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Jeremiah 32: A Hinge between Restoration and Disaster

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Article abstract

Jeremiah 32 exhibits a complex combination of the contrasting motifs of disaster and restoration. The present article argues that these twofold contents of the chapter reflect its original literary function as a hinge between the Book of Consolation (Jer 30–31) and the stories about Judah's collapse (Jer 34–45). Due to later developments, Jer 32 lost its original hinge function, as the chapter was integrated into the expanded Book of Consolation (Jer 30–33).

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JEREMIAH 32: A HINGE BETWEEN RESTORATION AND DISASTER

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The book of Jeremiah contains many complex chapters, and Jer 32 is one of them. The chapter narrates that, at the time of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah bought a field at Anathoth. The purchase is interpreted as a symbol of hope, but Jer 32 also devotes many words to the dire circumstances of the time. These contrasting motifs—the disaster befalling Judah and its future restoration—run through the entire chapter.

Scholars have often focused on the positive message of Jer 32, understanding the chapter as part of the block of salvation prophecies in Jer 30–33. In the present article, full attention is paid to the twofold character of the chapter's contents, and in particular to the function of the contrasting motifs within the (original) literary setting of the chapter. I will argue that Jer 32 was designed as a hinge between the Book of Consolation (Jer 30–31) preceding the chapter and the story of Judah's collapse that followed it (Jer 34–45). Later developments resulted in the chapter's integration into the "expanded Book of Consolation" (Jer 30–33), and in a stronger emphasis on restoration in Jer 32 itself.

1 THE TWO-FOLD CONTENTS OF JER 32

Jer 32 consists of four subunits—an introduction (vv. 1–5), the description of Jeremiah's purchase (vv. 6–15), a prayer by Jeremiah (vv. 16–25), and YHWH's reply to Jeremiah's prayer (vv. 26–44).[1] There is no doubt that, in the present form of the chapter, the main emphasis is on Judah's (and Israel's) restoration.

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[1] As elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah, one finds many differences in Jer 32 between the Masoretic text and the Old Greek translation. For extensive discussions, see Herbert Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf: eine Untersuchung von Jeremia 32*, ÖBS 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 53–80, 253–363; Andrew G. Shead, *The Open Book and the Sealed Book: Jeremiah 32 in Its Hebrew and Greek Recensions*, JSOTSup 347 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002). The textual complexity has little impact on the argument made in the present article and will only be touched upon

According to verse 15, the purchase of the field symbolizes that, in the future, real estate transaction would again be a normal occurrence in Judah. This promise, which is repeated in verses 43–44, implies an end to the war and a return of stable living conditions.[2] In addition, verses 37–42 envision an end to the diaspora and the establishing of an "eternal covenant" (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) between YHWH and his people. As pointed out by Fischer, the cognates טוב and יטב function as key words here.[3] The people will fear YHWH "for their good" (לְטוֹב לָהֶם, v. 39), YHWH will "do them good" (לְהֵטִיב, v. 40 MT, v. 41), and bring upon them "all the good" (כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה) about which He had spoken (v. 42). The only time that the expression "with all [my] heart and with all [my] soul" (בְּכָל־לִבִּי וּבְכָל־נַפְשִׁי)[4] is in the mouth of YHWH is here in verse 41, where YHWH gives his full commitment to his people's restoration.[5]

At the same time, Jeremiah's prayer and, especially, YHWH's reply contain extensive reflection on Judah's collapse (cf. also vv. 2–5). The prophet offers a brief overview of Israel's history, in which he interprets the dire circumstances of his time as the result of the people's persistent disobedience to YHWH (v. 23). In YHWH's reply to the prayer, the promises of restoration are preceded by an announcement of the capture and destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 28–29) and an elaborate explanation of its reasons (vv. 29–35). The explanation consists of a series of strong accusations of idolatry, which together give the impression of the people's *corruptio totalis*. From their youth, they have only been doing evil (v. 30), Jerusalem has aroused YHWH's anger even from its foundation as a city (v. 31), and all segments of society have participated in provoking him (v. 32). The idolatry has even gone so far as to include the "abomination" (תּוֹעֵבָה) of child sacrifice (v. 35).

The motifs of restoration on the one hand and disaster and sin on the other are combined in Jer 32 in a complex way. In YHWH's reply, in particular, there is a rather abrupt transition from the explanation of Judah's collapse to the announcement of restoration (v. 36).[6] In addition, the complexity can be seen in

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in a few relevant cases.

