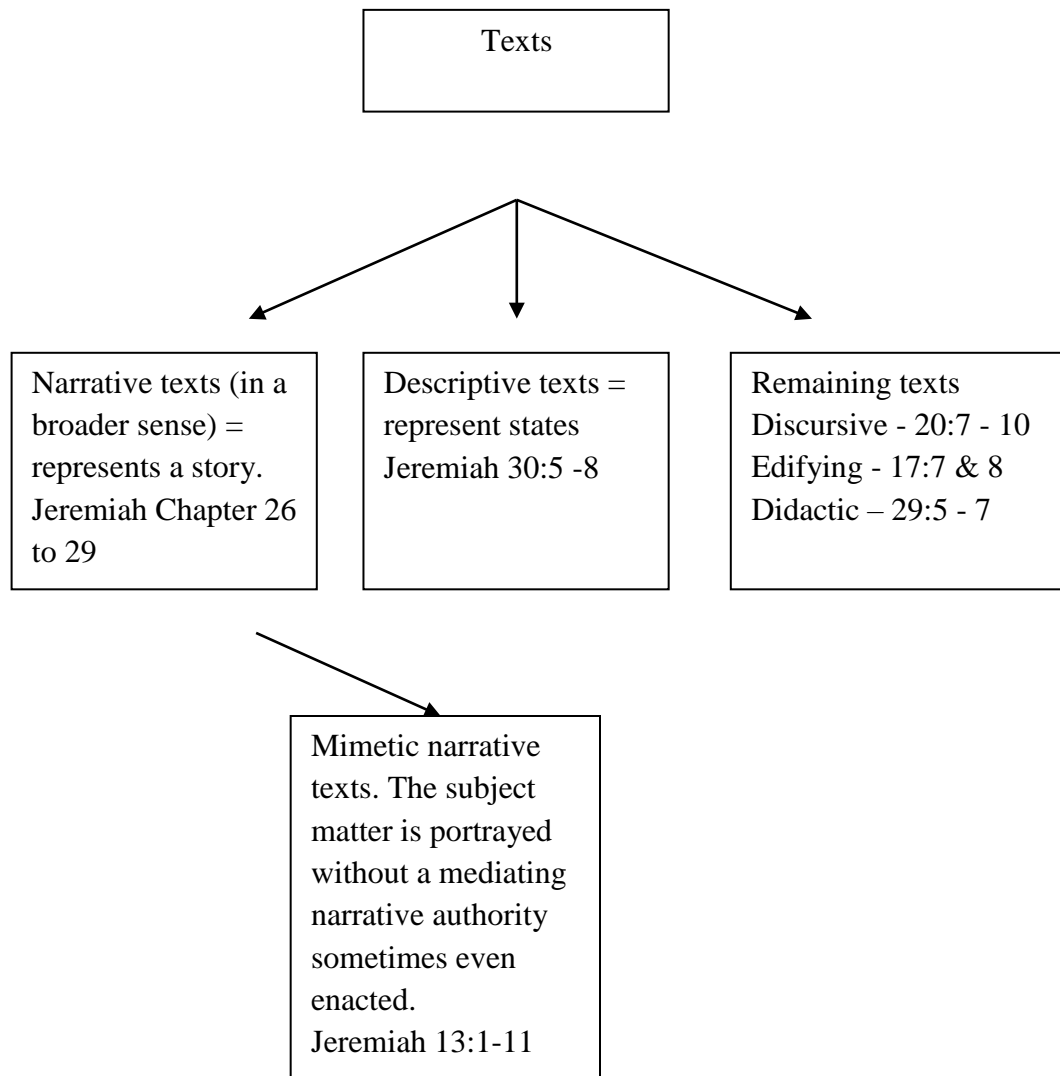
Mediated and Mimetic narrative texts:
Any text can be accounted for or defined as narrative in a narrower sense if it represents a story or subject matter, and either implicitly or explicitly has a mediating authority or narrator behind the subject matter. But this narrower definition excludes the broader context which has the subset of texts, which represent a transformation without a mediation or narrator, and dramas, fictions, comic strips, ballets, pantomimes, narrative paintings are included in this category. There, in an uncomplicated way, to refer to 'the broader sense' of the word, including all the (above) various categories as 'narrative', while the narratives in the 'narrower sense' can be referred to with the term 'mediated'.

The types of texts are illustrated in the diagram given below which is actually a modified one of Seymour Chatman's well-known model (Chatman 1990, 115), in which narrative texts are sub divided into 'diegetic texts' that which recounts an event with the mediation of a narrator and 'mimetic texts' that which enacts the event without a mediation. There are various types of text types and connected to this is, different writing styles. Of these various types the major sub-division in the narrative texts which represent the story or any other narrated matter (subject) and descriptive texts which represent the detailed description of states in a written work. Apart from these two types there is the discursive type which refers to the digressive mode of a piece of writing which runs to and fro, then there are the 'edifying type' of texts which focuses mainly to improve and build the readers morally or intellectually and the didactic text type which is pedantic and meant to instruct and to teach.

The book of Jeremiah consists of all the different 'text types' shown in Seymour Chatman's model and various writing styles connected to it which is explained below with examples:

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                        ┌──────────────────┐
                        │      Texts        │
                        └──────────────────┘
                                 │
          ┌──────────────────────┼──────────────────────┐
          ▼                      ▼                      ▼
┌────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐
│ Narrative texts (in a│  │ Descriptive texts = │  │ Remaining texts     │
│ broader sense) =     │  │ represent states    │  │ Discursive - 20:7 - 10│
│ represents a story.  │  │ Jeremiah 30:5 -8    │  │ Edifying - 17:7 & 8 │
│ Jeremiah Chapter 26  │  │                     │  │ Didactic – 29:5 - 7 │
│ to 29                │  │                     │  │                     │
└────────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘
          │
          ▼
┌────────────────────┐
│ Mimetic narrative   │
│ texts. The subject  │
│ matter is portrayed │
│ without a mediating │
│ narrative authority │
│ sometimes even      │
│ enacted.            │
│ Jeremiah 13:1-11    │
└────────────────────┘
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Generally speaking, 'Style' is nothing but the author's perfect choice of words and their arrangement. In other words, the language command, and semantic expertise plays a major role in the style of a writer. The author has to make a careful choice of vocabulary framing sentences and paragraphs so that he can create the desired specific effect on his readers.

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Expository Writing Style

To begin with, is the 'Expository style of writing', which is a subject-oriented writing style, where the main focus of the writer is to explain and write on a given topic or subject and leave- out (or) should not project his own personal opinion in this style of writing. The writer furnishes and puts forth relevant facts and figures. This type of writing style is commonly followed in textbooks and also usually adopted in "How – to" articles.

(i)   The key feature of expository writing is – it usually explains the process of something. In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet, gripped by prophetic persuasion, explains the process of God's impending doom and judgement approaching his beloved nation. This process is clearly seen in Chapter 27:6 and 7 of the book.

"And now have I given all these lands into the hand of
Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him"

(ii)   Expository style of writing is often equipped with facts and figures as seen in Jeremiah 25:1 & 3.

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon: ......

"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon King of Judah, even
unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord has come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened."

(iii)   The Expository style of writing is usually in a logical order and sequence as in Jeremiah 28:1&3.

"And it came to pass the same year in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying.   Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried them to Babylon."

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Descriptive Writing Style

Next is the Descriptive style of writing, which focuses on describing a character, an event or a place in great details. Descriptive style is sometimes poetic in nature in which the author focuses on specifying and describing the details of the event rather than just giving the information of that event.

