

## Jeremiah 26-29: A not so Deuteronomistic Composition

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*This article addresses the issue of so-called Deuteronomistic influence on the book of Jeremiah. The article posits that in the case of Jer 26-29 it would be far more prudent to concentrate on the implicit definition of prophecy found in the text rather than to analyse the linguistic and compositional features used to create the definition. In this essay it will be argued that once the presumed Deuteronomistic influence that has often directed scholar's opinions is removed, it becomes clear that even at the times when the texts seem to be linked to the Deuteronomistic works, it is by way of contrast and not by way of allusion. The unit Jer 26-29 differs both from the only legal treatment of prophecy in Deuteronomy in Deut 13:1-5 and 18:18-22, as well as from the narrative in the Deuteronomistic History 1 Kgs 22:1-38, which perfectly fits the criteria of the legal treatment with regard to its theology surrounding true and false prophecy.<sup>1</sup>*

**Key words:** Deuteronomistic, Jeremiah, prophecy, legal, linguistics

### A INTRODUCTION

The emphasis placed on linguistic features, of various kinds, by scholars who have attempted to address the matter of Deuteronomistic influence in the book of Jeremiah has created more confusion amongst scholarship than it has clarified any of the particular issues.<sup>2</sup> But it is impossible to discuss all the issues relevant to this debate in an article not formally dedicated to the topic. The most prominent issues are, among others, that: (1) the distinction between Deuteronomistic and Deuteronomic<sup>3</sup> influence is vague at times;<sup>4</sup> (2) inferences from linguistic and compositional features regarding authorship remain

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<sup>1</sup> **Article submitted:** 2014/05/16; **accepted:** 2014/09/22.

<sup>2</sup> In this essay the term "Deuteronomistic" will be used to refer to the collection of texts known as the former prophets, i.e. texts influenced by the book Deuteronomy. Therefore, the phrase "Deuteronomistic influence" will be applied to texts which share similar purposes, values and language with those found in that corpus.

<sup>3</sup> "Deuteronomic" will be used in this article as an adjective derived from the book of Deuteronomy and therefore refers only to the book as such. It is important to maintain this distinction as it emphasises that Deuteronomistic implies Deuteronomic, but not the other way around.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the use in Else K. Holt, "The Chicken and the Egg – or: Was Jeremiah a Member of the Deuteronomist Party?" *JSOT* 44 (1989): 112.

speculative;<sup>5</sup> (3) the context within which phrases are used is often neglected;<sup>6</sup> and finally (4) an issue which is unique to Deuteronomistic matters is that one finds scepticism from Sharp, amongst others, with regard to the classification of terms as Deuteronomistic which do not appear in either the Deuteronomistic History nor in Deuteronomy.<sup>7</sup>

This article will attempt to address the matter of authorship and Deuteronomistic influence in the unit Jer 26-29 by analysing the "goal"<sup>8</sup> of the texts.<sup>9</sup> The premise is that a group such as the Deuteronomists would be united by a common goal (communicating a specific theology) rather than by a common means of communication (linguistic and/or compositional features).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it would be more appropriate for one not to refer to changes in Deuteronomistic theology, simply because the language, or compositional techniques

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<sup>5</sup> To take this point further, the authors of the present article refer to Ehud Ben Zvi, "A Deuteronomistic Redaction in/among the "Twelve"? A Contribution from the Standpoint of Micah, Zephaniah, and Obadiah," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 259-60, who argues persuasively that correspondences between the texts need not be seen as unilateral, that is to say borrowing has taken place from both sides. The DH was not a fixed corpus and had also changed by the time of the composition of the book of Jeremiah. The relationship between the two texts could be regarded as reciprocal.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the discussion of this in Carolyn J. Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah* (New York: T. & T Clark International, 2003), 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Sharp, *Prophecy*, 16-18.

<sup>8</sup> The term "goal" has been adopted in this article to represent the notion of theological argumentation, that is to say, the theological point which the authors were attempting to make in the writing of the texts.

<sup>9</sup> Though there is no consensus amongst scholars regarding the delineation of these chapters as a unit, the topic is not hotly debated, and general scholarly opinion does weigh in favour of reading them as a unit.

<sup>10</sup> This statement implies less about the nature of the group than may appear at first. Indeed, the authors of this article will not enter into a debate on the nature of the Deuteronomists other than to say, in agreement with John Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB 21; New York: Doubleday, 1964), lviii, that they are the "exilic and post-exilic protagonists of the theology of Deuteronomy and of Josiah's reform." Defining the phenomenon as such, one still allows for theories such as the notion of a Deuteronomistic library and a school of scribes who wrote and edited the books (Deuteronomy-Kings) from the 7th century up to the Persian period, promulgated by, *inter alia*, Thomas C. Römer, "Deuteronomistic History," *EBR* 6:648-653. Furthermore, the authors think it apt to refer to the Deuteronomists as a "school," that is to say, an educational centre as well as a "school of thought." For more on the use of this term see Norbert F. Lohfink, "Was there a Deuteronomistic Movement?" in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (JSOTSup 268; ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 36-66.

