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Post-Apartheid reading of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22: An approach for inter-generational healing

By

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DECLARATION

I, Kamagano Sethono, declare that this thesis, "Post-Apartheid reading of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22: An approach for inter-generational healing," which I hereby submit for the degree of MTh in Biblical Studies Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

ETHICS STATEMENT

I, Kamagano Sethono, have obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research.

Signature:

Name: Kamagano Sethono

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SUMMARY

The book of Jeremiah explores reflections on catastrophe, trauma, and strategies for survival. At its core, Jeremiah is characterized by a focus on tears and lament, portraying the prophet as a symbol of suffering. The text revolves around a nation engulfed in pain and loss, as the defeat of Judah disrupts its social and political fabric, leaving survivors traumatised and disillusioned. In Jeremiah 8:18-9:22, there is a collective mourning involving God, the prophet, and the people for both the impending and past disasters. Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 illustrates the efforts of the disaster's victims to navigate grief and come to terms with their circumstances.

Apartheid has similarly left numerous black communities traumatised and in need of healing. Rooted in South Africa, apartheid was a racial ideology that enforced the dominance of the white minority over the indigenous black majority. Comparable to the destruction of Judah, apartheid witnessed traumatic events, including widespread violence, merciless opposition, and brutality resulting in loss of life.

The thesis aims to delve into the repercussions of apartheid trauma, emphasising the necessity for healing. It explores mourning rites within South African communities as mechanisms for coping with trauma and underscores the importance of forgiveness in the healing process. Ultimately, the thesis envisions black communities transitioning from avoidance of apartheid-induced trauma to actively fostering hope and working towards a brighter future.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Book of Jeremiah stands as a profound testament to the complex interplay between divine revelation and human agency within the context of ancient Israel. Nestled within the pages of the Hebrew Bible, Jeremiah's prophetic discourse unfolds against the backdrop of a nation in turmoil, capturing the poignant struggles and enduring faith of a people grappling with political upheaval, spiritual rebellion, and the impending shadow of exile.

Within the pages of the book of Jeremiah, the haunting echoes of trauma resound as a poignant undercurrent, shaping the narrative with profound emotional resonance. Jeremiah, the prophet of weeping, becomes not only a messenger of divine warnings but a witness to the deep scars inflicted upon a nation in crisis. The trauma embedded in this ancient text transcends the political and spiritual upheavals it describes, delving into the collective psyche of a people besieged by forces beyond their control.

The book of Jeremiah consists of writings that reflect on disaster, trauma and how to survive the trauma. Claassens (2018:666) believes that a central feature of Jeremiah is the focus on tears and lament, and we see Jeremiah the prophet as a symbol of suffering. Stulman (2020:1) argues that the book of Jeremiah is about a nation whose lives are wracked with pain and loss. It portrays raw emotions and disturbing images of the disaster that results in the collapse of the nation. It talks about the defeat of Judah in 587/6 BCE by Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE).
Stulman expresses how a book full of such trauma and loss can offer hope. Stulman (2020:6) writes that:

> How does literature so laden with loss operate as an artistic expression of hope? In the first place, it translates lived chaos into language and so creates a bearable distance between traumatic events and their symbolic representations. It refuses to indulge in denials about the nation's monstrous losses, generating space for the work of grief, a prerequisite to the work of hope. This trauma corpus puts virtually every facet of community life under a microscope and calls for action, transforming victims of violence into active meaning-makers. It creates alternatives to the old world,

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> alternatives that contour a future for a people seemingly without one. Moreover, it makes a stunning claim that raw historical power is subservient to the power and purposes of God. This polyphonic corpus speaks with clarion voice that God's purposes are not thwarted by geopolitics or cosmic forces.

This defeat shattered Judah's social and political order and left the survivors traumatised. From reading this book, certain questions can arise because of the language, disturbing images and the violence. Stulman (2020:1) further alludes that according to biblical narratives, three Babylonian offensives (597, 587, 582 BCE) shattered Judah's social and political order and left survivors beaten and disillusioned. The siege of Jerusalem in 587 BCE was presumed the most costly. It resulted in death, displacement, and widespread destruction. The imposing Neo-Babylonian military machine burned to the ground the great temple of Jerusalem and the royal palace complex.

Jeremiah as a prophetic book allows us to relate to it since the prophets were not excluded from their political context. De Bruyn (2013:73) defines "prophetism" in the context of Israel and argues that prophetism generally refers to the act of communicating the word of God, to influence the cult and or political life of Israel. Through prophetism the invisible God also becomes audible. This is to show the involvement of prophets in the daily life and political lives of the community they served. Allen (2008:1) thinks that the mission of the classical prophets clustered around political crises. He further mentions that prophets "were religious idealists who insisted a higher agenda was being played out in the history of the two nations that shared a common theological tradition, Israel and Judah. They saw themselves as interpreters of crisis."

Stulman (2020:5) believes that what we find in prophetic books, and especially the book of Jeremiah are texts that bear witness to the end and dares to re-enact it. He further points out that written prophecy shifts the focus from the wreckage of war to the symbolic world of language, allowing readers to name their ordeal, mourn it, and service it. Prophetic books also serve the purpose of bringing hope to the people whose world has been destroyed and whose belief in faith and culture has been broken beyond repair.

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The book of Jeremiah stands at the epicentre of this prophetic witness, focusing on the crucial period around the final capture of Jerusalem in 587 BCE that began the final fall of Judah and Jerusalem. The text to be discussed in this thesis is a lament. Ackermann (2003:100) explains a lament as "a language for dealing with, although not solving, the problem of suffering." Klopper (2008:1256) adds by mentioning that a lament "is a vehicle for expressing the raw emotions that arise from pain so intense that it cannot be articulated in words. Just as pain and suffering are intrinsic to human existence, so also the expressing of pain is deeply human." We see that laments were a practise not only known and used in Israel but also a practise that was prominent in the ANE.

Samet (2014:1) points out that the lament is a well-known *genre* in world literature. Laments of various types are part of the cultural legacy and literary corpus of many societies, from ancient to modern times. Sumerian literature is no exception. She further argues by pointing out that many literary works are focused on lamentations or use a lament-like style (Samet 2014:1). Continuing with the discussion, Samet (2014:1) mentions that the lamentation literature in Mesopotamia includes a significant body of laments belonging to a unique and almost unparalleled *genre*, the *genre* of lamentations over the destruction of cities and temples. This *genre* has no known ancient parallel outside the ancient Near East; more specifically, it is almost exclusively attested in Sumerian and biblical literature. Lamentations were a common practice and a way to get over the pain and trauma.

In the text which I will be addressing in this thesis, we see God, the prophet and the people joining in mourning for the disaster that is yet to happen and has happened. When one goes through a disaster or a traumatic event, that encounter does not allow the person to be the same again. Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 tells us more about this traumatic experience. O'Connor (2011:60) argues that in Jeremiah 8:22-9:11 victims of this disaster try to find ways of grieving and accepting their situation. O'Connor (2011:60) writes that "grieving practices can help restore people's humanity by opening them up to a whole range of emotions. They can begin to melt the icy despair that cuts them off from their spirits and knowledge of divine presence." Israelites came with weeping poems which is an expression of grief in the long journey of recovery as laments were

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a common practice in the ANE. Jeremiah writes about traditional mourning rites which can give structure to sorrow. Israel's mourning customs help people face death, express grief, and then begin to come back to life.

O'Connor (2011:61) alludes by saying that "her grieving should be volatile, dramatic, and extreme. Loss of a child, of an only child, or any child, is a grief beyond bearing, so intimate a devastation that it hardly can be taken in for its shock and loss." It is not only the bereaved nation that mourns but God also mourns in Jer. 8:18-9:3. In Jer. 9:10-22, there is an emphasis on weeping as this is seen as a special remedy of trauma and disaster. God as well as the bereaved weep for their beloved and for the land (O'Connor 2011:65).

Weeping as a mourning rite is emphasised in this text. God encourages the people to weep because he understands the importance of mourning. Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 allows reflecting and evaluating the context of black and white people living in South Africa. For this research, I am directing my attention away from political and economic freedoms to concentrate on the psychological and well-being aspects of individuals, particularly within black communities. Apartheid, left a lot of scars on black people in South Africa and methods of healing need to be implemented and/or continued to facilitate the regaining of identity. Gobodo-Madikizela (2015:1086-1087) talks about the problems that are currently faced in South Africa, particularly in black communities, which are rape, brutal killings, xenophobic violence and crimes committed by police officials. She uses the work by Brown (2008) to describe these social problems and argues that the problem might be "insidious trauma" that results from ongoing depravity, humiliation, and degradation, rather than from spectacular and extraordinary violence (Gobodo-Madikizela 2015:1087).

She argues that "the post-apartheid generation is living through its traumas of a life of humiliation. The work of the TRC is perhaps what needs to happen again in South Africa, while at the same time addressing these problems of humiliation" (Gobodo-Madikizela 2015:1087). In her opinion she does believe a TRC (a space to talk about the trauma) is needed in our generation.