Descriptive writing is often poetic in nature; it describes places, people, events, situations or locations in a highly detailed manner. The author also visualizes what he sees, hears, smells and feels when he adopts the Descriptive style of writing. Two examples are given below, to show the descriptive style of prophet Jeremiah taken from chapter 14 verses 2 to 6 where Jeremiah describes the great drought that comes upon the land and from chapter 17 verse 1 to 4, is the passage describing Judah's engraved sin and inevitable punishment which was to follow-

The examples are quoted from the New King James Version (NKJV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) respectively to show the poetic and visualised nature of Jeremiah's descriptive style.

"Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They mourn for the land, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. Their nobles have sent their lads for water; They went to the cisterns and found no water; They returned with their vessels empty; They were ashamed and confounded And covered their heads. Because the ground is parched, For there was no rain in the land, The plowmen were ashamed; They covered their heads." [Jer. 14:2-6, NKJV]

"Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field, But left because there was no grass. And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass".
[Jer. 17:1-4, NRSV]

Jeremiah records a pathetic poem, in the form of a lament, during a drought which is highly descriptive.

"The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts, and on the horns of their altars,
While their children remember their altars and their sacred poles, beside every green tree, and on the high hills,

On the mountain in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for

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spoil as the price of your sin throughout all your territory.

By your act you shall lose the heritage that I gave you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever".   [Jer. 17: 1-4, NKJV]

The prophet   isualizes Judah's sin and the impending doom upon the land.

Persuasive Writing Style

Jeremiah also adopts the Persuasive style of writing. The persuasive style, unlike the expository writing, contains the opinions, biasness, and justification of the author. This type of writing contains justification and reasons to make someone believe on the point the writer is talking about. Persuasive writing is meant for persuading and convincing the readers on your point of view. It is often used in complaint letters, where one provides reasons to justify the complaint mode. Copy writing texts, television commercials, affiliate marketing pitches are all different types of persuasive styles of writing, where the author is actually persuading and convincing the readers and viewers on something he wants you to do or believe.

The persuasive writing style has to be equipped with reasons, arguments and justification. In this style the author takes a firm stand and asks or convinces his readers to believe and accept his point of view. Persuasive style often asks or calls for an action or response from the readers. We see the prophet using this persuasive style of writing in the letter he writes to the exiles who are taken captive to Babylon. This letter is meant to be convincing, instructing warning as well as encouraging to his countrymen, and it is in Jeremiah Chapter 29. Verses 5 to 7 alone is quoted below from the New King James Version (NKJV),

"Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruits.
Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters – that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace."

The Narrative style

Jeremiah also uses one more style of writing, the Narrative style. Narrative writing is a type of writing in which the author places himself as the character in the written work and narrates the story (or) the content matter of the literary work. Novels, short stories, novellas, poetry, and biographies fall in the narrative writing style.

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Narrative writing can be defined as 'an art to narrate a story or a message or the content of a literary work.

This form of writing simply answers the question – "What happened then?"

In this style, the narrator describes or narrates the story or the event. Narrative writing may have characters and dialogues also and it has definite and logical beginnings, intervals and endings. Narrative writing style can be employed in writing about situations like disputes, conflicts, actions, motivational events, problems and their solutions. An example of this style is given below taken from Chapter 26 of the book, in the New King James Version.

"Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all
that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets, and all the people took him, saying, 'Thou shalt surely die:

"Why has thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord".

The term 'discourse prophecy' is best suited to describe the style of the book and presentation as Prophet Jeremiah adopts all the different types of writing styles and techniques in his book.

KunstProsa –The Poetic Prose

The idea of an artistic Kunstprosa in Hebrew is not new. There is some evidence that the ancient world knew of a distinctive literary style present in poetic prose. Eduard Norden traced recognition of it in literary treatises from the sixth century B.C.E through Roman times. Aulus Gellius, a Roman critic, distinguished three styles of writing. His "grand" and "plain" correspond to Aristotle's "poetical language" and "functional prose," respectively, but a third style which he calls "middle" partakes of the qualities of both elegant poetry and narrative prose. In ancient Egyptian literature, too, Miriam Lichtheim has detected such an intermediate style standing between prose and poetry: it has a distinctive sentence rhythm and symmetrically structured clauses, it is employed only in direct, oratorical speech, and it is characterized by parallelism of members.

Commentators like Robert Lowth have described much of the prophetic style of poetry as "more ornamented, more splendid and more florid than any other." In the last century, Heinrich Ewald noted that the prophetic style is "too exalted in subject-matter and spirit to permit it to sink to the level of common prose on one hand but on the other hand, prophetic woks are, " too essentially intended to produce an immediate effect upon

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the affairs of life, to suffer it to depart so far from these, as is allowable in the case of the pure poetic style". In the Old Testament of the English Revised Version, published in 1885, the poetic books are arranged in verse form, but the editors did not extend this arrangement to the prophetical books, whose language they considered high prose, except in some particularly lyrical passages.

Literary analyses of prophetical books have resulted in the identification as Kunstprosa of numerous texts ordinarily judged to be prose. William Holladay has proposed very plausibly that Kunstprosa is found first in prophecy related to the Deuteronomic reform and the sermonic prose style of its language. This certainly would fit several other undoubtedly perceptive observations about shifts in prophetic language with Jeremiah, and their successors. Paul Hanson sees a new style at the time of the exile and afterward.

"However conceived, the development is in the direction away from dominance of the simple bi- and tri-colon toward longer, more baroque prosodic units." Westermann and Hanson presumably speak of a "baroque" style by analogy with the art of the baroque period, an ornate art with many decorative details.

Some Proposed Characteristics of a Poetic Prose
Some characteristics generally proposed to be present in this type of writing, enumerated by Helga Weippert in Kunstprosa in Jeremiah: the irregular use of parallelism, word clusters of two or four members, word pairs, tripling, irregular or non-metrical line versification, and a paraenetic style. Northrop Frye identifies what he calls "rhetorical prose" with the classical category of euphuism, the style of oratory. In euphuism, every device known to the rhetoric books is employed, including rhyme, metrical balance, and alliteration, which are usually thought of as prerogatives of verse. Euphuism has "a tendency to long sentences made up of short phrases and coordinate clauses, to emphatic repetition combined with driving linear rhythm, to invective, to exhaustive catalogues and to expressing the process or movement of thought instead of logical word order of achieved thought.

Finally, Wellek and Warren propose that "artistic prose" can be detected by its cadence, in which ordinary speech rhythms are forcefully organized in patterns, stress distribution is more regular (but not as fully regular as in poetry), the differences in stresses between lines are leveled, periodicity is strengthened by phonetic and syntactic devices such as sound figures, parallelism, and antithetic balancing, and greater rhythmic regularity is shown at the beginnings and the endings of lines than in the extended middle. These characteristics resemble those normally associated with oral rhetoric.

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The Function of Poetic Prose

Wellek and Warren suggest that artistic prose is used to bring full awareness of the message, to tie together and underscore major points, and to relate sections to one another by emphasis. It is generally agreed that artistic prose originated in oratory and proclamation, and that it can be associated with many of the qualities identified with oral traditions in persuasive speech. The baroque or ornate quality is sometimes associated with the frequent use of elaborate similes and comparisons in rhetorical preaching, and sometimes with the dominance of verbal devices that lead naturally to the employment of balanced constructions, rhetorical questions, or antithesis. Northrop Frye points also to the tendency of euphuistic prose to break down into a series of harangues. Although Frye sees this quality as one leading to self-parody in this kind of speech, it is preferable to suggest that it is a quality of the strong repetition intended to reinforce a message.

Kunstprosa or poetic prose is more than just ornamental prose. It is closely linked to rhetoric, oratory and persuasion, seems to be identified most clearly in texts from the exilic period or shortly after, probably reflects in writing what was a style of public oration and oral proclamation, and its verbal quality was oriented towards persuasion to action.