*seem* Deuteronomistic. Surely, if the theology differs, one must first consider that different authors may have been responsible, even if the language is similar. In order to support this argument, a comparison of the theology (especially with regard to false prophecy, as this seems to have been a matter of grave concern to the authors of this unit) will be made between the selected unit from Jeremiah and Deut 13:1-5, and 18:18-22, as well as 1 Kgs 22:1-28, 37.

## B PAST SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

The first recognised scholarly attempt by Bernhard Duhm in 1901 to discern the authorship of the book of Jeremiah, already mentioned Deuteronomistic redactors.<sup>11</sup> Yet for Duhm the redaction was not systematic in nature, but he contends rather that the book "grew like a jungle" all the way up to the first century B.C.E.<sup>12</sup> Another early study by Sigmund Mowinckel in 1914 is in stark contrast with the suggestions made by Duhm; Mowinckel argued that this unit in the book of Jeremiah formed part of the historical tales based on the prophet's activity and passed on through oral traditions.<sup>13</sup> For Duhm, therefore, one must envisage a later writing, editing and composition of the texts, which need not have had a historical kernel, whereas for Mowinckel the texts are and were at the time of their writing historical narratives, passed on orally and written down at a later stage. Modern scholars seem to locate themselves at various points between these two poles.

Recent endeavours have not produced much more consensus on these matters as there are those on the one extreme such as Thiel,<sup>14</sup> who argues for Deuteronomistic influence throughout the book, while others such as Holladay,<sup>15</sup> Weippert,<sup>16</sup> and Bright<sup>17</sup> range from being mildly sceptical about the

<sup>11</sup> Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHC 11; Tübingen: Mohr, 1901).

<sup>12</sup> Keep in mind, however, that for Duhm the Deuteronomists remained redactors first and writers second, if at all. Duhm did not use the term as Martin Noth would later. For example, according to Duhm, one could find various original Jeremianic words in the section 26-29, which Samantha Joo, *Provocation and Punishment: The Anger of God in the Book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic Theology* (BZAW 361; New York: De Gruyter, 2006), 187, refers to as "miscellaneous oracles."

<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania, Oslo: Dybwad, 1914).

<sup>14</sup> *Inter alia* Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973); Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45: Mit einer Gesamtbeurteilung der deuteronomistischen Redaktion des Buches Jeremia* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> *Inter alia* William L. Holladay, "Elusive Deuteronomists, Jeremiah, and Proto-Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 54-77.

<sup>16</sup> Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremia Buches* (BZAW 132; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), 64-65; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999).

notion to entirely unconvinced by it. Others, like McKane,<sup>18</sup> have sought to find something of a middle ground by proposing that at least parts of the book may have come about as a combination of Baruch writings<sup>19</sup> and Deuteronomistic editorial work. Finally, there are also those such as Stipp<sup>20</sup> and Römer,<sup>21</sup> who have moved beyond the point of debating the Deuteronomistic nature of the book and choose instead to debate the nature of the Deuteronomists whom they believe were responsible for it. Stipp argues that the Deuteronomists, who he maintains had a hand in the writing of the book Jeremiah, are not the same as those who wrote the Deuteronomistic history, whereas Römer regarded these two groups to be the same.<sup>22</sup>

### C THE DEUTERONOMISTIC REDACTION OF JEREMIAH 26-29?

As mentioned earlier, texts are generally deemed to be Deuteronomistic based on linguistic features such as using expressions or words that are akin to those used in the Deuteronomistic canon (Joshua – 2 Kings). Or, if not based on these features, one might refer to the interests and contents of the texts themselves,

<sup>17</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*.

<sup>18</sup> William McKane, 26-52 (vol. 2 of *Jeremiah*; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), cxxxii.

<sup>19</sup> The thought that the book may also consist of Baruch writings is dependent, by McKane's own admission, on its historical nature. That is to say that should one judge the book to be primarily unconcerned with the historicity of the tales, then one may discard the notion altogether. The tendency to regard the book, or parts thereof, as historical is seen in, among other places, Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 32, where she refers to Jer 26-29 as the "biography" of Jeremiah. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1986) writes, quite justly, that the prophet Jeremiah appears to be more legend than man in the book and therefore the book cannot be regarded as historically sound, nor indeed, historically driven. Also, Thomas C. Römer, "The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah as a Supplement to the So-Called Deuteronomistic History," in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; London: Equinox, 2009), 168-183 calls the very notion of Baruch composing the book anachronistic.