[2] Cf. Nelson Kilpp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen: Das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch*, Biblisch-theologische Studien 13 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 81.

[3] Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, HThKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 212.

[4] The pronominal suffixes are unrepresented in the Old Greek; see Shead, *Open Book*, 207–8.

[5] Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase always describes an action of man towards YHWH; cf. Deut 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:4; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; Josh 22:5; 23:14; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:48; 2 Kgs 23:3, 25; 2 Chr 6:38; 15:12; 34:31.

[6] Cf. Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, HAT, I/12,2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 346: "völlig überraschend." The Masoretic text adds in verse 36 the particle לָכֵן "therefore," but its logic is hard to understand (cf. 16:14; 30:16). The particle is unrepresented in the Old

the way in which restoration and disaster are both related to the theological notion of YHWH's omnipotence. This notion forms the starting point of Jeremiah's prayer (v. 17) and YHWH's reply (v. 27) as well,[7] and it seems that it is primarily mentioned in connection with the promises of restoration. YHWH's omnipotence implies that, notwithstanding the hopeless circumstances, the people may still cherish hope. At the same time, the notion is associated with Judah's collapse. Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply present the collapse as a work of YHWH, and the statements of YHWH's omnipotence underscore this divine agency.[8] While He once brought Israel out of Egypt "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm" (v. 21), He now applies his powers to punish his people.

Disaster and restoration are most directly joined in verse 42, where the motifs are placed in chronological order: "Just as I brought all this great evil upon this people, I will bring upon them all the good I have spoken about them." Even here, however, no explanation is given of why YHWH will cause his people's restoration (in contrast to the motivation given of Judah's collapse, in vv. 23, 29–35). This lack of explanation gives YHWH's omnipotence an overtone of divine sovereignty. The basis of restoration, Jer 32 implies, is YHWH's "free capability"—his sovereignly exercised power, which He will ultimately use again for his people's good.[9]

Greek, which probably reflects the earlier text here; see the discussion by Shead, *Open Book*, 204.

[7] While verse 27 is commonly interpreted as a rhetorical question, Terence E. Fretheim, "Is Anything Too Hard for God? (Jeremiah 32:27)," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 231–36, argues that it is a real question. According to Fretheim, Jeremiah falsely understood the promise of field trading (v. 15) as indicating that YHWH would bring an immediate halt to the judgment in progress. In the question of verse 27, YHWH invites the prophet to consider whether such a shortcut to restoration (without a full execution of judgment) would be possible, and to conclude that it is not. One problem for this interpretation is posed, however, by the fact that verse 25 expresses incomprehension about the purchase itself, rather than about its interpretation in verse 15.

[8] Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, AOTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 278; Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 368; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 319. See the 2m.sg. verbs in verses 22–23 and the 1c.sg. forms in verses 28, 31, and 42.

[9] Cf. Walter A. Brueggemann, "A 'Characteristic' Reflection on What Comes Next (Jeremiah 32.16–44)," in *Prophets and Paradigms*, ed. Stephen Breck Reid, JSOTSup 229 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 30–31, from whom I borrowed the term "free capability." The underlying assumption is that Judah/Israel is, indeed, YHWH's people, with whom He has a special relationship (cf. vv. 21, 36, 38–40).

2 THE COMPOSITION OF JER 32

The complex relationship between disaster and restoration is one indication that Jer 32 is "a heavily edited chapter."[10] Further evidence of this is provided, in particular, by the following:[11] (1) the originally rough transition from the introduction (vv. 1–5), which refers to Jeremiah in the third person, to the first-person account in the body of the chapter;[12] (2) the repetition of basically the same promise in verses 15 and 43–44; (3) Jeremiah's apparent ignorance in his prayer (v. 25) about the interpretation of the purchase of the field he himself had proclaimed (v. 15);[13] and (4) the fact that the promises in verses 37–42, which have no link with the purchase of the field, give a much more comprehensive vision of salvation than verses 15 and 43–44.

Scholars widely agree that verses 1–5 were written as a redactional introduction to the account of Jeremiah's purchase.[14] As regards verses 6–44, there is a broad consensus that verses 37–43 were the latest (major) insertion,[15] but opinions differ on

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[10] Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1986), 620.