Finally, it may prove valuable to pursue the question whether these qualities of Kunstprosa suggest a connection to the reform efforts done in the society during Jeremiah's time. Quite a few sections from the book are in the style of Kunstprosa, portions such as, Jeremiah Ch. 7:1-15; Ch. 24:4-8; Ch. 25:8-14 and Ch.33:1- 26, to mention a few. Due to its oratorical quality this form was used by the Prophet quite prominently and effectively.

In order to comprehend the following sections on the poetry of Jeremiah, its stylistic feature, its various forms inclusive of the unique acrostic poems of Lamentations and its lofty lyric poetry, a little preliminary information and knowledge about the vernacular of Jeremiah's times, the Old Testament Hebrew, its poetic metre and rhythm is a prerequisite.

Old Testament – Hebrew

The languages of the Old Testament are Hebrew and to a limited extent Aramaic. Owing to their very close affinity and many common features they are rightly understood only in relation to each other and to other languages of the Semitic family to which they belong. The Hebrew language is of a composite nature and can be described as the speech (or) language of Canaan, which is Canaanite. On their entry into Canaan after the Exodus, the Hebrews brought with them an Arameo– Arabic dialect and found already there, an existing language which became in large measure, the language of the Old

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Testament.

The Hebrew alphabet is limited to twenty-two consonants, and as this is less than the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, some of the Hebrew letters such as hêṯand ayin serve the dual function of representing both the harsher and softer sounds. The six consonants b, g, d, k, p, t, are aspirated as bḇ,gg,kḵ, thereby adding to the number of sounds denoted in the alphabet. In the absence of letters for the vowels, the consonants hē, wāw, yōḏ were adopted to indicate the pure long vowels â, û and ô, î and ê.

From the middle of the secondnd century B.C. Hebrew was no longer generally spoken and its cessation as a living language led in time, to difficulty over pronunciation of the biblical text, since the vocalic consonants failed to represent all the variations of sound. In order to safeguard the pronunciation of the consonantal text, about the end of A.D.I, a vowel system was devised and authoritatively fixed. This vowel system known as pointing, in Hebrew called as nikkēd, consists of a series of strokes and dots below or above the appropriate consonants. For greater precision, accents were added, which are of importance especially as marks of punctuation and of tone.

The vocabulary of biblical Hebrew is relatively small, only about a tenth of its five thousand – odd words being found with any frequency. However, there are indications of more extensive Hebrew vocabulary than what has survived in the Old Testament. Likewise words found but once in the Old Testament were not necessarily rare in contemporary usage. Ethiopic similarly has much to contribute to Hebrew lexicography. The concrete quality of Hebrew vocabulary with its use of physical terms for the emotional and psychical as well as the simplicity of its syntactical structure combines to make the language a superb instrument for vivid and picturesque narration, yet it is unsuitable for sustained argument and the articulation of abstract thought.

It can be said in summary that by 1500 B.C. the Hebrew Alphabet as distinct from cuneiform writing and Egyptian hieroglyphs, came into use in Syria and Palestine. The early Hebrew Alphabet was constant throughout the millennium of its usage, dating from the Gezer calendar in the tenth century B.C. The formal Hebrew character developed quickly during the Herodian period of 30 B.C.E – AD 70 and after that time its progress could be traced by means of dated commercials and legal documents.

Writing materials varied considerably depending upon climate and local conditions. Clay tablets were the commonest material of written communications in Mesopotamia for many centuries, where as in Egypt it was papyrus which claimed this distinction from about 3000 B.C. Metal was much less commonly used as writing material than either stone or clay, although cuneiform inscriptions in Sumerian and Old

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Persian have been discovered on objects of gold, silver, copper and bronze. Gold is mentioned in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament as writing-surface (Exodus 28:36); stone is also referred to as writing material in the Old Testament. The use of broken pottery as writing material was widespread throughout the ancient Near East, although potsherds were of limited value to the Mesopotamians, since they could be utilized for a script like Aramaic, which was written with pen and ink rather than with a stylus. Wood in one form or another was also employed as a means of writing material so were leather and parchment.

The use of tanned animal skins for the purpose of writing dates back to the early third millennium in Egypt and lasted until the Arab conquest in A.D. seventh century. It is very possible that the prophecies of Jeremiah were written upon a leather scroll. (Jer. 36:4, 23). Papyrus also may have been used as this may be indicated by the fact that the deed of purchase signed by the prophet in Jeremiah 32:10 was undoubtedly a papyrus document of the kind found at Elephantine, and also by the use of the word 'scroll' (Jer. 36:2,4) and in chapter 36:23, both of which denote a sheet of papyrus. Although hides were tanned by the Hebrews, the Old Testament itself does not specifically mention writing on leather.

Hebrew Poetry as in Jeremiah
Of the sixty six books of the Old Testament, the books of Psalms, Proverbs and Job were regarded by the Jews as specifically poetical in nature, and were described by a mnemonic title, 'The Book of Truth'. Although there are elements of epic, dramatic and lyrical poetry in these three compositions, they are outstanding for the vitality and beauty of their didactic passages in which profound spiritual truths are enshrined for the edification of humanity. Along with these poetic books which are extensively poetic, the major prophetic books of the Old Testament such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, also have poetic sections, exemplary for the beauty of their imagery and composition. The poem of the book of Jeremiah is not merely a form but one which depicts the actual events of the age. It yields its meaning and completeness as the reader progresses from the beginning to the end.

This concurs with the view of Mark Schorer who remarks that, 'technique will help ……… to discover and evaluate our subject matter and   discover the amplification of meaning of which our subject matter is capable". The poetic sections of the book have expressions that penetrate the depths of human mind.

The Patterns of Hebrew Poetry
Many of the Old Testament prophetic oracles are poetic in form, which has been recognised adequately and followed in the format of the modern translation of the Bible

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such as the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and New Egypt Bible (NEB). The book of Lamentations which is entirely poetry features certain choice literary devices used by the prophet poet, which is also part of this research. Hence it necessitates commenting briefly on the nature of the Old Testament poetry.

From an early period, the Hebrew are renowned throughout the Near East as singers and musicians; and poetic sections are scattered liberally throughout the Old Testament. One of the striking features of this poetry is parallelism. To define this feature in its simplest form, this structure is expressed by a restatement in the second line of a couplet or distich of the thought which has already been expressed in the first. The basic unit of composition which is the line comprises one half of the parallelism. It is of importance in Hebrew poetry because it forms a complete thought, and this possesses grammatical and syntactical coherence and unity. Since there is no uniform nomenclature for describing the units of parallelism, terms such as 'stich', 'stichos', 'hemistich' and 'colon' are used variously to express the concept of line.

With this basic unit, however, the Hebrew is adept at deriving sophisticated variation of parallelism; thereby making the relationship between the first and second lines of the couplet as that of synonymous, synthetic, antithetic and emblematic parallelism to name a few, which are explained in detail in the following pages of this section with select examples from the book of Jeremiah.

Meter is a unique feature of occidental compositions and it does not occur in ancient Hebrew poetry. Thus, they don't have a corresponding measuring term. It is the foot which is the unit of metrical measure. However Hebrew poetry exhibits a strong accentual quality of its own, with the stresses or ictus which are placed on the varying words, being used to determine the rhythm of the given passage. Each major word in a verse can carry one stress, whereas minor words may either be unstressed or else they may be linked with others by a hyphen to receive one stress for the unit thus formed. This kind of procedure results in groups that tend to exhibit regular rhythmic patterns, even though they are not of a mechanical order.

All that is now known of ancient Near Eastern poetry suggests that there was a degree of accentual freedom available to Semitic composers. Moreover, in Hebrew the number of unstressed syllables which can occur between stresses is variable. Hebrew poetry is concerned primarily with intellectual rather than phonic or rhythmic considerations and it aims at balancing one thought against another by syllabic accentual values. Apart from rhyme which does not occur in Hebrew poetry, the Old Testament authors made abundant use of all other literary devices found in poetic writings including assonance, various figures of speech, alliteration to mention a few.