<sup>20</sup> Hermann-Josef Stipp, "Probleme des Redaktions geschichtlichen Modells der Entstehung des Jeremia buches," in *Jeremia und die "deuteronomistische Bewegung"* (ed. Walter Gross and Dieter Bohler; BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 225-62.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas C. Römer, "How did Jeremiah Become a Convert to the Deuteronomistic Ideology?" in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 189-99.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that Römer has moved much closer to Stipp's view in this regard, as is illustrated by the citation above from his more recent work (see footnote 9 of this article – note that no date is mentioned there). The debate which had taken place does remain important for the discussion of the topic.

looking for things such as the notion of venerating Yahweh alone, observance of the Torah, the land promised and endangered, and the centralisation of the cult.<sup>23</sup> One could even refer to common narrative patterns such as the laws and history which lead to blessings or curses.<sup>24</sup> This article, however, will argue that the essential characteristic of a religious movement lies in its theological convictions. If one were to understand Deuteronomistic works as stemming from a Deuteronomistic movement, then it necessitates that one reconcile the former with the latter. That is to say, something cannot be understood to be the result of Deuteronomistic edition if it does not conform to Deuteronomistic ideals and theology. Indeed, something may very well sound *like* a Deuteronomistic work, based on its vocabulary and tone, but actually with the purpose of critiquing a specific text. Or as Holladay explains it, "The tone of the borrowed phrase may instead be contrasting. The authors of Jeremiah might well cite (or vary) a phrase from Deuteronomy with a tone of mockery, or irony, or in some other way express distance from the original."<sup>25</sup>

Most scholars do see at least some Deuteronomistic redaction in the book of Jeremiah, some more than others. Holt, for example, following Thiel explains that the latter's detailed analysis of the Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah has "once and for all proven the influence of Deuteronomistic terminology and ideology in all parts of Jeremiah, poetry as well as prose."<sup>26</sup> This is a bold statement for sure, and it is this theory that will be tested in this article. It must be stressed that the findings in this article are related only to the unit in question. Conclusions drawn from this analysis need not necessarily lead one to make the same or even similar conclusions regarding the rest of the book. Each unit must be tested on its own merits in order to arrive at reliable conclusions.

#### **D DEUTERONOMY 13 AND 18**

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and 18:18-22, as well as 1 Kgs 22:1-38, have been selected for various reasons. The two texts from Deuteronomy represent the only systematic and legal explanation of how one is supposed to discern the true prophet from the false one in the entire HB, whilst the text in Kings represents one of the more debated narratives on the topic of prophetic conflict in the OT. Moreover, the text in 1 Kings conforms seemingly at every point to the criteria set out in Deuteronomy. Furthermore, both of these texts are to be found in corpora that have traditionally been attributed to the Deuteronomistic movement. Clements attributes both of the texts in Deuteronomy to the Deuteronomists, who he argues most likely wrote these texts after the collapse of the

<sup>23</sup> For a more complete list see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1-6.

<sup>24</sup> Lohfink, "Was there?" 41.

<sup>25</sup> Holladay, "Elusive Deuteronomists," 59.

<sup>26</sup> Holt, "Chicken and the Egg," 109-122.

Judean state in 586/587.<sup>27</sup> This is supported by the view of Holt, who argues that Moses is first seen as a prophet in Deuteronomistic writings, a theory which is also adopted in this article.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this section is to analyse these texts with regard to their hermeneutic of prophecy so that they may be compared to the texts in Jeremiah. The understanding here is that both the text in 1 Kings as well as those in Deuteronomy share the same view of the prophetic vocation and thus, by looking at both, the reader is presented with the regulations for prophets both in theory (Deuteronomy) and in practice (Kings), with the latter corresponding more closely to the Jeremianic texts.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 provides only one criterion for assessing the validity of a prophet, namely, that a prophet is false if he/she attempts to make the Israelites turn to a god other than Yahweh (v. 2). The regulation which accompanies this statement is that if one should find a prophet doing this, then he/she must be put to death (v. 5). For the prophet has then דִּבְרֵי טָרָה ("spoken defecation/disobedience") against Yahweh. A final remark on Deut 13 is taken from Christensen, who writes that in this chapter it seems as though a prophet could possess all of the required credentials, but still be labelled false should he/she attempt to draw others away from the service of Yahweh.<sup>29</sup>

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 is probably better known for its statement regarding a prophet "like Moses." Unfortunately, one would have to move far beyond the scope of this article in order to discuss this matter properly, but those aspects of the text which are of importance to the formal topic of this article will be mentioned.

In terms of the criteria presented for evaluating prophecy in Deut 18, these are, according to Clements, twofold.<sup>30</sup> The first is that in his message the prophet needs to be "like" Moses, that is to say, that his message ought to be in harmony with the tradition understood to have been set in place by Moses. The second criterion is that the prophet needs to be a prognosticator, meaning that the prophet has to be able to accurately predict the future. Should the prophet's message not come to fruition then that is understood to be proof that the prophet is false and has spoken a word which Yahweh has not given to him.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Robert P. Clements, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 394 and 428.