Forster (2018:81) makes this statement about the situation in the current South Africa:

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> South African society remains deeply divided. The fault lines of division are particularly evident in the Christian Church. If one were to visit a Church gathering on a Sunday one would find that in large measure the hegemonic identities of race, class, culture, economics and theology, are deeply entrenched and maintained (van der Borght 2009: 9). While South Africans have had to learn to live and work together in certain public spaces, such as workplaces and schools, there is no such pressure, or expectation, for unity, or at least engagement in diversity, within the Church. This is telling, since it seems to expose that when persons have the privilege of choice as to whom they will associate with, they choose not to encounter difference, but rather to retreat to the safety of the familiar. Black Christians and white Christians have separate spaces of worship, different cultures, liturgies, languages, and even theologies. These are largely related to their respective social identities, which are deeply shaped by South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid.

This study posits that black communities can glean insights into mourning and subsequent healing from the examined text. While these two contexts differ, both underscore the significance of mourning as a pivotal step towards eventual healing. The expedition towards healing is portrayed as a challenging and prolonged journey, yet one that is achievable. Additionally, the study delves into the theme of forgiveness, a concept not explicitly mentioned in the text but deemed essential, particularly in the context of facilitating healing from the actions of individuals or groups.

The research unfolds with a threefold purpose: first, an exploration of the importance of recounting traumatic stories. Drawing from Judith Herman's work, the study aligns with O'Connor's insight that, akin to psychotherapy following trauma, victims in the text, exemplified by Jeremiah, share their experiences as part of the initial stage of recovery (O'Connor 2011:68). Second, the research navigates mourning rites and practices as integral to regaining and maintaining identity. O'Connor (2011:64) contends that by acknowledging grief, witnesses validate the suffering, fostering a human connection with victims and reintegrating them into the community.

Last, the study delves into forgiveness as a consequence of mourning and a method of mourning. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:341) perceives forgiveness as a collective turning from the past that neither ignores nor excuses past evils. The text, rooted in the context of apartheid and its lingering trauma, guides coping with collective trauma.

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It is crucial to note that this study does not intend to propose novel solutions or undermine existing efforts to aid black communities. Rather, its purpose is to spotlight the healing processes adopted by apartheid victims and draw parallels with the approach depicted in the text.

1.2 Research problem

Apartheid has left a several black communities traumatised and in need of healing. Apartheid is based on the domination of one group (Whites) over an indigenous majority (Blacks). It is a racial ideology with its origins in South Africa. Apartheid is typically defined as a social policy of segregation and discrimination against a minority. It was a racial discrimination policy against non-Europeans in South Africa (Ellis 2019:63). By black communities I mean a group of African (black) South Africans. Mhlauli et al, (2015:204) believe that apartheid was a systematised racial discrimination in South Africa which did not begin when the Nationalist Party won and took power in 1948. They allude that racial discrimination is a result of many factors which can be traced as far back as the preindustrial period, similar to what happened in Europe, Asia, and America. It dates to the days of colonial rule when the Dutch first settled at the Cape in 1652 and the establishment of a fort at Table Bay.

Apartheid has given rise to numerous traumatic incidents, reminiscent of the destruction of Jerusalem, where large-scale violence occurred, and people faced brutality and mercilessness. The parallel between the Israelite episode and apartheid lies in the oppressive practices of both ruling powers, utilising brutality to instil fear and obedience in their victims. The repercussions of apartheid have left a significant portion of South Africa's population in a state of shock and trauma. Witnessing the loss of lives through shootings and injuries is a distressing experience that no one wishes for. These events have rendered many South Africans emotionally numb, devoid of hope, and silenced. Beyond the physical violations, apartheid has inflicted severe mental health issues on black individuals. The system, rooted in white dominance, led black people to perceive themselves as less than human. The ongoing challenge involves the continuous effort to reclaim a sense of identity in the aftermath of this deeply damaging system.

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According to Groenewald (2018:89) trauma is derived from the ancient Greek word for trauma (*τραῦμα*) can be translated as "wound" or can indicate "an injury inflicted upon the body by an act of violence."

> In other words, according to Jones (2009:12), to be traumatised implies that one is struck down by some kind of external force that threatens to ruin one. This external force attacks the human body in such a way that it is wounded. Caruth (2016:3) indicates that the Greek word originally referred to an injury inflicted on a body. However, in its later usage – as is evident, primarily, in the medical and psychiatric literature – this term is interpreted as a wound inflicted not on the body, but on the mind. In Freud's writings… the term "trauma" is understood as a wound of the mind, which, unlike the wound of the body, is an injury that cannot be healed, but that imposes itself again upon the mind of the survivor (Groenewald 2018:89).

This thesis will embark on defining the different trauma concepts namely collective, cultural and historical trauma. For some scholars these terms describe the same thing but I propose the contrary. Cultural trauma, collective trauma and historical trauma are related concepts, often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different nuances in their meanings. While collective trauma is a broader concept that refers to the shared psychological effects of trauma on a group, cultural trauma specifically looks at how a traumatic event impacts a culture's identity, values, and historical narrative. The two concepts are related because a traumatic event can cause both collective and cultural responses, but cultural trauma highlights the distinctive impact on a culture's sense of self and history.

Kaminer & Eagle (2010:10) state that,

> according to the evidence collected by the TRC, forms of political violence and traumatisation that were particularly common in South Africa during apartheid included the political detention and torture of those who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle, the abduction and murder of suspected political activists, stoning, shooting and beating of people engaged in political protests, and the intentional destruction of homes and property.

Healing is of paramount importance for black South Africans in the aftermath of apartheid due to the profound historical trauma that the system inflicted. Apartheid subjected individuals to systematic oppression, violence, and discrimination, leaving

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enduring psychological wounds. The inter-generational impact of this trauma necessitates healing to break the cycle of pain passed down through generations and to create a more mentally and emotionally healthy environment for present and future communities. Furthermore, healing plays a pivotal role in restoring a sense of identity and dignity that apartheid sought to undermine. It empowers individuals to reclaim and celebrate their cultural heritage, fostering a positive self-identity.

The social cohesion required for a united South Africa is also closely tied to healing, as it addresses historical divisions and promotes understanding and empathy among diverse communities. Additionally, healing initiatives contribute to mental health and well-being by providing psychological support and counselling for conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Beyond the individual, healing is an integral aspect of the broader processes of reconciliation and nation-building, acknowledging the pain of the past and laying the foundation for a more inclusive and harmonious society. Ultimately, healing is a collective journey that empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and contributes to the social transformation necessary for a just and equitable South Africa.

The focus in black communities should be on addressing hope. This study posits the idea that instead of avoiding the trauma inflicted, black communities should actively engage in fostering hope and working towards a brighter future.

1.3 Aim and objectives

The following are the aims and objectives which will be explored in this study:

- Presenting an overview of the Book of Jeremiah, this study aims to conduct a synchronic examination of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22. This study will make use of diachronic insights in selective part of the study.
- Providing a concise historical backdrop, the research will delve into the cultural and social context surrounding the Book of Jeremiah.
- Exploring Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 as a textual exploration of mourning rites, the study will analyse its depiction of mourning practices.

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- A comprehensive analysis of the contemporary South African landscape will be provided, encompassing the historical roots of Apartheid and the prevailing challenges faced by black communities.
- Delving into the theme of mourning rites within black communities as a means of addressing trauma, the study will also emphasise the significance of forgiveness in the overall healing process.

1.4 Methodology

The main aim of this thesis will be an exegetical analysis of Jeremiah 8:18-9:20. Gorman (2009:11) defines exegesis “as an investigation. It is an investigation of the many dimensions, or textures, of a particular text. It is a process of asking questions of a text, questions that are often provoked by the text itself.”

An exegesis may be defined as the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text. Another appropriate description of exegesis is “close reading,” which means the deliberate, word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase consideration of all the parts of a text to understand it as a whole (Gorman 2009:10). To mention the reason for an exegesis, Gorman (2009:10) argues that “it is to achieve a credible and coherent understanding of the text on its terms and in its context. The exegesis in this study will be viewed through the lens of trauma, as the core of this study is on the trauma found in the text.”

Gorman (2009:13) argues that an exegesis should follow a synchronic, diachronic and existential approach. This study will only use a synchronic approach, but it will take cognisance of diachronic aspects which are relevant for the discussion. Synchronic means “within time” and this study looks at the final form of the text, the text as it stands in the Bible as we have it (Gorman 2009:13). He further mentions that a diachronic means “across time” and it focuses on the development of a text, it employs methods designed to uncover these aspects of it (Gorman 2009:15). Hong (2013:522) remarks that diachrony attends to “change through time”— *δια-chronic*. It takes the “long view” of a text and may be compared to a longitudinal perspective on a plant stem in a biology text (Gorman 2009:15).