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Taking into consideration the book of Jeremiah, taken for this research, it has both poetic and prose passages and other literary forms too. Jeremiah's poetic passages are lyrical and follow the Hebrew poetry fundamentals and techniques. Jeremiah himself is a poet. His style of poesy is lofty and lyrical, which is discussed separately in this work.

Just as in other areas of Old Testament writing even in the matter of Hebrew poetic compositions also, there are fundamental differences between what the Orientals understood by poetry and that which is commonly denoted by the use of the term in the western world. That is the primary reason why a short introductory prelude is given here in this research about the Hebrew language, and alphabet, as they are a prerequisite to our understanding of Hebrew poetic techniques. To begin with, primarily there is nothing that can be recognised as rhyme in Hebrew poetic compositions. The nearest approach to rhyme occurs when the same pronoun suffix appears at the end of two or more 'stichos'.

"You have stricken them, But they have not grieved;
You have consumed them, But they have refused to Receive correction."   [Jer.   5:   3, NKJV]

It is unbelievable that this is anything more than purely accidental. Second, while it is possible to speak about metre in Hebrew poetry, it is more accurate to think in terms of periodic accentuation and the balance of component clauses. Third, the forms in which the Hebrew poems were transmitted are radically different from their counter parts in occidental writings. As we see in western poetry, which in general has followed the patterns that were established by the Classical authors, the units of speech are based upon sounds. On the contrary in Hebrew as in some other oriental poetry, the units were formulated in terms of concepts or ideas.

Hebrew has been regarded as by far the most suitable of all human languages for the expression of noble poetic sentiments, due in part to the manner in which words are accented. Since accentuation is found in both prose and poetry, there must clearly be some attestable means of distinguishing accentuation between the two forms of literary expression. It was Josephus who first furnished the difference in connection with the poetic structure, stating explicitly that Hebrew poetry consists of trimeters, pentameters and hexameters.

Parallelism:
Parallellism is one of the paramounting techniques, which holds aloft Jeremiah's incomparable poetic work. Paul Sanders distinguishes parallelism as, synonymous, antithetic or contrasting parallelism, synthetic also referred as progressive parallelism to mention a few.

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Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Biblical scholars attempted to measure Hebrew syllabic forms in terms of Classical poetry. It was by the pioneering work of Bishop Robert Lowth in 1753, the phenomenon of parallelism in Hebrew poetry was critically scrutinised and observed. Lowth observed that Hebrew poetry consists of measured lines and that the individual verse contains two or more components which exhibit internal parallel relationship. Thus Lowth came up with three different varieties of parallelism which are explained with references of examples taken from the book of Jeremiah.

(a)   Synonymous parallelism, in which the second line of a poetic verse repeats the thought expressed in the first line.

"And the shepherds will have no way to flee,
Nor the leaders of the flock to
escape."   (Jer. 25:35, NKJV)

"That I will break his yoke from
your neck,
And will burst your bonds;
Forgiveness shall no more
enslave them" (Jer. 30:8, NKJV)

(b)   Antithetic parallelism, in which two portions or stichos of the verse were involved in contrast; the same idea was sometimes expressed positively first, then negatively in Antithetic parallelism.

"The Lord called your name,
Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit
With the noise of great tumult He has kindled fire on it,
And its branches are broken. (Jer. 11:16, NKJV)

Here the poet using antithetic parallelism implies, that God, who planted Israel has pronounced doom and judgement against them for the evil they have done against themselves.

"O the Hope of Israel, his Saviour in time of trouble,
Why should You be like a
 stranger in the land,
And like a traveller who turns
aside to tarry for a night?"   (Jer. 14:8; NKJV)

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(c) Synthetic Parallelism, in which the sense carried on continuously. This form actually can hardly be considered as parallelism in the strictest sense of the term, as some of the modern later critics recognised it.

"Their nobles have sent their lads for water;
They went to the cistern and found no water
They returned with their vessels empty;
They were ashamed and confounded.
And covered their heads".   (Jer. 14:3, NKJV) "For thus says the Lord

'Your affliction is incredible, Your wound is severe.
There is no one to plead your cause,
That you may be bound up;
You have no healing medicines". (Jer. 30:12 & 13, NKJV)

Scholar and critic Briggs cited three more additional varieties of parallelism that scholars had come to recognise by their study of Hebrew poetry.

(d) Emblematic parallelism, in which one stichos represented a literal statement while the other suggested a metaphor

"Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord
Goes forth with fury,
A continuing whirlwind;
It will fall violently on the head of the wicked
The fierce anger of the lord will not return until he had done it,
And until he has performed the
intents of his heart   (Jer. 30:23&24, NKJV)

(e) Stair like parallelism, where only a part of the first stichos was repeated, and made the point of departure for a new development

"The voice of joy and the voice of gladness
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,
the voice of those who will say:
Praise the lord of hosts For the lord is good,
For his mercy endures
forever"   (Jer. 33:11, NKJV)

(f) Introverted parallelism, involves four stichoi, so arranged that the first corresponds to the fourth and the second to the third.

"Zion shall be plowed like a field,

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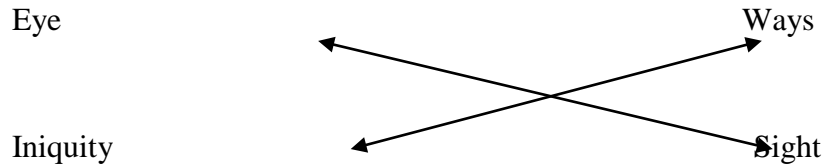
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins,
And the mountain of the Temple
Like the bare hills of
the forest."   (Jer. 26:18, NKJV)

In these four stichoi, the first and the fourth correspond and are similar in thought and idea like that of Zion to be ploughed and made as barren hills. Then the second and third correspond similarly, where Jerusalem becomes a heap of ruins and the temple mountain likewise lies in ruins. Jerusalem is the main holy city with the temple mount. Chiastic parallelism is yet another kind of parallelism found in the book. It is a literary device in which the various semantic elements in line 'b' appear in reverse order of that followed in line 'a'. Some examples of chiastic parallelism from the book of Jeremiah are spoken by God as reassuring words of encouragement to the prophet, "

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(a)   If you **utter** what is **precious**, and not what is **Worthless,** You shall serve as my **mouth**…….…… not you who will turn to them" [Jer.15:19, NRSV] Utter   precious
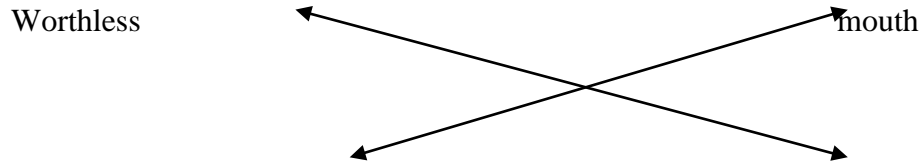
Worthless   mouth

Here the word 'utter' is cross-parallelled with 'mouth' and 'worthless' with 'precious' thus making it 'Chiastic'. Then the Almighty speaks about the restoration of Israel which is also in chiastic parallelism, "For my **eyes** are on all their **ways**; ……… my Presence, ...Their **iniquity** concealed from my **sight**." [Jer.16:17]

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Eye   Ways

Iniquity   Sight

Here, 'eyes' are cross-parallelled with 'sight' and 'iniquity with 'ways', making this as Chiastic. And yet another example of chiastic parallelism, "………I will **scatter** them before the enemy. I will show them **my back,** not **my face**, in the day of their **calamity**.....................Jer. 18:17, NRSV]

Scatter   My back
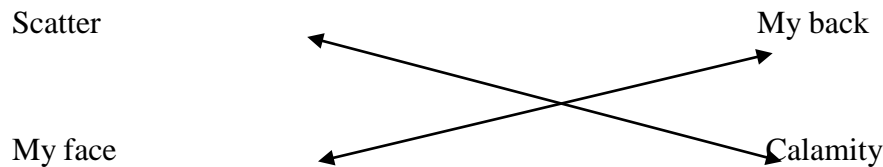
My face   Calamity

'Scatter' is cross-paralleled with 'calamity' and 'my face' with 'my back' making it Chiastic parallelism.