<sup>28</sup> Holt, "Chicken and the Egg," 118.

<sup>29</sup> Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9* (WBC 6A; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 272.

<sup>30</sup> Clements, *Jeremiah*, 429-430.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (IBC; Louisville: J. Knox Press, 1990), 152 explains that there are further nuances to the phrase in 18:20, namely that there are two types of prophets who are false in this section: (1) those who speak falsely in the name of YHWH; and (2) those who do so in the name of another God. It is possible to

As alluded to earlier in the article, a text which seems to take up the criteria presented in Deuteronomy is 1 Kgs 22. Moreover, it will be argued that this text, notwithstanding the view of prophecy, also shares various other features with the unit being analysed from Jeremiah.<sup>32</sup>

## **E 1 KINGS 22 AND DEUTERONOMY 13 AND 18**

This section will test the theology found in 1 Kgs 22 with regard to false prophecy against that of Deut 13 and 18 in an attempt to discover whether the former, in fact, covers the latter, or whether the one attempts to break away from or amend the criteria presented in Deuteronomy.

As discussed earlier, the three criteria presented in Deuteronomy as the telling factors when considering the validity of a prophet are: (1) that the prophet may not attempt to lead the people of Israel away from its God; (2) that in his conduct the prophet needs to be "like" Moses, though this value is slightly more implicit than it is stated outright; and (3) that the prophet must be able to predict the future accurately. Of these three, the third is often emphasised as the most Deuteronomistic, in other words, it is the criterion presented in Deuteronomy which is evinced most clearly and often in the Deuteronomistic corpus.<sup>33</sup>

There are various features in the narrative of Michaiah ben Imla which point to its being in agreement with Deuteronomy on the matter of prophetic evaluation. First, though the prophets which are called upon by Ahab seem to be Yahweh prophets, Ahab himself has at various times been associated with the Baal cult.<sup>34</sup> Therefore one could make the argument that by proxy these prophets proclaiming favourably that Ahab's wishes will be granted by Yah-

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identify whether the prophet has been speaking falsely by checking the accuracy of his prediction(s). Verse 20 is therefore not a criterion in and of itself, but rather forms part of the criterion of accuracy of prediction.

<sup>32</sup> These texts share a similar theme (prophetic conflict), characters (both feature antagonists named Ahab and Zedekiah, and a protagonist named Micah – see Jer 26:18). Both texts feature prophets who make use of objects to illustrate their point: in 1 Kgs 22:11 Zedekiah makes use of iron horns in order to illustrate the dominance which King Ahab will enjoy, and in Jer 27:2 Jeremiah makes use of a yoke, first one of wood, which is replaced later (Jer. 28:13) by an iron one. The narrative in Jeremiah which most closely resembles the type of conflict found in 1 Kgs 22 (prophet vs. prophet[s]) is ch. 28; interestingly, both these texts contain the anomaly that the protagonist reacts to the message of his opponent positively (Jer 28:6 and 1 Kgs 22:15).

<sup>33</sup> Else K. Holt, "Jeremiah's Temple Sermon and the Deuteronomists: An Investigation of the Redactional Relationship between Jeremiah 7 and 26," *JSOT* 36 (1986): 73-87, refers to Von Rad, who believed the prophecy-fulfilment scheme to be constitutive of the Deuteronomistic History.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs 16:31-32; 1 Kgs 18:17-19; 2 Kgs 10:18

weh are false, and furthermore Ahab also receives the punishment which is set forth in Deut 13 for attempting to lead the people astray, namely death.

The second criterion is quite difficult to assess, as one could quite easily connect most of the conduct of a prophet with Moses and then label said prophet as being *like* Moses. What is telling, however, is that Michaiah, though seemingly otherwise unknown in the rest of the HB, should be given the honour to see Yahweh on his throne and to witness his council. This on its own may not have ever been a requirement for a prophet's word to be true, but sharing this kind of relationship with Yahweh and being offered the opportunity to speak his words as he did certainly does seem, one must concede, Moses-like.

The final criterion is most clearly present in the text. The prophets, whose word has been labelled false, did not have their prophecy fulfilled and Michaiah, who was thrown into jail by Ahab in the hope that he could punish him when he returns, was shown to be true. Michaiah's reaction to the king throwing him into jail and promising to deal with him when he returns is given in 22:28 where he says: "If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." (NRSV).

Therefore, at this point Michaiah is explicitly rendering the view that predictive accuracy is to be related directly to the validity not only of the word of a prophet but also to the validity of the prophet *per se*. This utterance could hardly have been more in line with the criterion set forth in Deuteronomy. And it seems clear at this point that Michaiah, as presented in this text, could scarcely have conformed more to the ideal Deuteronomistic prophet.