[11] Cf. Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 87–92, who lists no less than thirteen "schwere Kohärenzstörungen" in Jer 32 (not all of which are equally severe, however).

[12] In MT, the transition is quite smooth, since the clause "And Jeremiah said" at the beginning verse 6 introduces the first-person account that follows (from the next clause onwards: "The word of YHWH came to *me*"). The original Hebrew text has again been preserved by the Old Greek, however, which lacks "And Jeremiah said," reads the third person in the revelation formula ("And the word of the Lord came to *Jeremiah*"), and then shifts to the first person in verse 8 ("And Hanamel came to *me*").

[13] Cf. Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 301.

[14] See, e.g., Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 92; Gunther Wanke, *Jeremia 25.15–52:34*, ZBK-AT 20.2 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2003), 299; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 302; and cf. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 209–10. Migsch and Wanke include v. 6a in the introduction, but the relevant clause was a late addition in MT (see footnote 12 above). According to Wanke (cf. Holladay), the redactional introduction initially comprised verses 1–2, 6a, and was later expanded by verses 3–5. On the other hand, it has been argued that verse 2 was the original introduction of the account of Jeremiah's purchase; see Christof Hardmeier, "Jeremia 32,2–15* als Eröffnung der Erzählung von der Gefangenschaft und Befreiung Jeremias in Jer 34,7; 37,3–40,6*," in *Jeremia und die 'deuteronomistische Bewegung'*, ed. Walter Groß, BBB 98 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 199–201. For a criticism of the latter view, see Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 365–72.

[15] The precise borders of the insertion are a matter of debate. For the view that it comprised verses 37–43, see Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 303–4. For different delimitations, see, e.g., Konrad Schmid, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches: Untersuchungen zur Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Jer 30–33 im Kontext des Buches*, WMANT 72 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 100–103; Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "The Prophecy for 'Everlasting Covenant' (Jeremiah XXXII 36–41): An Exilic Addition or a Deuteronomistic Redaction?" *VT* 53 (2003): 202–8. According to

the composition of the remaining verses (vv. 6–36, 44). Three main views can be distinguished. According to the first, the three-partite structure of purchase, prayer, and reply was already a feature of the original (first-person) account, but Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply initially were much shorter. They mainly contained the material directly related to the purchase of the field (esp. vv. 16, 24–27, 36, 44), while the reflections on Judah's collapse (vv. 17–23, 28–35) were inserted by a later editor.[16] The second view holds that the original account only described Jeremiah's purchase and its initial interpretation (vv. 6–15*), and that his prayer and the reply were added at a later stage. According to this view, much of the complexity in verses 16–36, 44, including the complex relationship between disaster and restoration, can be explained from the section's literary character.[17] The third view is, in a sense, a combination of the other views. It holds that Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply were no part of the original account. When they were added, however, the reply was initially rather short, with the majority of its reflection on Judah's collapse being inserted at a still later stage.[18]

In my opinion, this latter view is the least likely, since it presupposes that the original account did not yet contain the promise of future transactions (either v. 15 or v. 44). In view of the focus on Jeremiah's purchase (as expressed by the verb קנה, vv. 7–9), however, this promise is the natural conclusion of the account.[19] Deciding between the other two views is more difficult, but it is questionable whether the second provides an entirely satisfying explanation of the complexity of verses 16–36, 44. In addition, if Jeremiah's prayer was written by a later editor as a continuation of verses 6–15*, one would expect him to have avoided the problem of Jeremiah's apparent ignorance of the sig-

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Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 241–50, the entirety of verses 16–44 (including vv. 37–43) should be attributed to one author, but this view depends on Migsch's unconvincing interpretation of Jer 32 as a coherent (though complicated) speech ("Rede").

[16] For this view, see, e.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 3rd ed., HAT 12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 207; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 206–12; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 368–70. While these scholars differ in their precise attribution of verses to the original account (especially re Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply), they all reconstruct an original three-partite structure.

[17] Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 298–306; cf. Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 92–108, 248.

[18] Schmid, *Buchgestalten*, 85–107; Wanke, *Jeremia*, 297–98, 307–8; cf. William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 848–49. According to Schmid and Wanke, the initial version of YHWH's reply comprised verses 26–29a, 31, 42–44 (cf. footnote 15 above); they regard verses 29b–30, 32–35 as later insertions.