The fact that the phenomenon of parallelism is so consistent an element in Hebrew poetry, will be sufficient to indicate the importance the ancient Semites gave to the balance of thought or logical rhythm, just like the concept of metre in many modern occidental languages, where balance of sound or phonic rhythm is given precedence. Other stylistic or rhetorical feature of Hebrew poetry, such as the acrostic form of poetry in the book of Lamentations which is attributed to Prophet Jeremiah is dealt in the later part of this chapter. Assonance and alliteration are regarded less significant and subordinate to the parallel expression of thought – forms. The reiterative structure of Hebrew poetry is a special feature to didactic poetry for it enables the mind to absorb the content enshrined in the work. The repetition in the poetry improves in fact the skillful literary variation that underlies the theme.

Metrical Division in Hebrew Poetry

Regarding metrical division, there is no tradition of metre in the classical Hebrew compositions. Josephus applied the occidental concepts of Classical poetic metre to the writings of Hebrew and he did this only to show his readers that a specific poetic form underlay certain portions of Hebrew Scriptures. Generally, we can take it as; any

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discernable metre in Hebrew poetry can be determined by its relationship to form of other ancient poetry in which, the essential basis of the structure was the balance of thought and from the parallel lines themselves. The writers commonly composed verses that consisted of feet of two syllables, one long and one short, occurring in alteration. Along with the basic principles of Hebrew poetry, the character of a particular verse could be determined by reference to the number of accented or stressed syllables. A verse quite often consists of a three-stress stichos separated by a caesura. Caesura which means in verification, 'a pause' near the middle of a line, literally it means cutting a line in the middle, from a parallel two-stress stichos and this gave the 3:2 characteristic feature regarded as an elegiac pentametre.

Biblical scholar Budde noticed such a phenomena occurred in the book of Lamentations, and therefore he gave it the name Qinah or Kinah which means the dirge-metre; but this structure is not restricted to the dirge type poetry alone, it is seen in other types of poetry as well.

It is to be remembered always that there is no intrinsic evidence for metre in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and this fact is accepted and admitted by many famous Biblical scholars. Metre in Hebrew poetry can only be postulated inferentially on the basis of literary and conceptual parallelism. Thus in a line of Hebrew poetry, the separate ideas are accented by a word or group of words, and if there are two important items of thought in one stichos, balanced by two others in the corresponding stichos, the particular line can be recognised as a 2:2 metre scheme. Similarly if there are three important items of thought in one stichos contrasted by two others in the corresponding stichos, then the line is in the 3:2 metre scheme. The 3:2 pattern metre is noticeable in the chapters of the book of Lamentations.

Strophic Arrangement

A strophe is a poetic term, originally referring to the first part of the Ode in Ancient Greek tragedy followed by the antistrophe and epode. The term has been extended and defined to mean a structural division of a poem containing stanzas of varying line length. In poems composed of similar units, such as epic poems, the term strophic is synonymous with stanzaic.

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The strophic arrangement or stanzas in Hebrew poetry is never allowed to interfere with the real sequence of thought. This proves that stanza is never basic to the structure of such Hebrew poetic compositions; where as in modern poetic usage, stanza comprises a group consisting of a specific number of lines marked by a particular rhyming pattern. Even where, there might appear to be some kind of strophic division in Hebrew poetry, clearly the stanzas follow the logical division associated with the thought-forms rather than the rhyming-patterns of modern poetic usage. Therefore there is no evidence of any rigid metrically constructed strophes in Old Testament. Basically Hebrew poetry gives importance to the thought and idea communicated and its rhythm and rhyme revolves around its thought – form. Strophes, metre and rhyme encapsulate within the boundary of thought patterns, therefore they are not rigid but rather quite flexible.

However if a 'strophe' can be defined in a more fluid fashion as an informal arrangement of lines characterized by certain external indications, it is possible to speak of strophes, and see strophes in Hebrew poetry. So the close of a stanza maybe indicated by the presence of recurring refrains.

In conclusion of the strophic arrangement of Hebrew poetry, it is important to mention and add a special device, known among scholars as 'anacrusis'. 'Anacrusis' can be defined as a 'single word' such as an exclamatory word, or an interrogative particle, that stands separately outside the normal rhythmical pattern of the poetic verse and it is prefixed to the verse. Examples as seen in Lamentations 1:1

"How! Doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
How! Is she become as a widow, She that was great among the nations! and princess among the provinces,

How is she become tributary!"   (Lam. 1:1, KJV)

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Here the word 'how!' employed with an exclamation can be separated from the text without disturbing the poetic metre, 3:2, 2:2, 2:2 rhythmic pattern of the verse. Again as seen in Jeremiah 12:1

".. Yet let me talk with thee of thy judgement;

Wherefore! doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore! are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
(Jeremiah 12:1, KJV)

Here too the word, "wherefore" can be isolated in an analogous manner, leaving the passage to conform to the 3:3 metrical pattern, and this the most commonly found pattern or structure in Hebrew poetry.

The early poetic forms of Hebrew poetry appear mostly to have reflected the activities of the nation as a whole. However there are other poetic sections in which the main theme is more personal. Whatever the specific genre of the early poetic section, they are ultimately directed towards a religious interpretation and involved the deity more or less directly. This feature is characteristic of just not only Hebrew poetry and literature, but of Mesopotamian epic and other poetic compositions of the Orient. Quite aside from the use of poetry in prophetic denunciations, oracles, songs and the like, poetry is commonly used in the worship of the deity. Despite a wide range in nature and provenance, these poetic compositions commended themselves over several centuries of Israelite life to be used in their religious life and rituals.

Lamentations – an Acrostic Poetry Introduction
The Hebrew title of this book is the first word of the text – 'ekah' – which is translated "how?" The title in the English Bible as 'Lamentations' comes from the Latin Vulgate 'lamentia', meaning "funeral dirges". The book consists of five laments that the prophet Jeremiah wrote after Babylon destroys Jerusalem in 587-86 BC. Lamentations is placed in the third part of the Hebrew Bible known as the 'Megilloth' which means 'the scrolls', and it follows the book of Jeremiah.

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Tradition assigns the book to the prophet Jeremiah, commonly referred to as "The weeping prophet". One evidence that Jeremiah wrote the book is the presence of similar phrases in both Lamentations and the prophecy of Jeremiah. Some such phrases are given below–

"My eyes flow tears". (Seen in Lamentations1:16, 2:18, 3:48 and also in Jeremiah 9:1, 18, 3:17) "Laughing stock" (Lamentations 3:14, as well as in, Jeremiah 20:7) "Terrors on every side". (Lamentations 2:22, and in Jeremiah 6:25, 20:4, 10) "Destruction" and "wound" (Lamentations 2:11, 13; 3:47, 48, also in Jeremiah 4:6, 20, 6:1, 14)

Lamentations reads as though it was written by an eye witness and Jeremiah certainly qualifies that. The associations of these poems with what we know of the conditions in Judah during the period 586-540 B.C.E may be regarded as reasonably sure. The probable chronological order may be chapters two and four followed by chapter five, then one and three. The contents and emotional feelings of chapter two and four seem to be especially closely related to the disasters of the fall of Jerusalem. All poems reflect an immediate experience of conditions in the land of Judah.