## **F JEREMIAH 26 – 29 AND DEUTERONOMY 13 AND 18**

Holt writes that detailed analyses of smaller pericopes clearly indicate Deuteronomistic activity throughout the book of Jeremiah.<sup>35</sup> She adds that even at the compositional level it is evident how the Deuteronomists have understood the prophet's role within the framework of a historical sequence. It is not clear whether Holt is arguing in a circle here, or whether she simply believes that seeing prophets as part of the historical sequence was uniquely Deuteronomistic.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the case may be, the following section will test the accuracy of her statement with regard to the unit chosen for analysis.

<sup>35</sup> Holt, "Jeremiah's Temple Sermon," 73. Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 244 similarly argues that in these chapters a Deuteronomistic understanding of prophecy is ubiquitous.

<sup>36</sup> If so, how does one account for the absence of Jeremiah in Deuteronomistic literature, despite his presence in the Chronicle version based on the same events? Gordon McConville, *The Prophets* (ExOT 4; London: SPCK Publishing, 2002), 49 adds to this that Jeremiah is as enthusiastic about the decisive event of the



This section, like the previous one, will analyse and compare the unit from Jeremiah with the criteria that are presented in Deuteronomy. However, because the text here presents multiple narratives and not just one, as in 1 Kgs 22, each account will be analysed separately. Furthermore, as the text in 1 Kings has been shown to be the ideal narrative presentation of the Deuteronomistic values, and as it has been argued that this text seems to be related to this unit inner-biblically,<sup>37</sup> an attempt will be made to discern in what way this unit covers the Deuteronomistic texts and in what ways it differs from it.

## 1 Jeremiah 26 and the Deuteronomistic Criteria

Hibbard claims that in Jer 26 Jeremiah is portrayed as the prototypical Moses-like prophet of Deut 18, who speaks everything that YHWH commands him to.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, everything said by Jeremiah up to v. 12 of this chapter is attributed directly to Yahweh. Once resistance from the people is experienced (v. 11), however, Jeremiah seemingly starts to speak for himself.<sup>39</sup> The priests and the prophets demand Jeremiah's death in v. 11, but his defence against this notion is somewhat puzzling when compared to Deut 13 and 18.

Hibbard explains that the opinion against applying this penalty to Jeremiah stems from an apparent belief that a YHWH prophet should not be executed (v. 16).<sup>40</sup> Indeed, when facing the prospect of being killed for his prediction, Jeremiah mounts no defence other than to explain that should the people kill him, then they would have innocent blood on their hands, as Yahweh has indeed been talking to him.<sup>41</sup> This seems to have sparked some debate amongst those present in the meeting and a precedent is sought. Two different examples are found in the past, the one featuring Micah and King Hezekiah, and the other a prophet named Uriah and King Jehoiakim.<sup>42</sup> In both examples the prophets

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Deuteronomistic History (the reforms of Josiah) as the book of Kings is about him – not at all.

<sup>37</sup> See footnote 31.

<sup>38</sup> Todd J. Hibbard, "True and False Prophecy: Jeremiah Revising Deuteronomy," *JSOT* 35 (2011): 339-358.

<sup>39</sup> Although he does contend that he speaks for YHWH (v. 12), this is the first utterance by Jeremiah where the 1st person in his speech refers to himself and not to God. Furthermore, he does not begin his speech with the characteristic כה אשר יהוה.

<sup>40</sup> Hibbard, "True and False," 352.

<sup>41</sup> One could not have asked for a more Deuteronomistic defence than this one; Jeremiah claims that he is speaking that which YHWH has commanded him; indeed, by the standards of Deut 13 he cannot be killed. However, it is important to note the ineffectiveness of this criterion in evaluating the legitimacy of a prophet, a fact which is highlighted in the rest of the narrative.

<sup>42</sup> Sharp, *Prophecy*, 55 argues that the text is not about Jeremiah's vindication as a true prophet, but rather about the people who recognise his authority. Her thesis, however, leaves one in the dark as to how one is to interpret the analogies used in the chapter. She solves this problem by proposing that they were added later without any

spoke "against the city and the land" just as Jeremiah did. Ironically, however, despite the fact that both of the prophets made incorrect predictions (as per Deut 18), the one was spared and the other killed. What is important, however, is who performed the act, and not so much what it was. Hezekiah,<sup>43</sup> who is generally depicted in a positive light, spared Micah, whereas Jehoiakim,<sup>44</sup> who is generally viewed with some negativity, killed Uriah. Furthermore, the idea upon which the criterion in Deut 18 rests is also shown to be ineffective; it is to be supplanted by following the way of the LORD, which is the safest option. At this point two issues seem to emerge with regard to the relationship between this text's view of prophecy and those of Deuteronomy: As Hibbard argues, (1) the predictive capacity of prophecy recedes in favour of a more strident call for changes in religious attitude and political policy, which contradicts Deut 18 outright,<sup>45</sup> and (2) death is depicted as something which is only fitting for prophets who do not claim to speak in the name of Yahweh, that is to say, non-Yahweh prophets. This second implication does not contradict anything written in Deut 13; if anything, it seems as though the two may be in agreement with one another.