[19] Schmid (*Buchgestalten*, 90–91) and Wanke (*Jeremia*, 302–3) assume that the original interpretation of Jeremiah's purchase is found in verse 14. That verse expresses a complementary idea, however, which is related to the details of the transaction described in verses 10–13 (cf. footnote 22 below).

nificance of this action (point 3 above). For these reasons, I consider the first-mentioned view to offer the most plausible reconstruction of Jer 32's composition. It can adequately account for the chapter's complex features, in the following ways:

- The original first-person account, which resolved around Jeremiah's purchase of the field, approximately comprised verses 6–14, 16, 24–27,[20] 36,[21] and 44.[22] Assuming that verse 15 was not included (while v. 44 was), Jeremiah's prayer connected well with the description of the purchase,[23] and the promise of future transactions formed the climax of the account.

- A later editor prefixed the introduction (vv. 1–5) to the original account and expanded Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply by the reflections on Judah's collapse (vv. 17–23, 28–36).[24] The fact that the reflections focus on the same circumstances as described in the introduction render it likely that these sections are the work of the same person.[25]

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[20] This reconstruction presupposes that, in verse 26, the first-person "to me" (Old Greek) was the original reading (MT: "to Jeremiah," which was perhaps influenced by 33:1); contra Shead, *Open Book*, 185–89; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 302.

[21] In verse 36, the original text is again represented by the Old Greek, which reads a 2m.sg. form "You are saying" (MT: 2m.pl.). Since the verse connects YHWH's reply to Jeremiah's prayer (cf. v. 24), it probably was part of the original account.

[22] Rudolph and Allen (see footnote 16 above) include verses 28–29a in the original account, but, in view of their focus on Jerusalem's fall, these verses are better regarded as part of the later expansion. Moreover, if verses 28–29a belonged to the original account, it seems that verse 42 should be included too (to mark the transition from disaster to restoration), but the phrase "all the good I have spoken about them" connects this verse to verses 37–41 (i.e. v. 42 was part of the late insertion of vv. 37–43).

According to some scholars, verses 10–14 reflect a later reinterpretation of the promise of future transactions (postponing its fulfilment to the distant future; v. 14); see, e.g., Kilpp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen*, 72–76, and cf. Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 300–301. There are no compelling reasons, however, to exclude these verses from the original account; cf. Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 250–52; Werner H. Schmidt, *Das Buch Jeremia: Kapitel 21–52*, ATD 21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 156–57.

[23] Admittedly, the temporal clause in verse 16 might be regarded as somewhat superfluous (the same applies to Baruch's patronym in the same verse; cf. vv. 12–13), and, strictly speaking, YHWH did not order Jeremiah to buy the field (v. 25). Unlike Migsch (*Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 245–47) and Stipp (*Jeremia 25–52*, 301–2, 304), however, I regard this as an acceptable degree of complexity within the text.

[24] Verse 19 was perhaps a still later insertion; see Wanke, *Jeremia*, 305; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 302.

[25] It seems that the insertion of verse 15 was prompted by the fact that, due to the additional verses being inserts (vv. 17–23, 28–35), the original interpretation (v. 44) came too far away in the text from the

- At a still later time, the promises in verses 37–43 were inserted.

For our present purposes, it is important to note that, in all likelihood, Jer 32 initially was characterized by a relatively strong emphasis on the motif of disaster. Similar to the first-person account on which it was based, it contained the promise of future transactions, but the motif of restoration was not substantially developed until the later insertion of verses 37–43.

3 THE COMPOSITION OF JER 30–33

Within the present book of Jeremiah, Jer 32 belongs to the block of salvation prophecies in Jer 30–33, which may be designated as the "expanded Book of Consolation."[26] While this is not the place to discuss the block's composition in detail, it may be helpful to briefly sketch my understanding of the main stages in the compositional process.[27]

- Jeremiah 30–33 consists of two sections (Jer 30–31; 32–33). As regards the former section, the main stages of composition can be inferred, in particular, from two features. First, Jer 30–31 has a double introduction, since the preface in 30:1–3 is followed by a second heading in 30:4. Secondly, the middle part of Jer 30–31 mainly consists of poetry, while the beginning and end are mostly in prose. These features are best explained by assuming that a first compilation of (poetic) oracles of restoration—that is, the initial version of the Book of Consolation—comprised 30:4–31:26*.[28] Jeremiah 30:4 functioned as the heading of this complication, and 31:26 as its conclusion.