Ascribing Prophet Jeremiah as the author of Lamentations is based on two pieces of textual evidences apart from the general pattern of the lament. First the Septuagint (LXX) and derivatively the vulgate have prefaced the beginning of the poetry with the following superscription: 'Before the first verse of chapter one of the Mesoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX) has this preface. "And it came to pass after Israel had been taken captive and Jerusalem had been laid waste, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented this lament over Jerusalem and said. ...." The vulgate also contains this prologue in nearly identical form, based on the identification of Jeremiah as the author of the book'.

Secondly the Old Testament book of II Chronicles [chapter 35 verse 25], ascribes the laments to Jeremiah! "Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a custom in Israel; they are recorded in the Laments". (II Chronicle 35:25, NRSV)

In spite of the textual evidences some scholars still are of the opinion that these Laments may have been composed by more than one poet. Nevertheless the poem express genuine emotional distress and this is made clear by the obvious features of their

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poems, their poetic form and their acrostic character. Basically the poetic form is that of the 'Kînāh' or 3:2 metre. This form coupled with a masterly choice of language has an almost hypnotic effect comparable to the effect of Chopin's Marche Funèbre. These dirges are of a ritualistic character and are normally uttered by professionally trained class of women, (Jeremiah 9:17). It is used by prophets to stimulate sorrow for a predicted disaster and so a heartfelt penitence and return to their God who alone will restore life to them. It is to be noted that the first word of Lamentations in chapters one, two and four, 'Ekah' translated as the interrogative particle, 'How'! is the characteristic first word of the dirge.

The book of Lamentations comprises five poems each forming one chapter of the book, of which four are acrostic in form. The twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew Alphabet occur in succession throughout each of the four poems at the beginning of each strophe or stanza. This alphabetical arrangement shows that, "Israel had sinned from 'aleph' to 'tau' which is as we would say from A to Z, or in Greek, from Alpha to Omega".

The first poem follows the normal order of the consonants in the Hebrew alphabet. There is however variations in this acrostic order. The first three chapters contain three lines to each strophe except for two instances of a four-line stanza. Again chapter four differs from chapter one to three in having two instead of three lines to a stanza. Further the order of the Hebrew letters also varies slightly between chapter one and the rest of the chapters. The sixteenth letter Ayin and seventeenth letter Pē, in chapter one are reversed in order, in the other chapters, we know of no obvious reason for this variation. Chapter three is of a more elaborate form of the acrostic pattern with lengthier stanzas than chapter four which has only two lines for each strophe, beginning with the letters of the Alphabet. The fifth poem is not actually acrostic in form, but is alphabetic in the sense that it comprises of twenty-two lines. The rhythmical or stress pattern is 3:2 or the qînāh or Kînāh dirge. The short, throbbing structure of qînāh best suits for the task of conveying emotional reactions, particularly that of grief.

The special acrostic form of the book has been examined by scholars, and the reason for the poet to use such a mechanical device to convey a passionate and dramatic outpouring of grief can only be speculated by us. It is known from an early period that the

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Hebrew consonants were accorded sanctity (P. 665), yet it is not convincing and believable enough to consider that the poet is preoccupied with the thought of any medieval mystical effect upon the readers because of using the alphabet.

Acrostics have also been regarded as poetic devices used by the Egyptians where Egyptian school boys are taught the alphabet and this custom was in practice as we know from the Egyptian sources. Even this aspect of customary practice has to be ruled out as the dramatic outpouring of emotion by the poet speaks of the deepest and intense realities of chastisement (correction), sin, confession, and trust in divine mercy, thus, it makes it quite far-fetched to assume that the work was merely compiled as an exercise in literary style. Mnemonic is something designed to aid the memory. The mnemonic function of the acrostic has been adopted to explain this mechanical structure of this poetry. A more appropriate explanation would be the suggestions given by scholars De Wette, Keil and others that the acrostic structure furnished a form of exhaustive completeness to the lamentation, as though to express the full range of human-suffering (P. 337), because these poems should be seen as composed during those dark and seemingly hopeless years 586-540 B.C. They were composed especially for a disillusioned and despairing people who gathered at the ruined shrine, where once in a magnificent ritual; the divine blessing had been sought and found. It is to mourn the vanished glory.

Also, it is to be accounted, that the people such as the Hebrews, are readily given to emotional expression of a kind which is rarely seen in the occidental society. The structure of the acrostic gives an important degree of control and restraint to what could have otherwise degenerated into a lament impossible to follow, understand or accept due to its incoherent outburst of emotion. Lying alongside the destruction and catastrophe is the hope in Divine mercy for restoration.

Lamentations – An Elegy
An elegy is, –

"A tender and querulous idea ....and so long as this is thoroughly sustained.. , which by its manner of treating them, it renders its own.

It throws its melancholy stole over pretty different objects; which like the dresses at a funeral procession, gives them all, a kind of solemn and uniform appearance".

<div align="right">(Shenstone 1768:15-16)</div>

Undoubtedly the elegy as a poetic form is essentially classical in origin. The general meaning of the term 'elegy' is just given as, 'a song or poem of mourning'. Elegy is one of the richest literary forms because it has the capacity to hold emotions that deeply influence. And an elegist uses various aids and tools to accomplish an effective influence. The strongest of these tools, the elegists rely on, are the memories of the past and its glories. Even the poets themselves who compose elegies are awed by the frailty of human life.

In classical literature an elegy is a mournful, melancholic or plaintive poem, a funeral song or a lament for the dead. The word has its origin from the Greek and the Greek term elegos means 'lament', which originally refers to any verse written in elegiac couplets and covers a broad spectrum of subject matter including death, love and war. The Latin elegy of ancient Roman literature is often erotic or mythological in nature. The structure of elegiac couplets has the potential for rhetorical effects and therefore an elegiac couplet is used by both Greek and Roman poets for witty, humorous and satiric subject matter too. Even Ovid writes elegies bemoaning his exile which he likens to death. Other Latin poets like Catullus, Propertius used humour, irony and even slotted narratives into poems and referred to them as elegy.

In English literature the more modern and restricted and narrower meaning for elegy, is the lament for a departed beloved or tragic event and this kind of a perspective and explanation is only since the sixteenth century. A broader concept was taken up and employed by John Donne for his elegies, written in the early seventeenth century. The Old English Exeter Book, (Circa 1000 CE) also adopts a broader concept of elegy and it contains 'serious meditations' and well known poems such as 'The Wanderer', 'The Sea Farer' and such. In these elegies the narrator uses the lyrical style to describe their own personal and mournful experiences. They tell the story of the individual as well as the collective lore of his or her people as epic poetry seeks to tell. The narrator remains anonymous in Exeter elegies and speaks with a clear sense of longing and loneliness.

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Peter Sacks in his work, 'The English Elegy' (1985), outlines the conventions of traditional western elegies categorically as primary and secondary conventions He puts down the features of elegiac conventions as, an elegy is to have a pastoral context. Elegies uses repetitions, it also reframes and repeats questions. An outburst of anger and cursing is also conventionally present in elegies. A procession of mourners, leading to a movement from grief to consolation is also a characteristic feature of elegy. It gives way to concluding images of resurrection based on the beliefs of the elegist. The elegists' submission to language and its incapacity for complete expression makes it essential to draw attention to him and his surviving powers asserting his own poetic skill in the face of the bemoaning loss are a few of the secondary conventional features of an elegy. An elegy features essentially loss, whether it is personal or a communal one, a personal nostalgia or an individual's memory and longing for past times.

The word nostalgia means 'to return to one's house' or past or homeland. An elegiac poetry brings forth the memories and dreams of what was there in the past and longs the glory of the past and mourns for its loss in the present. All the above given elegiac characteristics are present in Lamentations. Before looking at Lamentations and its vital elegiac features, let us turn our attention briefly to the origins of this genre of literature.

The origin of elegy involves poetic form and specific subject matter. The term elegy is derived as dictionary tells us from the Greek, 'elegos' meaning 'mournful song'; but ironically the earliest surviving examples of the genre is not funeral. Elegies of the ninth century B.C.E., in Greece by poets such as Archilochus, Callinus, dealt with love and war and they were accompanied by the flute or two-piped aulos.