However, the first is in clear contrast to it, as predictive accuracy is explicitly identified in Deut 18 as the criterion by which prophets ought to be judged.<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah 26 is not concerned with this criterion, even though, as pointed out above, this criterion is often considered the most Deuteronomistic of them all. With regard to the second, it remains unclear whether or not the text in 1 Kings is in agreement with it or not, as the prophets themselves are not truly ever punished, though one can imagine that had Michaiah been wrong and Ahab had returned from the war, then surely the death penalty would have been imposed. Jeremiah 26 does not seem to express an aversion to the notion of killing a prophet; rather the point of contention is the means by which such a prophet is to be identified.

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clear connections to what precedes them. Such an analysis remains insufficient and, therefore, it will be maintained here that the text indeed discusses the topic of false prophecy as this does account for the entirety of the text.

<sup>43</sup> John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 163 explains that Hezekiah is a hero in the Deuteronomistic history. Cf. his role in 2 Kgs 18:1-20:21.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs 23:34-5 and Jer. 22:15-16.

<sup>45</sup> Hibbard, *Jeremiah*, 354, mentions in this regard that fact that Jer 26 contains another idea that is potentially much more troublesome for the criterion of fulfilment: YHWH might change his mind (יָחַד). This idea is certainly not present in the Michaiah text.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew G. Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah* (NSBT 29; Downers Grove: Apollon, 2012), 163 explains that one of the key features in this chapter (especially the section about Micah) is that it illustrates how true prophecy can be accepted as such without historical verification.

## 2 Jeremiah 27 and the Deuteronomic Criteria

Jeremiah dons a yoke in this chapter (27:2) which may, in fact, be similar to the iron horns which the false prophet in 1 Kgs 22 makes use of in his illustration. The difference of course is that here the instrument is used by a true prophet, whereas it was used by a false one in 1 Kgs 22. Interestingly, in this text we have a true prophet making use of a metaphorical sign when speaking against a character named Zedekiah (the king); in the tale of Michaiah ben Imla the Zedekiah is the name of the prophet who does so.

The key phrase in this text is found in v. 18: "But if they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, let them now entreat the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem, may not go to Babylon" (NAS). The logic behind the text is fairly clear. The opponents of Jeremiah will not prove their legitimacy by the accuracy of their predictions, or even by speaking all that Yahweh has commanded them, but rather by attempting to persuade Yahweh to change his mind. As was also mentioned in the section preceding this one, the only way to accomplish this is to reform the community. As Miller states, those who would be prophets are those who engage in intercession for the community.<sup>47</sup> Once again, there is a strong moral tone attached to the concept of true prophecy, a phenomenon foreign to the texts selected from Deuteronomy.

It must be said, however, that this aspect of Moses is present in the Pentateuch (Exod 32:11-14), and also in Deut 9, which is a retelling of the same narrative. Importantly, however, in those texts Moses is the one who entreats the Lord and does so successfully. In Jer 27 Jeremiah challenges his opponents to do the same with the very implication that they will be unsuccessful. In Jeremiah, pleading in this way seems to be viewed as an exercise in futility, unless social reform has taken place. Importantly, Jeremiah himself also does not persuade God to lessen the punishment of the people; if one were, therefore, going to argue that Jeremiah needs to act like Moses in this regard to prove his legitimacy, he would also be a false prophet.

## 3 Jeremiah 28 and the Deuteronomic Criteria

Holt describes Jer 28 as "a narrative where Jeremiah acts like the ideal Deuteronomistic prophet" and adds later that "It is well known that the problem of pseudo-prophecy is a major Deuteronomic subject." She also mentions in this regard chs. 27 and 29 and writes that ch. 28 is to be regarded as "a thoroughly Deuteronomistic composition," in which "Jeremiah is portrayed with all the characteristics of the true prophet."<sup>48</sup> Despite her somewhat perplexing use of

<sup>47</sup> Patrick D. Miller, "Jeremiah," *NIB* 6 (ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 783.

<sup>48</sup> Holt, "Chicken and the Egg," 115.

the adjectives Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic, at times they almost seem to be synonyms, her point is clear.<sup>49</sup> To analyse the validity of the aforementioned statements, the characteristics of a true prophet, which have been identified earlier in the book of Jeremiah, will be compared to those present in this chapter.