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This study primarily adopts a synchronic approach, with occasional inclusion of diachronic perspectives when essential for supporting my thesis. Additionally, I will incorporate diachronic insights from other scholars to ensure a coherent integration of perspectives. Groenewald (2004:552) argues that both approaches need to be integrated into any exegesis of the text. It is thus no longer a question of either synchronic or diachronic reading of a specific text Groenewald (2004:552). He concludes by saying that “therefore, it can be deduced that synchronic analysis without diachronic input seems to touch only the textual surface” (Groenewald 2004:553). To add to this discussion, Hong (2013:524) believes that the synchronic/diachronic dialectic still belongs in a historical sphere, in which two historical dimensions are in play.

This study will investigate trauma and disaster studies as a reading lens. Trauma studies have contributed to the understanding that war, rape, and abuse leave victims with uneased consequences that even pass on to the next generation. According to (O’Connor 2011:2) trauma studies cut across many diverse fields such as cognitive psychology, counselling, sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism. O’Connor (2014:211) states the benefit of using trauma studies in Biblical studies, especially the book of Jeremiah and writes that findings from trauma studies have a profound impact on the study of Jeremiah. They enable us to uncover deeper layers of human suffering within the intricate historical contexts that shaped the Bible’s texts. Instead of solely exploring the history of how these texts were created, we now shift our gaze toward understanding how they served traumatised readers. In doing so, we gain valuable insights into the content that may challenge and unsettle modern readers.

1.5 Hypothesis

The 586 BCE fall of Jerusalem stands out as one of the most brutal and catastrophic invasions in Biblical history, leaving the affected people emotionally numb, unresponsive, and deeply wounded. The Book of Jeremiah provides a narrative of the final days of Jerusalem and the aftermath of its fall. Notably, Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 unveils an unexpected aspect of God—expressing grief for healing. God, in this text, urges the nation to collectively mourn their trauma, offering a glimmer of hope to the devastated people. We discover that weeping, as depicted in this text, serves as a

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mourning rite that empowers healing and restoration after a series of traumatic events. Drawing a parallel to Apartheid's impact, which has left many black individuals traumatised with insufficient support for their healing, this text serves as a guide for mourning rites that can facilitate healing and help restore the lost identity of black communities. Additionally, the argument is made that forgiveness is an integral part of the healing process and should not be overlooked in discussions about recovery.

1.6 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 – Overview of the study

This chapter will offer an introduction to the study. This chapter will discuss the following: Introduction to the study, the research problem, the aim and objectives of the study, the hypothesis, and last, orthography and terminology.

Chapter 2 – Trauma Studies

Within this chapter, an exploration will unfold, providing context on the term "trauma" and delving into the field of trauma studies. A detailed definition will be offered for historical, collective, and cultural trauma, elucidating the distinctions between them. Furthermore, the examination will extend to the transmission of trauma across generations. Additionally, the chapter will underscore the significance of incorporating trauma studies within biblical studies.

Chapter 3 – Historical background of the book of Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah falls within the category of prophetic books, originating from a distinct historical and temporal context that differs from our present circumstances. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the text to be examined, a concise exploration of the historical and cultural backdrop is warranted. Within this chapter, I will delve into the theological aspects inherent in the Book of Jeremiah.

Chapter 4 – Exposition of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22

This chapter is dedicated to the exegetical study of the text. Before the exegesis, I will give a brief background on the context in which the text existed. These commentaries use different approaches ranging from synchronic to diachronic approaches.

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Chapter 5 – Apartheid and its effects

This chapter will be organised into four distinct sections. Initially, I will delve into the evolution of Apartheid Theology, spotlighting key figures like Gustav Warneck and Abraham Kuyper. Subsequently, attention will be directed towards the significance of the letter authored by Prof EP Groenewald, advocating for apartheid. The third section will scrutinise the ascent of apartheid, elucidating its policies and their implications. Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining two pivotal events from the apartheid era that serve as focal points for the comparative and analytical study presented in this thesis.

Chapter 6 – The post-reading of the text

In this pivotal chapter, I bring together various aspects of my exploration. It commences with an overview of the current emotional landscape of South Africa, emphasising the lingering impact of trauma. Shifting the focus to healing approaches, I underscore the importance of reconstructing and retelling traumatic stories. This section includes an examination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, extracting valuable lessons. Another explored avenue is the enduring relevance of struggle songs and poems as mechanisms for healing and expression. The chapter concludes by delving into the crucial topic of forgiveness, acknowledging its pivotal role in the ongoing healing and progression of our nation.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to consolidating the various aspects discussed. I will provide a comprehensive overview of the study and summarise the key conclusions drawn.

1.7 Orthography and terminology

1.7.1 Abbreviations

- BCM – Black Consciousness Movement
- et al. – and other
- Hos. – Hosea
- Isa. – Isaiah
- Jer. – Jeremiah
- pp. – pages

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- TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- v. – verse
- vv. – verses

1.8 Keywords

- **Apartheid**

Apartheid: Apartheid is based on the domination of one group (Whites) over an indigenous majority (Blacks). It is a racial ideology with its origins in South Africa. Apartheid is typically defined as a social policy of segregation and discrimination against a minority. It was a racial discrimination policy against non-Europeans in South Africa (Ellis 2019:63).

- **Black communities**

These are communities where African South Africans reside. In most cases, such communities are townships, the location (well known as *eLokshin*), and *Bantu* hostels. These places have a predominantly black people occupation.

- **Collective trauma**

Hirschberger (2018:1) describes collective trauma as,

> psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society; it does not merely reflect an historical fact, the recollection of a terrible event that happened to a group of people. It suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it.

- **Cultural trauma**

Alexander (2012:6) describes cultural trauma as a phenomenon that “occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subject to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.”

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- **Diachronic**

This is a type of study that focuses on the origin and development of a text., employing methods designed to uncover these aspects of it. It takes the "long view" of a text and may be compared to a longitudinal perspective on a plant stem in a biology text (Gorman 2009:15).

- **Exegesis**

Gorman (2009:11) defines exegesis "as an investigation. It is an investigation of the many dimensions, or textures, of a particular text. It is a process of asking questions of a text, questions that are often provoked by the text itself."

- **Post-apartheid**

Post-apartheid refers to the period in South Africa following the dismantling of the apartheid system. The term signifies the era after the official end of apartheid policies, marked by the inauguration of a more inclusive and democratic government. The dismantling of apartheid laws and the establishment of a multiracial, democratic government occurred in the early 1990s, culminating in South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994.

- **Synchronic**

A study of a text that looks only at the final form of the text, the text as it stands in the Bible as we have it (Gorman 2009:13).

- **Trauma**

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders defines trauma as:

> direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1).

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CHAPTER 2: TRAUMA STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

The concept of trauma has existed for quite some time. The concept has permeated various disciplines, shaping our understanding of human suffering, resilience, and the complexities of cultural memory. The study of trauma has caused different scholars and health professionals from different fields to delve deeper into the multifaceted nature of trauma, and its influence on individual and collective experiences has become increasingly apparent. Our journey begins with a critical examination of the word "trauma" itself.

We then transition into the field of trauma studies, a field that has gained prominence relatively recently. While the phenomenon of trauma has been a part of human history, trauma studies as a discipline emerged in the early 1990s. Its inception aimed to construct an ethical response to various forms of human suffering and their representation in culture and the arts. Our exploration further branches into the definitions of distinct trauma concepts: collective, cultural, and historical trauma.

Moreover, we delve into the transmission of historical trauma, which reveals that traumatic experiences can transcend generations, impacting descendants in a myriad of ways. Finally, we explore the relevance of trauma studies in the context of Biblical studies. Even within a text-based discipline like Biblical studies, there is a recognition of the importance of examining trauma, as religious texts offer valuable insights into cultural, historical, and literary reflections on trauma.

2.2 Defining the word “trauma”?

The word “trauma” is casually used to describe emotions such as shock and feelings of being overwhelmed. The word trauma is used to exaggerate people’s emotions, or perhaps to emphasise their emotions. However, the word “trauma” refers to the event or incident and not the reaction, in doing so the term should not be used to describe people’s reactions but rather the incident that one experienced.

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As the cornerstone of our exploration, we begin by examining the definition of trauma as outlined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), an influential resource in the field of psychology. The DSM's perspective on trauma provides a valuable starting point, but it is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding the profound impact that traumatic experiences can have on individuals.

While the DSM's definition offers a structured framework for identifying and categorising trauma-related disorders, it is essential to recognise that trauma is a concept that transcends the boundaries of any single discipline. This section aims to broaden our understanding by delving into the perspectives of various scholars and experts in related fields. Their diverse viewpoints and insights illuminate the nuanced nature of trauma and provide a richer context for our exploration.

For the rest of this section, I will highlight how scholars in this field of trauma have defined trauma.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines trauma as:

> direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganised or agitated behaviour) (Criterion A2)" (2005:424). The use of the 4th edition in this definition is because it is the only latest edition where the term trauma is fully defined in this way.