As Martin L. opines, 'elegy' merely denotes a large body of verse in which the poet speaks in his own person often to a specific addressee and in the context of a particular event or state of affairs. And Lamentations readily falls into this opinion, as a voluminous collection of verses addressed by the poet, to a specific audience in the context of a specific nation-wide disaster and catastrophe, for which they are responsible.

The diversity of early elegies does not mean that it is not funeral. Scholars are of the opinion that there was a sixth-century B.C. school of Dorian elegists who used the elegiac couplet for lament (Alexiou 1974:104). A famous collection of elegies known as

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'Lyde' by Antimachus flourished around 400 B.C. The Greek poems that have had the greatest influence on funeral elegy are those by the third-century B.C. poets like, Theocritus, Bion**,** Moschus. Theocritus is acknowledged as the creator of pastoral poetry, and writes a series of 'little poems' commonly called as "idylls". These idylls not only created characters and imagery such as nymphs and shepherds or singing and wearing but also established close relation between pastoral and elegy, thus the term, pastoral elegy.

Theocritus' works /poems occupy a notable position because they establish a number of conventions and figures that become characteristics of funeral elegy in English. A selected few are presented below, based on which the book of Lamentations' elegiac features are understood and derived. They include invocation of a muse; the rebuking of nymphs; a procession of the mourners bemoaning the loss and catastrophe, which is of prominence in Lamentations. An elegy also features essentially a loss, a personal nostalgia, stimulating an individual's memory and longing for past times. The theme of the book of Lamentations is well presented in the opening verses that tell us of the mortal calamity that has overtaken the land.

Jerusalem, Judah's capital city, a bustling commercial centre and also a focal point of national cultic worship during normal times, is a deserted ruin, stripped of all her former grandeur, and emptied of her habitants. To heighten this tragedy of loss**,** the poet uses the image of a woman bereaved of her husband and children, bitterly lamenting her vanished glories and contemplating her present sorry state in anguish. The concept of widowhood, death and consequent loss is employed frequently to depict the depths of human loneliness and despair. The pathos and tragedy of captivity are deliberately heightened by the contrasting of past and present conditions of existence. Verse7b of Ch. Two describes the pillaging of Jerusalem.

"The lord has spurned his altar........

………They have made a noise in the house of the Lord,……….
As on the day of the set feast" (Lam. 2:7, NKJV)

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Even the magnificent Solomon Temple, the pride of the nation for centuries is not spared in the destruction; the poet bemoans the loss of this former glory. The use of pathetic fallacy is yet another feature of elegiac poetry -

"Even the jackals present their breasts To nurse their young; But the daughter of my people is cruel, Like Ostriches in the wilderness.
(Lam. 4:3, NKJV)

The poet graphically paints before our eyes the terror and the ruin that is come upon the people. The famine conditions grew worse affecting the young in particular. At this juncture children are given to receive a worse treatment than that provided for even the offspring of jackals or the fledglings of the ostrich; the ostrich being traditionally regarded as cruel and indifferent to the needs of its young. The famine deprived nursing mothers to feed and satisfy their famished infants. The pathetic scenes of children begging for food seem to have etched deeply on the mind of the author that he uses the world of nature as example to show the enormity of the loss and terror. One more essential feature of elegy seen in the book is worth mentioning. The poet, in a vivid manner portrays, 'the sense of the natural order being disrupted by loss, death and destruction!'

"The hands of the compassionate women Have cooked their own children; They became food for them in the destructions of the daughter of my people"   (Lam. 4:10, NKJV)

The gauntness, malnutrition and dehydration which are described exhibit clear marks of an eye-witness. The haggard faces and parched lips would have preferred an early death by the sword than the lingering agonies of famine and pestilence to which they have sentenced themselves. They were so desperate for food that the loving mothers boiled and ate their own children. The stark horror of this appalling deed has been indelibly etched on the consciousness of the poet, and doubtless it would have haunted him for the remainder of his life.

According to the famous third century B.C. Greek poet Theocritus' 'First Idyll' where in Thyrsis the shepherd sings the 'Affliction of Daphnis', and this introduces the connection between mourning and nature which later elegists who adopted the conventions of Theocritus follow. Similarly poet Jeremiah, though he lived before the

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time of the Greek poet, still in the third chapter of Lamentations crystallizes the tragedy spoken of, to 'bitterness', establishing a connection to a plant and its fruit though of obscure identification yet clearly associating it with 'wormwood'.

"The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!"   (Lam. 3:19, NRSV)

Wormwood and gall is extremely bitter to taste and so became used metaphorically of highly unpleasant experiences, which are commonly referred even today by the one undergoing pain, as, "it was a very bitter pill to swallow". Jeremiah establishes a connection with nature to express his travail and to paint a vivid picture of mourning in his elegy.

The third-century elegists established two other important characteristics, both of which are in Lamentations too. First, in contrast to the usual dialogue of pastoral poetry, they made the elegy into a monody that is a poem voiced by a single speaker. Lamentations as we see it is quite obvious, a monologue; the haphazard, spontaneous, outpourings of a grief-stricken poet who is the single speaker of this piece of work. Secondly neither the poet nor the members of his audience are goatherds or shepherds. The setting of the Greek poet Theocritus poem highlights how elegy locates mourning outside the usual routines and habitual interaction of the individual and the wider community. Here poet Jeremiah descends from the priestly stock at Anathoth, and Lamentations is the outpouring of the poet's grief and sorrow at the disaster and calamity that has befallen his land and his beloved people, and he analyses the cause of this nationwide disaster which is Divine retribution and bemoans their sorry state and addresses the collective community of people from various walks of life, to focus and look towards the hope of Divine mercy and restoration. Samuel Taylor Coleridge remarks,

…..... "Elegy is a form of poetry natural to the reflection mind;
It may treat of any subject, but it must treat of no subject for itself; but always and exclusively with reference to the

poet. As he will feel regret for the past or desire for the future, so sorrow and love become the principal themes of the elegy.

Elegy presents everything as lost and gone, or absent and future".

(Coleridge 1835:268, original emphasis)

The key phrase here is exclusively with reference to the poet. Coleridge is stressing the authority and authenticity of individual feelings. Jeremiah's Lamentations amply qualifies for the above statement.

Jeremiah – A Lofty Lyrical Poetry

Lyric language presents to the ear that which resists communication and the will of an individual 'speaker'. T.S. Eliot says "............. Yet the words sufficed, to compel the recognition they preceded" Lyric poetry widely speaking bases itself on the bare outline of a situation, confines itself principally to the emotions that pours-forth there-of. Generally speaking, love assumes to be the most frequent theme of lyrical poetry. As a rule the best lyrics are those which express healthy and normal emotions but the range of emotions covered is very wide and varies with the temper of the age in which it is written. In a lyric poetry an emotion gains intensity if its expression is concentrated. Its structure is simple or complicated in relation to the social milieu in which it originates. A modern lyric often has a highly complicated structure as the emotions are complex and sophisticated.

Organically the lyric has recourse to a rhythmical or metrical structure. Rhetorically it makes use of figurative language as metaphors, and personification, alliteration, allusion and invasions. The skilful use of these along with rhythmic variations gives a peculiar individuality to language and enhances the lyric-poetry's quality. In Jeremiah the prophet adopts the familiar Kinah metre with possible variations and Jeremiah follows the common 3:2 beat meter as seen in many other Old Testament writings.