Jeremiah 28 features a struggle between Jeremiah and a prophet named Hananiah.<sup>50</sup> Fretheim explains that the portrayal of Hananiah in the text leads one to expect anything but his being a false prophet:<sup>51</sup> (1) his name means "Yahweh has been gracious"; (2) he uses all of the right language including the messenger formula "Thus says Yahweh," and the divine first person; (3) he is afforded a genealogical and geographical identity which Fretheim regards as akin to that of Jeremiah and, furthermore, he is given the title "the prophet" in the Hebrew text.<sup>52</sup> Finally, one could also add that he is the first of Jeremiah's prophetic opponents to be named.

It seems that this text is farther removed from the Deuteronomic texts in some respects than the other texts in this unit, yet also much closer to them in others. It is closer to those in that predictive accuracy does appear to come to the fore as a criterion once more for evaluating prophetic words, but it is also somewhat different in that regard. Or as Hibbard writes, "while Jeremiah 28 understands prophecy as subject to the criterion of fulfilment, its *application* of that criterion differs from Deuteronomy 18" (emphasis added).<sup>53</sup> Its application is different in that while fulfilment of the prophecy is the criterion, waiting to see who is right does not form part of the process. He is killed well before his announcement could have been proven correct or incorrect. Furthermore, in contrast to the text in Deut 13, he receives the penalty of death despite his being a Yahweh prophet, almost because he is too optimistic and jingoistic in his support of Yahweh. The perhaps idealistic and somewhat impractical view represented by the Deuteronomic texts would surely not have allowed for this. Hibbard argues that Jeremiah builds on Deut 18:20-22, but moves beyond it by envisioning a type of prophetic message not considered by the texts of Deuter-

<sup>49</sup> See footnote 2, for an explanation of why such usage is undesirable.

<sup>50</sup> Astonishingly, Hananiah is presented in these texts as the one who most revered the Davidic throne and sought its reestablishment with the return of Jehoiachim. It is indeed strange to find a prophet with such a stance labelled as false, but easy to understand how a prophet who found himself in a position of being opposed to both the ruling elite in Jerusalem as well as those of Babylon ended up being killed.

<sup>51</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah: Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary* (Georgia: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 391.

<sup>52</sup> Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 391.

<sup>53</sup> Hibbard, "True and False," 349.

onomy. He elaborates on this and writes that Deuteronomy does not raise the possibility of "prophets of peace" and certainly not false ones.<sup>54</sup>

Hibbard argues that this is indicative of the fact that "the later Deuteronomistic redactors of Jeremiah were using this prophet to modify an earlier view of prophecy in Deuteronomy and, thereby, to offer a different understanding of the prophetic vocation."<sup>55</sup> He does not believe the model represented by these texts to be altogether new. In fact, he argues that it bears a striking resemblance to eighth-century prophecy – that is, the prophet as social and religious critic. One must ask at this point, however, that if these texts are to be classified as different with regard to theology and ideology from those within the accepted Deuteronomistic corpus, why then continue to designate them as Deuteronomistic texts? Surely one cannot say with any certainty whatsoever that texts in conflict with Deuteronomistic texts are to be identified with that tradition. Whilst it is not impossible that there were indeed people within the Deuteronomistic grouping who may not have agreed with everything as set out in the Deuteronomistic history, one cannot – given the additional deductions necessary to form the conclusion – still seriously determine that the texts must have been Deuteronomistic. To what end would one wish to do so?

#### 4 Jeremiah 29 and the Deuteronomic Criteria

Though continuity in the content and purposes of the texts has been maintained throughout Jer 26 – 29, the way in which the issues have been addressed has differed in every chapter. So far in this unit we have seen Jeremiah on the defensive in ch. 26, Jeremiah on the offensive in ch. 27, in direct conflict with another prophet in ch. 28, and now in ch. 29 we are dealing with yet another different form of writing – here the letter is used to discuss the nature of prophecy.

Thompson notes that the likely cause for the classification of those addressed in Jeremiah's letter as false seems to be their overly optimistic view regarding the duration of the exile in Babylon.<sup>56</sup> In other words, they are propagating a short stay in Babylon; this is rejected and v. 10 reaffirms that only after 70 years will the people be allowed to return to their homeland. Thompson reads, along with this section, also vv. 21 – 23, which are about Zedekiah and Ahab, arguing that these two vv. form part of those mentioned in v. 10 and that this indicates that rebellion may have been part of their sins. Along with this, the latter also committed adultery as well as a "scandal/sacrilege" ("נְבִלָה").

Should one accept Thompson's proposal, then one could identify the causes for these prophets being accused of speaking falsehood: (1) they quite

<sup>54</sup> Hibbard, "True and False," 348.

<sup>55</sup> Hibbard, "True and False," 344.

<sup>56</sup> John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 547.

literally spoke falsely in the name of Yahweh, that is to say, they made a prediction regarding the duration of the exile which was untrue; (2) they planned a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, which was most likely the actual cause of their death. He would not have killed them because he believed them to be false prophets in the Israelite sense; (3) at least some of them, including Ahab and Zedekiah, were accused of having low moral standards; indeed, they are called false because of their lack of moral aptitude, namely, committing adultery and causing a scandal that may also have some sexual connotation.