Caruth (2016:6) in her pursuit to get a definition of the word "trauma", brings forward a question which is formulated as follows,

> Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" She goes on to suggest that trauma is a double telling, "the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival.

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Caruth (2016:11) defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and intrusive phenomena."

Wessels & Esterhuizen (2020:4) write that the word trauma finds its origin in the Greek word meaning 'wound.' Trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming, intense emotional blow or series of blows assaults the person from outside. Trauma events which are external quickly become incorporated into the mind (Wessels & Esterhuizen 2020:4).[1]

Balaev (2008:150) defines trauma as a "person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society." She further adds that trauma transforms an individual as ignited by an external and in most cases a terrifying experience. Trauma according to her can inform a new perception of the self and world. In agreement with her, although in different words, Carr (2014:7) defines trauma as "a trauma is an overwhelming, haunting experience of disaster so explosive in its impact that it cannot be directly encountered and influences an individual/group's behaviour and memory in indirect ways."

Herman (1997:33) expresses that trauma is an affliction of the powerless whereby the traumatic experience acts as an overwhelming force that renders its victims helpless. She further adds that traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. Rambo (2005:8) describes this helpless place and argues that traumatic experience leaves the survivor in a kind

[1] Wessels & Esterhuizen (2020:4) further write that " According to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V-TR), trauma is when individuals have experienced events of threat, death and serious physical and mental injury, and there was a response of intense fear, helplessness and horror. To give a clearer understanding, the DSM-V-TR lists various symptoms such as anger, anxiety, numbness, feeling threatened, fear and hopelessness that are prevalent. Trauma does not only mean that there is suffering, disaster and violence, but trauma is also so much more, and the case in point is to understand how people suffer. This 'how' is entangled in the question of why people suffer. And the 'why' is linked to the survival and resilience that people show when suffering."

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of space: between life and death. The survivor is neither dead nor alive. The survivor is locked in an indefinable middle space that is full of despair. From understanding what trauma is and how different scholars see trauma, we move to the inception and development of trauma studies as a discipline.

2.3 Trauma Studies[2]

The phenomenon of trauma is not new but has been there throughout the history of humanity. There is no exact period where we can pinpoint that trauma began, rather the discipline of trauma is relatively new.[3] Andermahr (2015:501) argues that trauma studies are a field of study that emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation.

Adding to the reasons why trauma studies developed, Craps (2013:1) argues that this "theory is an area of cultural investigation that emerged as a product of the so-called ethical turn affecting the humanities." Trauma studies were birthed from deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism and the study of the catastrophic event, such as the Holocaust literature. Andermahr (2015:501) mentions that from its beginning stages, trauma theory was to "bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to attend to the suffering of the other. Becker (2014:15) thinks that trauma studies focus on the aspect of disorder and vulnerability caused by external factors, such as human or natural violence, terror, and violence.

Caruth (2016:9-14) asserted that trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures. Craps (2013:2) speaks more about this link and writes that this link occurs when "trauma forms a bridge between disparate historical experiences, so the argument goes, listening to the trauma of another can contribute to cross-cultural solidarity and the creation of new forms of community." However, that statement was met with counter arguments from postcolonial critics who argue that trauma theory has

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[2] "Trauma studies" and "trauma theory" are two phrases used interchangeably to address the same phenomenon. In this study, I will make use of the term "trauma studies."

[3] See Rambo (2015:9) and Craps (2013:1)

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not fulfilled its promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement. Andermahr (2015:501) writes that,

> rather than forging relationships of empathy and solidarity with non-Western others, a narrowly Western canon of trauma literature has in effect emerged, one which privileges the suffering of white Europeans, and neglects the specificity of non-Western and minority cultural traumas.

Esterhuizen (2016:21) argues that trauma was formally studied through the history of 150 years. It was only in the 19th century that we saw formal theoretical models being used in the study of trauma. Ringel & Brandell (2012:1) give a detailed history of trauma studies and begin by mentioning that "during the late 19th century, a major focus was characterised by sudden paralysis, amnesia, sensory loss and convulsions." Also, during the late 19th century, a major focus was the study of hysteria, a disorder commonly diagnosed in women. The work of Charcot, Freud and Beuer focused on the relationship between trauma and mental illness associated with this hysteria. Wastell (2020:1) argues that the reason why there was a growing interest in trauma and the development of the study was because there was a change in social structure, medical advances, and a new philosophical outlook.

Esterhuizen (2016:22) believes that it is through philosophy that ideas and approaches are invented and studied so that people can understand human beings, the world they live in and events that shape their traumatic concepts. Throughout the ages, the understanding of trauma as a concept and discipline has not been a straightforward journey but had several debates especially when it comes to defining the term "trauma" and what characterises a "traumatic event". There are two famous traumatologists, namely Charcot and Janet, who can be seen as pioneers in the study of trauma within a historical framework.

Ringel & Brandell (2012:1) point out that it was first Charcot who investigated the relationship between trauma and mental illnesses as he was working with traumatised women in the Salpêtrière hospital. Charcot focused on studying hysteria which was a disorder commonly diagnosed in women. The symptoms of 'hysteria' included sudden paralysis, amnesia, and sensory loss. It was Charcot who through his experience with

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hysteria patients, understood that the origin of hysterical symptoms was not physiological but rather psychological (Ringel & Brandell 2012:1).

According to Wastell (2020:2), Charcot was tasked to investigate and study the ‘railway spine’ victims so that there were no fraudulent claims. The Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, as well as strong political stability in France, enabled countries to invent and build railway lines and that meant people would travel at a high speed. This resulted in horrific accidents and in psychological terms this trauma was referred to as the ‘railway spine.’ So, the term ‘railway spine’ describes the emotional shock and the physical injuries the passengers endured.

Esterhuizen (2016:26) argues that what was interesting about the ‘railway spine’ is that some scholars found that the symptoms were similar to the ones for ‘hysteria. According to Ringel & Brandell (2020:1) Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot, continued the study of trauma during 1890-1910. Janet researched the influence of patients’ traumatic experiences on personality development and behaviour. Wastell (2005:5) states that it was the work of Janet who noted the ‘vehement emotions’ in the experience of trauma and by ‘vehement emotions’ he meant terror and fear. Janet argues that patients’ intense affects were reactive to their perceptions of the traumatic events that happened to them, and he found that through hypnosis and abreaction, or re-exposure to the traumatic memories, patients’ symptoms could be alleviated (Ringel & Brandell 2020:1).

Esterhuizen (2016:24) mentions that no historical analysis of trauma could be undertaken without studying the valuable work done by Sigmund Freud. Freud – the father of the psychoanalytical theory – had developed and theorised the concept of psychic trauma in the early 1880s (Groenewald 2018:92). Freud is regarded as a neurologist (and the father of psychoanalysis) who paved the way for understanding trauma as it is seen today (Esterhuizen 2016:24). Freud studied under Charcot and he referred to Charcot as the “greatest of physicians” (Wastell 2020:4). Esterhuizen argues that “Freud, just as Charcot, considered hysteria symptoms as a result of traumatic experiences that could be found in both men and women. For the time, this notion was frowned upon and difficult to accept.”

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> Weisaeth …further explains that Freud stated that hysterical symptoms 'could only be understood if they were traced to earlier experiences that had a traumatic effect on the individual.' This idea of a 'deferred action' meant that the effect of a traumatic occurrence would be discernible later in the person's life when it was relived as a memory (Esterhuizen 2016:24).

Rambo (2010:3) argues that the trend in the study of trauma moved from studying hysteria in the 19th century to studying soldiers and the aftereffects of combat in the 20th century on these soldiers. The 20th century was dominated by the understanding of the effect of war on soldiers. The catastrophe of the First World War brought the reality of psychological trauma to the public. Herman (1997:20) argues that as a result of the soldiers' exposure to the horrors of trench warfare, men began to break down in shocking numbers. In these trenches, men were helpless and felt a constant threat of annihilation, as well as witnessed the death of their comrades without any hope of (or) reprieve, and therefore these men began to act like hysterical women.

Herman (1997:20) mentions that war victims screamed and wept uncontrollably, froze and could not move, were mute and unresponsive and lost their memory and capacity to feel. The number of casualties was so great that it was reported that 40 per cent of mental breakdowns in Britain were British battle casualties. It was frequently believed that mental breakdowns were commonly attributed to physical causes. Herman (1997:20) points out that the British psychologist Charles Myers examined these victims of war firsthand and attributed their symptoms to the concussive effects of exploding shells and called the resulting nervous disorder "shell shock." This study forces other psychiatrists to acknowledge that trauma cannot only be due to physical causes but also psychological factors.