Focusing our attention within the scope of prophet Jeremiah and his works, it is safe to assume, that no prophet surpasses Jeremiah in poetic skill. Minor prophet of the Old Testament Nahum may stand near him in excellence, but Jeremiah excels him in the variety of his muse. The richness of poetic fancy that meets us in the opening oracles is

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sustained throughout. There is seen here an effortless ease that marks the born-poet. The prophet's literary quality is a reflection of his personal character. Cornell calls him "the poet of the heart". In Jeremiah there is a peculiar strain, a soft tender nature with profound emotional quality. A phrase from the book of Proverbs in the Authorised Version can describe his words, "his words are as apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). The terseness and brevity of his expression is in verse to the magnitude of his message. His short poems show the rich quality of his verse.

Nothing more is required to be added to them or taken away from them. This precise conciseness and power to stimulate and suggest is the mark of one who is in perfect control of his medium. Jeremiah's lyric quality is unparalleled in the Old Testament literature. Even when all his verses are translated into prose form in the Authorised version, we cannot fail to feel the cadences of his poetry. All his pictures are striking and memorable.

"Death has come up through our windows, has entered our halls Cutting off children from the street, and youths from the squares. And the bodies of men lie stretched upon the open field,

Like sheaves after the reaper with none to gather".
(Jer. 9:21 and 22, NKJV)

Cornell comments, "It is impossible in four short lines to say more or to express a more gripping sentiment". His high poetic power is wedded to his capacity as a moral analyst and his ability to get inside the soul of man. Sometimes in certain version of translations, the text may fail to reveal his poetic artistry because many prosaic minds have worked upon it, yet not all the blundering efforts of scribes can obscure the beauty of his poetry or make his music mute. Hebrew poetry is lyrical: the poet sings with his eye on the subject:

"When I go out to the field, Then behold, those slain with the sword! And I enter the city, Then behold, those sick from famine!
[Jer.14: 8, NKJV]

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The brief compact verse shows the vivid picture of the horror and thrills the poet wishes to paint. Strongly emotional though he is, yet he is steadier enough to give form to his thought and poetic fancies. For all his profound emotional upheavals, Jeremiah never loses control of his poetic artistry. There are tremendous realities in all Hebrew thought and Hebrew poetry is supremely realistic in thought and its lyrical quality and poet Jeremiah is no exception to this.

Such acute interest and fervent passion can be excited in poet Jeremiah only because all the events are his own first-hand experience. And it is to be noted, "The Semite has no distant imagination. No literature suffers more than his, from separation in space or time between the writer and his subject." (Smith, George Adam. The Early Poetry of Israel, p.36. Ed) Well Lausen, who knew the life of the desert well, writes of this paradox in the Semite character that lies behind his poetry and literature in general.

"The Arabian Ode sets before us a series of pictures drawn with confident skill and firsthand knowledge of the life its maker lived, of the objects among which he moved, of his horse, his camel, the wild creatures of the wilderness, and of the landscape in the midst of which his life and theirs was set; but all, however loosely they seem to be bound together, are subordinate to one dominant idea which is the poet's unfolding of himself, his admiration and his hates, his prowess and the freedom of his spirit"
[Ibid. p.37.]

This life of the desert explains a lot in the Old Testament. The Old Testament poet 'thinks with the eye' and his eyes are therefore wide open and his ears unstopped. He sees and he hears and he tells us what he sees and hears in such a manner that it evokes in us what he intends to do and we too see and hear the same vision and voice. It can be compared to the response to S.T. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, who holds us spell-bound and rooted to the spot. Matching Coleridge, we may never find anything like the verse that I've quoted below from Jeremiah to express the intensity of the pain or the horror of death and pestilence. The poet's anguish is literally felt physically in these lines:
"My anguish, my anguish! I writhe pain! Oh, the walls of my heart!

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My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent;
for I hear the sound of the trumpet,
the alarm of war."   (Jer. 4:19, NRSV)

Surely these lines reach the heart with a veritable stab of pain. Here indeed we witness as John Paterson states, 'the desperate tides of the whole world's great anguish, forced through the channels of a single heart! And yet again we hear the prophet's voice:

"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!   (Jer. 9:1, NRSV)

Jeremiah climbs heights where lesser men dare not follow and he sounded depths what we cannot fathom. The prophet avoids rhetorical adornment naturally. Therefore the expression of this profound emotional poetry is strangely beautiful. Here also, we find a warm tender sympathy with Nature, an interest akin to that of Alfred Tennyson and Robert Burns. To speak in the words of Bible scholar John Paterson, for the Hebrew, Nature is the garment of God, half concealing and half revealing the divine being. The Hebrew is very theo-centric, they cannot regard nature as William Wordsworth did, and cannot think of nature as possessing a divinity of its own. Nature to a Hebrew is a vehicle of the divine revelation! Nature concealing God's glory, stimulates man's wonder and adoration yet at the same time, it reveals enough to constrain man to reverence. This is the abiding background of the Old Testament thought concerning Nature. To Jeremiah every bush was aflame with God. All Nature is alive for him and his eye rests upon it. He understands and knows the terrible wilderness, a land of drought and the shadow of death and he also loves the land that man lives and labours, we can see the heart of the poet skips with joy from that 'no man's land-wilderness, to the rich pastures and where the millstones rolled and the lamp in the lowly cottages are lit in lyrical rapture.

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He very well knows the roaring Sirocco that blows from the desert with the blasting touch upon the sown land, similarly the proud cedars of Lebanon captures the poet's admiration and wonder. To his expectant hopeful heart, the first bloom of spring reveals the glory of God. And as the poet peers into the glowing sunset he trembles at the thought of the coming darkness and doom.

"……Ere it grows dark, Ere your feet stumble, On darkening mountains, And you wait for light, but darkness descends, As he turns it to gloom"

(Jer. 13:16, Skinner's Translation)

The wild beasts find a friend in him and he marks the lordly lion as he rises from his lair.

"The lion is roused from his lair, Mauler of nation, He is off and away from his place They tend to lay waste"   (Jer. 4:7, Skinner's Translation)

Nor does the poet fail to note how the terrifying carnivores of the jungle lurk in wait for their prey.

"A lion from the jungle shall smite them, A wolf of the wild destroy, The leopard shall prowl round the cities, To send those faring forth"
(Jer. 5:6, Skinner's Translation)

What sorrow pierces the heart of this sensitive poet as he thinks of the havoc caused by human evil and how man's sin infects and affects the whole universe.
"The hind in the field calveth, And forsaketh her young Because there is no grass The wild ass stands on the bare height Gasping for breath, Their eyes glaze for lack of herbage" (Jer. 14:5:6, Skinner's Translation)

In a vivid sense of wistful pathos, the poet expresses his sorrow, grief and describes the coming chaos, in such a touching lyrical poetry. "The still sad music of humanity" strikes a responsive chord within his soul, and with such excruciating agony to his tender spirit, he had to pronounce doom and catastrophe on innocent young ones of the land and the older ones alike. The consequences of disobedience and straying away from moral ethical codes of living into deliberate evil, in willful arrogance against a Holy God, incurs the divine retribution on their heads.

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The prophet who is so sensitive, and emotional, with such capacity to love, and cherish, finds the deepest joy of life from the elemental things of life, like home and family, which he is deprived of. He is one who appreciates and finds great joy in the innocent pleasures of life, yet these were denied him. And in such a figurative sense, the happy future of hope and restoration which he saw beyond the present ruin of broken millstones and desolate highways is marked and sung by the poet, by the restoration of those very same innocent joys. And once again we find the poet, breaking forth into joyful rapturous lyric poetry.

"Once more will I build thee securely, O Virgin Israel! Once more thou 'lt come forth with thy tabrets And dance with glee; Once more thou 'lt cover with vineyards Samaria's hills". (Jer. 31:4-5, Skinner's translation)

Every stroke of the poet's pen, both that warns of impending disaster and those that assures of the coming hope and restoration, are all-drawn from the very stuff of life and the poetry of life's simplicities. And no doubt it speaks home to the hearts of men; for Jeremiah is essentially "the poet of the heart", who plays eloquently on the strings of life through his lyric poetry.

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