- It seems that a second version of the Book of Consolation was created when the initial compilation was framed by the preface in 30:1–3 and the prose oracles in 31:27–30 and 31–34.[29] Close similarities suggest that

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description of Jeremiah's purchase (vv. 6–14). It is quite possible, therefore, that verse 15 was inserted by same editor who expanded Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's reply, in order to have some words of explanation closer to Jeremiah's action.

[26] Jer 30–31 may be seen as the Book of Consolation proper (cf. 30:2), and Jer 32–33 as its expansion; cf. the discussion on the block's composition below.

[27] My understanding resembles the view of Stipp, which he explains in his recent commentary (*Jeremia 25–52*, 205–14). Other helpful discussions of the composition of Jer 30–33 include Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 22, 155–71; Schmid, *Buchgestalten*; Wanke, *Jeremia*, 269–317.

[28] For this view, see, e.g., Schmid, *Buchgestalten*, 152–53; Wanke, *Jeremia*, 269; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 208. In addition, many scholars subscribe to the more general view that the earliest parts of Jer 30–31 (which are often considered authentic Jeremianic) are found in the poetic middle part; see, e.g., Schmidt, *Jeremia 21–52*, 106–10. It is a matter of debate as to exactly which oracles belonged to the initial compilation or the earliest layer of Jer 30–31.

[29] Wanke, *Jeremia*, 270, 291; see also Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile:*

these sections were the work of one and the same editor,[30] who probably made the new version to incorporate the Book of Consolation into the book of Jeremiah.[31]

- At the same or a later time,[32] Jer 32 (the version without vv. 37–43) was added to the Book of Consolation. As discussed above, the chapter was composed on the basis of a pre-existing first-person account, the origin of which remains uncertain. Some scholars have assumed that, prior to the inclusion of Jer 30–31* into the book, the account was connected to Jer 27–29*,[33] but the more likely view is that, until its use by the editor of Jer 32, the account existed independently of the developing book of Jeremiah.[34]

- Jeremiah 33 consists of two parts (vv. 1–13, 14–26), both of which must be later than Jer 32.[35] The first part,

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The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E, Studies in Biblical Literature 3 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2003), 340; and cf. Schmid, *Buchgestalten*, 69–85.

[30] Each of the sections is introduced by the clause "Days are coming, declares YHWH," which is followed by a *w-qatal* 1c.sg. (with YHWH as the implied subject). In addition, the sections share a focus on Judah and Israel together, and 30:3 and 31:32 both refer to "their fathers" (cf. 31:29). The final two sections of Jer 30–31 (31:35–37, 38–40) are of a different character; they were probably added at a later stage. Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 208–9, recognizes the similarities between 30:1–3 and 31:27–30, 31–34, but he attributes these sections to three different editors, because they reflect various "Problemhintergründe". However, the various aspects of restoration envisioned here are not contradictory; they rather complement each other and may well be attributed to one and the same editor.

[31] The heading in 30:1 ("The word that came to Jeremiah from YHWH") is of a type often found in the book of Jeremiah (with some variation in the order of elements); see 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 32:1; 34:1, 8; 35:1; 40:1 (and 7:1 MT), and cf. 25:1; 44:1. The heading of the initial compilation (30:4: "And these are the words that YHWH spoke"), on the other hand, does not occur elsewhere in the book (but cf. 29:1).

[32] See further on this point the remark in footnote 41 below.

[33] Wanke, *Jeremia*, 298, 302–3; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 364. The case for such a connection is not very strong, however, and Wanke's argument presupposes his view that the promise of future field trading (either v. 15 or v. 44) was not part of the original account (on which see footnote 19 above). According to Hardmeier, "Jeremia 32,2–15*," 199–209, Jer 32:2, 6–15 originally was the opening section of the story found in 34:7; 37:3–40:6*, but see the criticism of this view by Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 365–74.

[34] Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 301. Although the first-person account probably was not included in early versions of the book of Jeremiah, Stipp rightly observes that, in its present wording, it cannot have existed on its own, since it presupposes knowledge about the Babylonian siege and Jeremiah's confinement. However, the account's original context cannot be reconstructed with any degree of certainty.

[35] This is widely accepted; see, e.g., Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 317; Wanke, *Jeremia*, 297–98; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 374; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 206–7; cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 22–23.

33:1–33, was clearly written as a (later) sequel to chapter 32 (see section 5 below). The very late date of 33:14–26 is indicated by the fact that the section is unrepresented in the Old Greek.