For O'Connor (2011: 2) trauma studies arose from "the bloody smear that was the twentieth century." She cites as an example a list of modern disasters that had a long-lasting effect on the victims, such as the World Wars, Holocaust, Vietnam, Armenian genocide, atomic bombs on Hiroshima and bloodbaths in the Congo, to list a few. Post traumatic stress according to Rambo (2016:3), is suffering that remains because there is one common denominator and that is that the traumatic experience 'overwhelms' the human process of adapting to the traumatic event.

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Andermahr (2015:500) mentions that in 2003 we see scholars such as Jill Bennett and Roseanne Kennedy who suggested a transformation of trauma studies from a Eurocentric discipline to a discipline that engages with 'the multicultural and diasporic nature of contemporary culture". Andermahr (2015:500) further argues that scholars such as Gert Beulens, Stef Craps, Michael Rothberg, and Roger Luckhurst were voices that called for a radical re-routing of the discipline. Craps (2013:2) writes that:

> Remarkably, however, the founding texts of the field (including Caruth's work) largely fail to live up to this promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement. They fail on at least four counts: they marginalise or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. As a result of all of this, rather than promoting cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities.

Craps (2013:31) believes that one major error in the field of trauma theory is the idea that trauma theory "continues to adhere to the traditional event-based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event." Craps thinks that this way of looking at trauma is not inclusive of non-Western and/or minority groups. Craps (2013:32) argues that racism for example does not fit into the "classical" forms of trauma because it is not a catastrophic event with a before and after but exists as an ongoing experience amongst minority and/or non-westerns. He further argues that "understanding racism as a historical trauma, which can be worked through, would be to obscure the fact that it continues to cause damage in the present" (Craps 2013:32).

Throughout the development of trauma, there have been remarkable discoveries which have helped in understanding this complicated phenomenon. Rambo (2015:9-10) alludes that,

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Innovative technologies have also changed the shape of trauma studies and treatment. From expanding technologies in brain research to modifications in diagnoses of trauma disorders, we have more information about the impact of violent experiences and their effects on persons and communities. Such discoveries have made trauma studies a diagnosable and treatable condition. The study of trauma has also moved away from an exclusively individual look at the psyche to a study of cycles of history and the global and political effects of ongoing violence. The study of trauma has expanded to account for multiple levels of trauma: historical trauma, institutional trauma, and global trauma.[4]

When looking at the consequences of traumatic events or disasters, they bring about a disturbance with regard to people's ability to think, feel and believe (O'Connor 2011:2). O'Connor (2011:4) believes that trauma and disaster disturb how people speak (language) and it can even cause them to be in a state of muteness. Trauma and disaster automatically switches off people's ability to feel, it shuts down feelings and turns off human responses. Disaster and trauma affect one's relationship with God, other people, and the world.

As we delve into the impact of trauma and disasters, it's clear they disrupt human existence deeply, affecting thoughts, emotions, communication, connections, and faith. This leads us to essential questions. Building on this, Garber (2013) underscores the importance of studying trauma, especially psychological trauma and PTSD. Both scholars emphasise texts as witnesses to trauma, revealing fragments of human experience. This exploration helps us reimagine the profound impact of these events.

Garber (2013:422) thinks that the study of trauma begins with a basic knowledge of psychological trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Garber (2013:422) mentions that it is important to have texts that testify to trauma and argues that these texts have fragmented into an existing frame of reference. He argues that texts that testify to trauma act upon witnessing, which leads them to share certain characteristics. The encounter in some ways helps the community re-experience the

[4] See Rambo (2015:10)

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event of their catastrophe but because of the 'missed' nature of the encounter, any representation of the event in art and literature exists in a world beyond analogy.[5]

Stephens (2020:8) discusses what trauma does to the spiritual life of victims. He mentions that trauma brings about spiritual disruption. Trauma causes the victims to reassess who God is and their position with God (Stephens 2020:8). He mentions a couple of theologians and their contributions towards the effects trauma has on people.[6]

Trauma studies have contributed to the understanding that war, rape, and abuse leave victims with uneased consequences that even pass on to the next generation. Trauma studies cut across many diverse fields such as cognitive psychology, counselling, sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism (O'Connor 2011:2). O'Connor continues to argue that the shared hope of these investigations is to gain further understanding of the life-destroying effects of violence upon people and ultimately to find processes that help people endure, survive, and perhaps eventually thrive. The word trauma refers to the harmful impact of violence experienced by an individual.

Frechette and Boase (2016:4) identify three dominant threads influencing trauma hermeneutics which are psychological, sociological, and literary and cultural studies.[7]

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[5] See Garber (2013:422)

[6] Stephens (2020:8) mentions the following about theologians who have contributed to the field of trauma studies, "Jones examined its impact on our understanding of grace and the cross (Jones 2009). Beste wrestled with its implications for human freedom and divine grace (Beste 2007). Baldwin re-examined everything she had been taught about God and the human condition (Baldwin 2018). Whether viewed through the lens of theopoetic (Rambo 2010), reformed theology (Jones 2009), a revision of Rohmerian theology (Beste 2007), or the crucible of one's own faith journey (Baldwin 2018), trauma interrupts and reframes faith. It changes the way we think about God, sin, and salvation. Previously held theologies of atonement and redemption may prove unhelpful or even false" (Stephens 2020:8).

[7] Frechette & Boase (2016:4) further argue the following "Psychology contributes to our understanding of the effects of trauma on individuals and on those processes that facilitate survival, recovery, and resilience. Sociology provides insights into collective dimensions of traumatic experience. Literary and cultural studies open pathways for exploring the role and function of texts as they encode and give witness to traumatic suffering and construct discursive and aesthetic spaces for fostering recovery and resilience"

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Above we touched on the development of trauma and how it should be understood as a phenomenon. We now move on to understand trauma in a collective and how it affects communities.

2.4 Introduction: Collective, Cultural and Historical Trauma

This chapter will embark on defining the different trauma concepts namely collective, cultural and historical trauma. For some scholars, these terms describe the same thing, but I propose the contrary. Cultural trauma, collective trauma and historical trauma are related concepts, often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different nuances in their meanings. While collective trauma is a broader concept that refers to the shared psychological effects of trauma on a group, cultural trauma specifically looks at how a traumatic event impacts a culture's identity, values, and historical narrative. The two concepts are related because a traumatic event can cause both collective and cultural responses, but cultural trauma highlights the distinctive impact on a culture's sense of self and history.

Within the field of trauma studies, the concepts of collective, cultural, and historical trauma, while marked by nuanced differences, share a fundamental interconnectedness. They each encompass the profound implications of traumatic experiences on communities or groups of people. In essence, historical trauma deals with the psychological and emotional impact of specific historical events, often rooted in systemic oppression, while cultural trauma encompasses the broader effects on a group's identity, norms, and symbols in the wake of these events. While there is overlap between these concepts, they provide different perspectives on how trauma is experienced and transmitted across generations within a community. This section will focus on defining and expounding these trauma concepts as well as highlighting the differences.

2.4.1 Collective trauma

Hirschberger (2018:1) characterises collective trauma as the psychological aftermath of a traumatic event affecting an entire society. This perspective goes beyond merely acknowledging a historical incident that occurred within a group; it implies that the tragedy becomes an integral part of the group's collective memory. Just like any form

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of memory, it entails not only the recall of events but an ongoing process of reconstructing the trauma to gain a deeper understanding of its impact and significance.

Hirschberger (2018:1) highlights that collective trauma is different from individual trauma because collective memory of trauma persists beyond the directly affected group and is remembered by a group of members that may be far removed from the traumatic events in time and space. He argues that trauma survivors who did not experience the trauma first-hand remember the trauma differently from those who directly went through the traumatic event (Hirschberger 2018:1). Such collective memory of a calamity suffered in the past by a group's ancestors may give rise to a chosen trauma dynamic that weaves the connection between trauma, memory and ontological security (Hirschberger 2018:1).

Hirschberger (2018:2) states that individuals who went through traumatic events eventually shatter and lose their perspective on themselves, the world and their position in the world changes. He argues that the same applies to collective trauma. The society feels shuttered, the lives of survivors of the collective trauma are transformed and their perception of themselves, the world and their position in the world is changed. Alexander (2012:6) argues that,
cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

In an African context, collective trauma is emphasised because of *Ubuntu*[8]. Tutu (1999:29) thinks that *Ubuntu* is not "I think therefore I am." But suggests that *Ubuntu* means

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[8]*Ubuntu* is a Nguni phrase "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*," meaning "a person is a person through other peoples." According to Odari (2020:60), she writes that *Ubuntu* can be translated to "humanity towards other, humanness, or being human." Odari (2020:61) argues that "*Ubuntu* is a celebration of humanity and its lessons on the need to care for and respect each other. *Ubuntu* acknowledges that we are all connected and that what we do consciously or unconsciously impacts others."