Thus more than anything else, this text appears to be promulgating that prophets who do not meet a certain moral standard are also to be regarded as false. Predictive accuracy seems to emerge as part of the expected criteria, but only second to obedience, which is expected seemingly more so from the prophets than from the common man, who most likely took his cue from the prophets. Jer 29 thus goes well beyond the criteria of Deut 13 and 18.

Shemaiah is accused of two things, the one being that he spoke a word which he did not receive from Yahweh. The factuality of the word seems not to be at play in the text, but rather its source. Furthermore, he is said to have taught "rebellion" ("מַרְדָּה") against Yahweh. This is the same term used in Deut 13:6, where it seems to be related more to apostasy than rebellion. It also seems from the context of the Jeremiah text that Shemaiah was also, like the false prophets mentioned before, more overly optimistic about Yahweh's plans, rather than attempting to turn Jerusalem away from their God, which is the accusation in Deuteronomy.

Again, it seems in Jer 29 as though (1) either additions are being made to the criteria presented in Deuteronomy and those highlighted in the Kings text, such as moral obedience on behalf of the prophets; or (2) the criteria found in Deuteronomy are adapted in certain ways to be more palpable and useful, such as identifying not only those who proclaim a word that leads the people to another god as false prophets, but also those who speak a word contradicting Yahweh's plan either positively or negatively.

## 5 Summary

In Jer 26 two matters emerge from an analysis of the text. The first was a critique of the notion of predictive accuracy as a means by which to determine the legitimacy of a prophet; the second was that the idea that Yahweh prophets are to be spared the penalty of death, which is to be applied only to non-Yahweh prophets was reaffirmed.

In Jer 27 the focus was mainly on one verse, but this verse held many implications. Here Jeremiah challenges his opponents to entreat Yahweh in order for them to make more desirable predictions. Clearly their legitimacy is not to be found in their predictive accuracy, nor are any of the other criteria at

play. It was also noted that Jeremiah is not expecting their entreaties to work. It is, therefore, not a test of whether or not they are true prophets, but rather an indictment of the notion of asking Yahweh to spare bad people.<sup>57</sup>

Jeremiah 28 is the only text in Jeremiah in which a prophet died after having made a false pronouncement. It was stressed, however, that while the Jeremiah text did seem to conform to the Deuteronomic criteria in this regard, it differed in a number of respects: (1) Hannaniah died long before his prediction could be confirmed; (2) Hannaniah dies as a result of his prediction, despite being a Yahweh prophet; finally, (3) the Jeremiah text presents a feature which the Deuteronomic texts do not consider, namely, false prophets of peace.

Chapter 29 in Jeremiah supplemented rather than contradicted the Deuteronomic texts. It stressed moral obedience above any of the other features which make up a true prophet. The one contradiction arises with regard to Deut 13, in that it explains that Yahweh prophets can also speak falsely.

## G CONCLUSION

The book of Jeremiah seems to have been uniquely interested in the topic of false prophecy.<sup>58</sup> This article argues that the unit 26 – 29 was put together for the purpose of amending and supplementing the criteria presented for discerning between true and false prophets in Deuteronomy by, amongst other things, making use of various forms of narrative which resemble yet vary the themes of the text in 1 Kgs 22, which likely indicates that the latter predates the former.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, it was argued that should the unit in Jeremiah not be in agreement with the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic texts with regard to the topic of prophecy, then one need not assert that the Deuteronomists were responsible for its writing. Baruch was also not accepted as the writer as a result of the authors' scepticism about the historicity of the unit.<sup>60</sup>

It was necessary to establish that there is a textual relation between both the unit in Jeremiah and the text in 1 Kgs 22, as well as between these two and Deut 13 and 18. Finally, the various narratives in Jeremiah were weighed against the criteria presented in Deuteronomy and propagated in 1 Kgs 22 with regard to prophecy, and it was accepted that the texts in Jeremiah have moved well beyond the latter two and indeed the unit in Jeremiah seeks to critique the

<sup>57</sup> Lest Jeremiah be identified as a false prophet himself for not being able to sway Yahweh's mind.

<sup>58</sup> The term נביא occurs seven times in Isaiah; 17 times in Ezekiel, but the term occurs 95 times in Jeremiah. Additionally, the book of Jeremiah names more prophets, both true and false, than any other prophetic book.

<sup>59</sup> It stands to reason that if the writers of Jeremiah seem to be adapting a theme in 1 Kgs 22 that the Jeremianic text must have been composed at a later stage.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. footnote 18

other texts and adapt their views. This observation makes it difficult to argue that the same authors (i.e. the Deuteronomists) wrote the texts for Deuteronomy, 1 Kings and Jeremiah.

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