- During the compositional process of Jer 30–33, various other insertions were made into the developing block of text, among which was the insertion of 32:37–43.

If this reconstruction of the composition of Jer 30–33 is correct, the original literary setting of Jer 32 within the book of Jeremiah was between Jer 30–31 and Jer 34–45 (the oracles in Jer 33 being later additions).[36] This original setting of the chapter provides an important clue to the explanation of the complex combination of disaster and restoration in Jer 32.

4 JER 32 IN ITS ORIGINAL LITERARY SETTING

According to Stulman and others, Jer 32 "appears in its present context because of its dramatic message of hope."[37] This is certainly true, insofar as the chapter's emphasis on Israel's restoration makes it a fitting continuation to the Book of Consolation. Since Jeremiah's purchase symbolizes Judah's favourable future (vv. 15, 44), the motif of restoration was present in Jer 32 even before the insertion of verses 37–43, so that the chapter linked up with the oracles of salvation in Jer 30–31.

This is not the whole story, however. As discussed above, Jer 32 not only contains a message of hope, but also—and quite prominently in the version without verses 37–43—a message of sin and punishment. The motif of disaster does not establish a link with Jer 30–31, but rather with Jer 34–45—that is, with the chapters that, prior to the insertion of Jer 33:1–13, immediately followed Jer 32.[38] The historical setting in the time of the siege of Jerusalem specifically connects Jer 32 to Jer 34 and 37–39, which have the same setting.[39] In fact, Jer 32 gives the strong impression of being purposefully crafted in a way that links it with the next chapters. This is most evident in the redactional introduction, which must have been formulated on the basis of both Jer 34:1–7 (the oracle about Zedekiah; cf. 32:3–5) and the information about Jeremiah's confinement in "the court of the guard" in Jer 37–39 (37:21; 38:13, 28; 39:14; cf. 32:2).[40] In addition, the announcements of Jerusalem's fall in 32:3 and 32:28–

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[36] In all likelihood, Jer 26–29* and 34–45* (excluding, perhaps, Jer 35–36 and 45) formed the basic layer of Jer 26–45; see, e.g., Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 18–25.

[37] Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 275, who notes that the chapter "belongs chronologically to the extended narrative in Jer 37–39." Cf. Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 190–91.

[38] Cf. Elena Di Pede, "Jer 32, *exergue* du récit des chapitres 32–45?" *ZAW* 117 (2005): 559–73. Di Pede overstates the significance of Jer 32 in relation to the chapters that follow, however, when she argues that Jer 32 functions as an introduction to Jer 32–45 (introducing the section's main characters and providing keys for its proper understanding).

[39] Cf. the view of Hardmeier, mentioned in footnote 33 above.

[40] Wanke, *Jeremia*, 300; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 307–9. Jeremiah 37–39

29 show affinities with similar announcements in 34:2, 22; 37:8–10; 38:3, 17–18, 23.

Within its original literary setting, then, the two-fold contents of Jer 32 corresponded with the strongly distinct character of the sections that immediately preceded and followed the chapter (Jer 30–31 and Jer 34–45, respectively). In the light of this, it seems that the chapter was not simply meant as a continuation of the Book of Consolation, but as a hinge between the Book of Consolation and the stories about the siege and fall of Jerusalem in Jer 34–45. The original account of Jeremiah's purchase conveyed a message of hope (v. 44), similar to the oracles of restoration in Jer 30–31. The editor of Jer 32 (the version without vv. 37–43) used this account, but elaborated extensively on the story's historical setting during the siege of Jerusalem, by adding the introduction (vv. 1–5) and the reflections on Judah's collapse (vv. 17–23, 28–35). In this way, he created a composition with the two contrasting motifs of disaster and restoration, in order to mark the transition from the oracles of salvation in Jer 30–31 to the far less hopeful stories in Jer 34–45 (esp. Jer 34; 37–39). In other words, the literary function of Jer 32 at this stage was to act as a link between the preceding chapters of restoration and the following chapters of disaster.

This understanding of the literary function of Jer 32 is similar to the view of Albertz, who holds that the chapter "probably always served to link the collection of salvation oracles with the Jeremiah narratives."[41] For Albertz, however, Jer 34 also functioned together with Jer 32 to act as the bridge between these sections with their contrasting genres and, in fact, he seems to see Jer 34 as the primary chapter that transitions from restoration to disaster.[42] Here my interpretation differs. Since the motif of restoration plays a very minor role in Jer 34, the chapter barely functions as a hinge between restoration and disaster.[43] This function is to be assigned to Jer 32 only.