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I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." He further argues that when someone has *ubuntu*, it means they are open to others, they support and encourage them. They do not become worried or feel threatened when others do well because they have a strong sense of self and know they are part of something bigger. They understand that when people are treated poorly, hurt, or oppressed, it diminishes not only those individuals but also all of us as a whole. So, *ubuntu* teaches us that our well-being is tied to the well-being of others, and we should care for each other. (Tutu 1999:29)

We see the interlink between cultural trauma and collective trauma clearly when looking at the African context. Culture cannot be separated from the collective in African communities. Tarus and Lowery (2017:306) write about the importance of a community for Africans and argue that people identify themselves as belonging to the community and that their identity is found in the community.

Tarus and Lowery (2017:306) continue saying that identity includes both individual and personal traits as well as social aspects acquired from the groups one belongs to. The term "community" entails the existence of people in a complex environment that includes their physical settings, past and future, and spirituality (Tarus and Lowery 2017:306). Furthermore, *Ubuntu* is a global anthropological truth, in that humans are recognised as social creatures; to be human is to be with others. In sociology, the term "social identity" refers to the part of a person's identity shaped by membership in a group. From a Christian theological perspective, ethnic diversity is part of the beautiful creation of God. Africans see their identity in the community.

Vervliet (2009:21) writes more on *Ubuntu* and argues that *Ubuntu* is part of an encompassing movement of reappraisal of the African 'heritage', which has grown throughout the nineties. According to the *Ubuntu* philosophy, human beings achieve their fullness in the community. Vervliet (2009:27) adds that *Ubuntu* refers to the complementarity of the individual and the community. This means that the person must participate in the life of the community.

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Collective trauma brings destruction and disturbance to the community that is meant to give you your identity. Hirschberger (2018:3) mentions that collective trauma may threaten collective identity. Hirschberger (2018:4) then writes about the reasons why victims of this collective trauma keep on remembering. He argues that the memory of trauma is shown to promote vigilance that may enhance actual group survival and restore a sense of efficacy (Hirschberger 2018:4). This process is there for the group to find a way to construct meaning around the experience of extreme adversity.

Another reason why victims of collective trauma remember is because of what (Hirschberger 2018:5) argues is a post-traumatic worldview. Hirschberger (2018:5) defines it and tells us that,

> a post-traumatic worldview that is characterised by extreme vigilance, compulsive attention to threat that may be accompanied with inattentional blindness to positive signals from other groups, and the sense that the group is alone in this world and must fend for itself.

Hirschberger (2018:7) also argues that trauma motivates self-continuity. He uses the term social representations theory in his arguments. The theory suggests that "the way people construe and explain historical events may have a marked impact on how they relate to the present, and what they expect from the future." Now, let us turn our focus to defining and discussing cultural trauma.

2.4.2 Cultural trauma

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subject to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (Alexander 2012:6). He further points out that cultural trauma is an empirical, scientific concept that suggests new meaningful and casual relationships between unrelated events and actions. Eyerman (2013:43) argues that cultural trauma is more abstract and mediated notions of collective identity, including religious and national identity. Cultural trauma as a scientific concept focuses on social responsibility and political action.

> It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilisations not only cognitively identify the existence and

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> source of human suffering but may also take on board some significant responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma in a manner that assumes such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the suffering of others (Alexander 2012:6).

Cultural trauma moved from the 'I' and placed its focus on 'we.' There is no individual pain and there is shared pain which is experienced by the society at large. Alexander (2012:7) believes that the advantage of cultural trauma is that it partakes so deeply in everyday life. He further mentions that people also have continually employed the language of trauma to explain what happens, not only to themselves but to the collectivities to which they belong as well (Alexander 2012:7). People who have experienced trauma speak out that they are traumatised when their environment suddenly shifts in an unforeseen and unwelcoming manner (Alexander 2012:7). Alexander (2012:7) argues that "trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society."

Alexander (2012:8) believes that "trauma is not located in the simple violence of the original event in an individual's past, but rather in its unassimilated returns—the way it was precisely not known in the first place—returns to haunt the survivors later on." Dube (2013:110) argues that cultural trauma does not exist from the event itself but from how the event is represented. It is the society that constructs the trauma. It is characterised by a gradual realisation by the community that its collective identity has been fundamentally shattered (Dube 2013:110). Cultural trauma represents a community that gradually realises that its existence as an effective source of support is threatened and that an aspect of the community has disappeared. Dube (2013:110) argues that trauma is a social process through which a particular event is represented as a fundamental threat to the existence of a community. What shatters the community is not the event itself but the community's meaning (as weak meaning-making processes).

> Cultural trauma occurs when the event is associated with cultural frameworks and symbols that make an event appear as a threat to collective identity. This is an important meaning-making stage in cultural trauma. The event is associated with a pre-existing pool of shared meaning present in the community. Thus, trauma is

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something that is created either during the event itself or after the event as a 'post hoc reconstruction' (Dube 2013:111).

Cultural trauma speaks to the societal perspective on a particular event. The event itself may not be traumatic but if the society interprets it as a threat to its identity and way of life, the society goes through a stage of trauma. Eyerman (2013:43) argues that cultural trauma(s) are not things but rather processes of meaning-making and attribution, contentious content in which various individuals and groups struggle to define a situation and to manage and control it. While collective trauma is a broader concept that refers to the shared psychological effects of trauma on a group, cultural trauma specifically looks at how a traumatic event impacts a culture's identity, values, and historical narrative. The two concepts are related because a traumatic event can cause both collective and cultural responses, but cultural trauma highlights the distinctive impact on a culture's sense of self and history. With that in mind, we will explore historical trauma in detail.

2.4.3 Historical trauma

Historical trauma theory is relatively new in public health and other disciples (Sotero 2006:93). The premise of this theory is that populations historically subjected to long-term, mass trauma—colonialism, slavery, war, genocide— exhibit a higher prevalence of disease even several generations after the original trauma occurred (Sotero 2006:93). In addition to this definition, Brave Hearts et al, (2011:283) argue that historical trauma "is defined as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma."

What lies at the core of historical trauma is the historical oppression of a minority or underprivileged group. Kirmayer et al, (2014:300) think that historical trauma describes the long-term impact of colonisation, cultural suppression, and historical oppression of many indigenous peoples. Historical trauma as a discipline was a result of a merger between historical oppression and psychological trauma (Hartmann & Gone

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2014:274-275).[9] Sotero outlines three theoretical frameworks in social epidemiology that make up historical trauma theory as a discipline.

Sotero (2006:94) introduces three distinct theoretical frameworks on the relationship between health and disease. The first framework, known as Psychosocial Theory, posits that both physical and psychological stressors originating from one's social environment not only create disease susceptibility but also directly act as pathogenic mechanisms affecting biological systems within the body. The second, Political/Economic Theory, addresses the broader determinants of health and disease, encompassing elements like unequal power dynamics and class disparities. Finally, the third framework, Social/Ecological Systems Theory, recognises the intricate, multilevel dynamics and interdependencies in disease causation, taking into account various factors such as historical influences, proximate and distal determinants, and life course events, all of which collectively shape health and disease outcomes.

Sotero (2006:94-95) adds that four distinct assumptions underpin historical trauma theory.

> (1) mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population; (2) trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period; (3) traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma; and (4) the magnitude of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists across generations.

Sotero (2006:95) concludes by pointing out that three basic constructs of historical trauma theory are the historical trauma experience, the historical trauma response,

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[9] Gone and Trimble (2012:132-135) further argue the need for this merge and write that "The justification for this focus is that the harmful impacts of racial oppression on the health and well-being of Indigenous people is rarely characterised as racial trauma but readily characterised as historical trauma. This follows from the fact that race, racial identity, and racial discrimination affect Indigenous community members differently than for other contemporary ethno-racial minority groups."

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and the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma, which now leads to a discussion of the last-mentioned point. Studying the transmission of historical trauma is vital as it unveils the enduring impact of past traumas on present generations. This understanding is essential for healing, and breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma, helping us address ongoing legacies of injustice. Now, let us explore how historical trauma can be transmitted from one generation to another.

2.5 Transmission of Historical Trauma

Traumatic experiences live beyond those who are the direct recipients (Prager 2016:18). What we have inherited from our parents is more than genes (Coetzer 2007:1). According to Coetzer (2007:1-2) intergenerational transmission of trauma is a new focus within the field of traumatic stress. Intergenerational transmission of trauma was first observed in 1966 by clinicians as they received an alarming number of children born by Nazi Holocaust survivors seeking treatment in clinics in Canada. These children were showing behaviour such as conduct disorder, personality problems, inadequate maturity, excessive dependence, and poor coping skills. Coetzer (2007:2-3) mentions five theories of trauma transmission:

1. Empathic traumatisation. This term is used to describe the offspring's attempts to understand their parents' wartime experiences and pain as a means of establishing a connection with them.
2. Children adopt their parents' trauma through one of two types of parental communication, namely an obsessive retelling of Holocaust stories, and silence.
3. Intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs when the traumatised parent implants his or her emotional instability into their children.
4. The female offspring of trauma victims are more likely to unknowingly adopt the trauma-related symptoms of their mothers.
5. Survivor parents attempt to teach their children how to survive in the event of further persecution; thus, they inadvertently transmit their own traumatic experiences. These children then often act out the trauma-survival behaviour adopted by their parents and become highly sensitive to trauma imagery during same-age anniversaries of their parents' trauma.

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Prager (2016:18) argues that identity development becomes severely hindered because children of trauma victims have not been able to experience themselves as persons occupying a particular discrete location in time and space. We have seen that there are quite a lot more similarities than differences between the three different trauma concepts I have expounded on above. In the next section, I will turn our attention to discussing trauma studies in biblical studies.

2.6 Trauma Studies in Biblical Studies

Becker (2014:25) argues that trauma studies create an interdisciplinary space for exploration, even though the subjects of study can be quite diverse. In the field of psychiatry, the primary focus is on providing treatment to individual trauma survivors. In sociology, the attention shifts to the broader society, examining how trauma can potentially affect entire communities. In historical research, the goal is to identify past traumatic events that may have continued to influence later generations. In text-based humanities like Biblical studies, we begin by analysing and interpreting various texts. These texts serve as valuable historical and literary sources, offering insights into religious, cultural, and literary reflections on trauma and its effects. Some of these texts may even be imaginative literary depictions of traumatic experiences.

O'Connor (2014:211) mentions the benefit of using trauma studies in Biblical studies, particularly the book of Jeremiah and writes that findings from trauma studies have a profound impact on the study of Jeremiah. They enable us to uncover deeper layers of human suffering within the intricate historical contexts that shaped the Bible's texts. Instead of solely exploring the history of how these texts were created, we now shift our gaze toward understanding how they served traumatised readers. In doing so, we gain valuable insights into the content that may challenge and unsettle modern Western readers.

O'Connor (2014:212) argues that the exploration of trauma and disaster theories enriches our understanding of life in ancient Judah, both during and after the Babylonian Period. Trauma and disaster theories can penetrate the 'objective' facade of history, revealing the profound human suffering hidden beneath. This, in turn, aids

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historical inquiries into ancient settings, shedding light on the contexts that gave rise to the texts. She further mentions that "trauma and disaster theories also expand our historical imagination by pointing to typical lingering effects of disaster upon victims after physical safety has been restored" (O'Connor 2014:212).

Rambo (2010:4) mentions that theologians have always engaged in the perennial question of human suffering. The question faced by most theologians is how to account for the suffering that is happening in the world. From this question arises other questions such as 'Is God responsible for the suffering? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't God fix the situation'? These questions pertain to God's power, will and presence and they are central for religious persons interpreting their experiences of suffering and the suffering around them. Rambo (2010:4) argues that trauma studies tackle one common theological discourse about suffering which is indicated as theodicy in the theological discourse: "the theoretical practice of reconciling claims about the goodness of God with the presence of evil in the world." She further mentions that the discussion around theodicy and its effectiveness in healing trauma is unclear since the main objective of this discourse is to offer an understanding of the discourse rather than to assist with suffering.

Several scholars have written research on the discourse of theodicy. Beyerlien et al, (2022:495) argue that theodicy refers to "believers' attempts to understand and sometimes justify why something is happening in terms of the action or inaction of gods or God." They further argue that these explanations offered by people can help them preserve or even strengthen religious faith in the face of disease and disaster (Beterlien et al, 2022:495). Li & Ma (2022:362) argue that the theodicy can be understood as God's goodness despite human suffering.

They associate God's silence with theodicy whereby they point out that God can be and has been silent in traumatising and overwhelming situations. Another definition of theodicy is from Taylor Winfield who argues that theodicy "refers to the intellectual process of understanding how a benevolent God could allow suffering" (Winfield 2021:205). According to Winfield (2021:205), the word theodicy is derived from the Greek words *Θεός* (God) and *δίκη* (justice) because it "explores logical strategies to vindicate God from moral culpability for evil."

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Beterlien et al, (2022:496) use the famous work by sociologist Max Weber to identify two broad families of theodicies: a "theodicy of suffering" in which people turn to religion to explain perplexing situations (why "bad things" happen to "good people") and a theodicy of "good fortune." Focused on explaining why certain individuals or categories of people are blessed with riches, health, or other forms of success and fortune. Winfield (2021:205) put forward three ideal types of theodicies according to Weber. Max Weber applied theodicy to the social sciences to analyse the mental frameworks individuals adopt to understand suffering. He provided three ideal types of theodicy: dualism, karma, and predestination. In dualism, suffering is the consequence of the fight between the forces of darkness and the forces of light, which will eventually succeed. Suffering occurs in the karma framework as the result of past misbehaviour, whereas predestination connects suffering with a divine plan—a plan that humans are unable to fully comprehend.

Mark Scott further explored how theodicy not only explains evil but also how a person "strives to overcome and transform [evil] through various practical responses" (2012:20). He argues that theodicy functions to give people a sense of meaning, orientation, and hope amid despair, thereby reinforcing rather dismantling their religious worldview (Scott 2012:22).

He introduced "theodicy as navigation"—individuals employ religious tools (sacred texts, tradition, and ritual) to navigate "from dis-orientation to orientation and from confusion to resolution" (Scott 2012:22). People use theodicy to "chart their way" through suffering, as a crew moves their ship (their beliefs) through turbulent waters (existential chaos) (Scott 2012:21). Scott explicitly recognised the potential of using "the analogy of navigation for exploring theodicy through the lens of ritual theory" and noted that the ritual dimension of theodicy has been undertheorised (Scott 2012:20–21).

Returning to the developments of trauma in the field of Biblical studies, according to Rambo (2010:5), in the mid-to-late 20th century the question of suffering/divine suffering was at the forefront of contemporary theology. Theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann shared their views on the crucifixion and argued that God did not stand

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outside of the event of the cross but rather was experiencing the suffering of the cross as well. Moltamann and other 20thcentury theologians were perceived to be accounting for the violence and atrocities that took place during the 20thcentury. There were counter arguments from womanist and feminist theologians who believed that "theologies of the cross have glorified suffering and provided sacred validation for the perpetuation of oppressive systems for persons and communities on the margins (Rambo 2010:5)."

Garber (2015:25) mentions that the first use of trauma studies was when it used an interpretive lens with the application of insights found in psychology to research the Bible. Groenewald argues that,
biblical trauma hermeneutics has developed as a result of the dialogue with different disciplines and theoretical frameworks. Biblical scholars have applied the concept of trauma as an important tool to interpret biblical texts. It is important to emphasise that trauma theory is not a method of interpretation, but a lens used to read and interpret biblical texts.

Rambo (2010:5) believes that trauma studies and theological engagement with it call attention to new aspects of the conversation about suffering. The emergence of trauma studies and its intersection with theological inquiry has ushered in a fresh perspective on the discourse surrounding human suffering. In recent times, theologians engaging with the subject of trauma have come to recognise that it demands a unique theological articulation. Trauma introduces distinct dimensions that propel theology into uncharted territories. As we witness suffering through the lens of trauma, it prompts us to question how this evolution reshapes the theological conversation. This transformation challenges theologians to explore and redefine their theological frameworks in response to the profound impact and intricate nuances that trauma introduces into the discourse of human suffering (Rambo 2010:5).

Rambo (2010:5) further writes that:

> The work of theologians such as Flora Keshgegian, Serene Jones, Cynthia Hess, and Jennifer Beste suggests that trauma poses unique challenges, transforming the discourse about suffering, God, redemption, and theological anthropology in significant ways. Their work testifies to the fact that trauma is not simply a category that can be

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> confined to the fields of psychology and counselling; it has broadened to present profound challenges to epistemology, constructions of the self, and theological understandings of time.

Trauma studies as a discipline gives opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement and discussion. Becker argues that "trauma studies, thus, opens up space for interdisciplinary research, even though the objects of study may vary significantly." She explains how other disciplines can tackle and conduct their research on trauma, and makes an interesting argument that in biblical studies, "we start by reading and interpreting various texts, these texts either appear as historical or literary sources to and religious and cultural reflections on trauma and traumatisation.

Garber (2015:24) says that in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Hebrew Bible scholars refocused attention on the experience of the Babylonian exile and its effects on the people of Judah. The rise of various critical approaches such as psychological biblical criticism, poststructuralist and postmodern biblical interpretation, ideological criticism, and postcolonial theory has prompted scholars to explore biblical texts in a new light by incorporating the insights of trauma theory. It's important to clarify that employing trauma theory is not a rigid method of interpretation; rather, it serves as a valuable framework for examining the Bible. When coupled with different forms of biblical criticism, it has the potential to yield compelling and thought-provoking results in the study of biblical literature and the societies that gave rise to it.