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does not state explicitly that the court of the guard was "in the house of the king" (32:2), but this piece of information could easily be derived from 37:17–21 (esp. v. 17); cf. Migsch, *Jeremias Ackerkauf*, 369. In connection with the relationship between Jer 32 and Jer 34; 37–39, it is noteworthy that Jer 35–36 (i.e., the section between Jer 34 and 37–39) was quite possibly a later insertion between Jer 34 and 37–43*; see Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 21–23, 406.

[41] Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 317 (cf. p. 319). Albertz attributes Jer 32 (and 34) to the same editor who incorporated Jer 30–31* into the book. This is a plausible view (as far as Jer 32 is concerned), but one cannot exclude the possibility that Jer 32 was added at a later point, as assumed by, e.g., Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 207, 298–99.

[42] Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 317: "Since 34:1–7 begins surprisingly with a salvation oracle for Zedekiah, only to follow it with an oracle of judgment on him and the aristocracy (34:8–22), the chapter probably has the function of reverting from the theme of salvation to the judgment theme of the narratives."

[43] Jeremiah 34 rather should be understood as an intrinsic part of the narrative block about Judah's collapse (chs. 34–45); cf. footnote 36 above.

5 The Integration of Jer 32 into the Expanded Book of Consolation

It is unsurprising that emphasis is often placed on the hopeful dimensions of Jer 32, since, in the present book of Jeremiah, the chapter is part of the expanded Book of Consolation. This literary setting, as well as the additional promises in 32:37–43, have the effect of downgrading the relative importance of the motif of disaster in the chapter, and of obscuring the chapter's original function as a hinge between Jer 30–31 and 34–45.

The most significant development in this regard was the addition of the restoration oracle in 33:1–13. The heading of the oracle presents it as a sequel to Jer 32 (esp. vv. 26–44), as it says that a message was revealed to Jeremiah "a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard" (33:1; cf. 32:1–2). In addition, 33:1–13, which adds promises of peace, forgiveness, repopulation and joy, and contains many other echoes of Jer 32.[44] The additional oracle not only separated Jer 32 from Jer 34–45, but, by formulating the promises in a way that recall Jer 32, it also highlighted the hopeful dimension of Jer 32 itself. As indicated above, a second important development was the insertion of 32:37–43, which substantially increased the amount of restoration promises in the chapter. In this way, too, the emphasis of Jer 32 came to fall on the motif of restoration, even more so since 32:37–43 gives a more comprehensive vision of salvation than the promises in 32:15, 44.

In the final Masoretic text form, the block of salvation prophecies in Jer 30–33 was further expanded by the addition of 33:14–26. The oracle in this passage has a particular focus on the durability of Davidic kingship and Levitical priesthood.[45] The addition of this oracle (and of the other, less substantial elements unique to the Masoretic text form of Jer 30–33) marked the end of the development of the expanded Book of Consolation, of which Jer 32 had become an integrated part.

6 Conclusion

Being heirs of the message of the historical prophet, the editors of the book of Jeremiah were particularly interested in two main themes. The one theme was the collapse of Judah, which they interpreted as YHWH's punishment of the people's sins. The other theme was the future restoration of the people and the land, for which they hoped on the basis of YHWH's faithfulness, mercy, and might. In Jer 32, both themes are combined in a rather complex way. It has been argued in the present article that the chapter's twofold contents can be explained by paying attention to the original literary setting of Jer 32. A pre-existing account of Jeremiah's purchase of a field was edited in such a way as to serve as a hinge between the Book of Consolation in Jer

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[44] On 33:1–13 and its connections to Jer 32, see, e.g., Allen, *Jeremiah*, 374–76; Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 354–61 (according to Stipp, 33:7–8 was a later insertion into 33:1–6, 9–13).

[45] There exists extensive literature on this oracle; for an up-to-date bibliography, see Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 363–64.

30–31 and the stories about the siege and fall of Jerusalem in Jer 34–45. Due to later developments, Jer 32 lost its original 'hinge' function, as it was integrated into the present block of salvation prophecies in Jer 30–33, the expanded Book of Consolation.