According to Garber (2015:24-25) this perspective, rooted in trauma theory, has evolved beyond its initial focus on exile-related literature, expanding to encompass a broader spectrum of biblical texts. This expansion reflects the recognition that trauma is not exclusive to one particular approach or historical context; instead, it is an intrinsic aspect of the human condition that underpins the creation of a wide variety of biblical writings. In essence, this approach encourages us to consider the profound impact of trauma on the human experience as it reverberates throughout different biblical narratives and their respective historical settings. In doing so, scholars and theologians gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role that trauma plays within the Bible and the communities that shaped its development.

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In conclusion, I will use the work by O'Connor where she highlights several ways trauma and disaster theories can inform many aspects of biblical interpretation.

- She argues that trauma and disaster by shining a light on the suffering embedded in violent historical contexts and the resulting human needs, trauma and disaster theories enhance our ability to empathise with the people of the past. These theories shift the focus of academic inquiry away from simply dissecting the text's origins and sources, encouraging a deeper examination of how literature interacts with the lives of its readers. This approach enriches the analysis of reader responses (O'Connor 2014:219).
- These theories encourage us to explore not only what the text explicitly states but also how it functions within the broader context. Instead of treating the text as if it emerged in isolation, providing universal truths about God, we consider how it responds to the specific challenges and experiences of its time (O'Connor 2014:219).
- Trauma and disaster theories emphasise the symbolic nature of the text, challenging interpretations that view these texts as straightforward historical reports or literal accounts of spoken words. Instead, they recognise the texts as products of creative literary artistry, offering therapeutic and post-traumatic interventions through their symbolism (O'Connor 2014:219).
- Looking through the lens of trauma and disaster theories, we see the text as a form of symbolic artistic expression and a means of artistic healing. It acknowledges the profound impact of trauma and seeks to engage with readers on a deeper, more therapeutic level (O'Connor 2014:219).
- Trauma and disaster theories can offer guidance in confirming matters of dating of sources within texts like Jeremiah and across biblical books that reflect that period (O'Connor 2014:220).
- Trauma and disaster theories turn biblical books that are seen to be filled with violence, disaster, trauma, punishment and sin into books that are used in pastoral care (O'Connor 2014:220).
- Trauma and disaster theories provide a theological lens to re-evaluate Jeremiah's portrayal of a punishing God. While some find these texts unpalatable when seen as making universal claims about the divine, for victims of violence, they can offer crucial cosmic support, helping them maintain their

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faith and restore meaning to their community. Trauma theories remind us that theological language is an imperfect attempt to express the ineffable (O'Connor 2014:220).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the multifaceted nature of trauma and its significance in various academic disciplines, with a particular focus on its relevance in Biblical studies. We began by emphasising the importance of defining the term "trauma" accurately, highlighting that it refers to the event or incident itself, rather than the individual's reaction to it. The emergence of trauma studies as a distinct field of inquiry was discussed, tracing its roots to the early 1990s and its development as a response to human suffering and its cultural representation.

We then delved into the distinctions between collective, cultural, and historical trauma. While these terms are often used interchangeably, we proposed nuanced differences. Collective trauma pertains to the psychological aftermath of traumatic events affecting an entire society, while cultural trauma focuses on the impact of such events on a culture's identity and values. Historical trauma, on the other hand, deals with the intergenerational effects of long-term, mass trauma on populations. The transmission of historical trauma was also explored, highlighting that traumatic experiences can transcend generations, impacting descendants in various ways.

Finally, we discussed the relevance of trauma studies in Biblical studies. Even within this text-based discipline, there is a recognition of the importance of exploring trauma, as religious texts can offer insights into the cultural, historical, and literary reflections on trauma. In conclusion, the study of trauma is a complex and interdisciplinary endeavour that transcends time and cultural boundaries. It offers a lens through which we can better comprehend human suffering, resilience, and the impact of traumatic events on individuals and communities. As we continue to explore trauma in various academic fields, we gain a deeper understanding of its far-reaching implications in shaping our collective memory and cultural narratives.

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CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

3.1 Introduction

The Book of Jeremiah is situated between Isaiah and Ezekiel and is an immensely complex book. Jeremiah was the second of the three major prophets found in the Hebrew Bible (and Old Testament). According to Stulman (2005:1), the book of Jeremiah is the longest prophetic writing in the Hebrew Bible. It tells of a people whose lives are wrecked with pain and loss, and it portrays raw emotions and disturbing images of the disaster that resulted in the collapse of the nation. It talks about the defeat of Judah in 587/6 BCE by Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE). This defeat shattered Judah's social and political order and left the survivors traumatised.

To understand the message of the book of Jeremiah, one must take note of the fact that Jeremiah's ministry and message are combined into the fabric of Jeremiah's world. It is of importance that one must understand the events that happened around the historical prophet. This chapter is focused on outlining the political context of Jeremiah's world. This includes the political history before, during and after his prophetic ministry. Also, to be expounded on is the character and the person the prophet was. To understand the prophet is to understand his message which leads us to the discussion around the authorship of the book. Understanding who wrote the book allows for a thorough analysis of the content and to determine its original intent and meaning. Further in this chapter, I will go through the themes that make up the theology of the book.

3.2 Historical background of Jeremiah

3.2.1 The last days of the Assyrian Empire

The closing years of the seventh century BCE were characterised by political discomfort. The time in the ANE was a turbulent era that most scholars describe as a time of crisis and transition. Huey (1993:19) argues that "the stability that had characterised the years of political and military domination by Assyria in northern Mesopotamia came to an abrupt end in 609 BCE with Assyria's capitulation to a

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coalition of nations led by the emerging city-state Babylon, fifty miles south of Baghdad." Assyria had been one of the most powerful empires of the ANE and its power began to go on a decline quickly after reaching its zenith of its political and cultural achievements. Its ruler Ashurbanipal was at the centre of this decline and scholars regarded him as a capable ruler in charge of a long sinking ship.

Esarhaddon ascended the Assyrian throne in 681 BCE, he established order out of chaos which followed the death of his father, Sennacherib the son of Sargon II. Esarhaddon was a vigorous ruler and he made sure that he quickly established the situation at home and squelched an uprising in Babylon, as this empire was a constant threat to the Assyrians. He then partially conquered Egypt in 671 BCE and embarked on a second campaign after the Egyptian Pharoah had rebelled. It was on the march to Egypt that Esarhaddon died, and his son Ashurbanipal completed the campaign and crushed the Egyptian rebellion. Assyria through Ashurbanipal was in control of Egypt and had everything under control (Huey 1993:19).

Smith (1961:418) writes that,

> Ashurbanipal's troubles, however, were compounded. Unrest arose, as usual, in Babylon even though the king's older brother served there as deputy king. Finally, open rebellion broke out and the Elamites and the peoples of the Iranian mountains took advantage of the revolt and attacked Assyria. In the west, Egypt and the smaller states, perhaps including Judah (2 Chron. 33:11), rebelled as always at the sign of trouble in the Assyrian homeland. As if this were not trouble enough, the tribes of the Arabian desert overran Edom, Moab, and other parts of eastern Palestine and Syria.
>
> After this struggle, Ashurbanipal managed to put the chaos under his control and restored order across his territory. Since Egypt was lost, Ashurbanipal did not attempt to reclaim Egypt.

There began a decline in military activity and that destroyed the strength of the empire. It was when Ashurbanipal died around 631 BCE when the end was nearing. Neither of his sons who succeeded him managed to deal with the falling Assyrian empire. Huey (1993:19) writes that Assyria was over-extended and that it had a lot of battles and wars to fight with limited resources. MacGinnis (2018:276) mentions that it is not

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only military decline that led to the downfall of the Assyrian empire.[10] Psammetichus I of Egypt (664-610) started withholding tribute from the Assyrians and later declared his independence from Assyria. Nabopolassar managed to push the Assyrians out of Babylonia after nearly ten years of fighting, and he was formally crowned king of Babylon in 626 BCE (Smith 1961:419). Nabopolassar took advantage of the unrest and civil war in the Assyrian empire and he also declared independence from the Assyrians. Nineveh was captured by the Babylonians as well as Medes in 612 BCE, and the last Assyrian resistance ended in 609 BCE at Haran.

The Babylonian empire grew in power and started to become a major world power. The pursuit of becoming the major power came with resistance from Egypt as they perceived Babylon as a greater threat than Assyria. This resulted in Egypt challenging the Babylonians at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE. Babylon won the battle and was the undisputed ruler of the ANE (Jer. 46:2-12). Smaller nations like Judah started transferring their loyalty to Babylon. Nabopolassar eventually died and his son Nebuchadnezzar was called home to take charge of the now-powerful Babylonian empire. Babylon and Assyria shared a common culture and language but the two centres had always been rivals (Huey 1993:19).

3.2.2 Josiah's reform: Its major features and significance

Judah was under the Assyrian domination since the days of King Ahaz (735-715 BCE, 2 Kgs 16:7-8; Isa 7:1-8:18). Bright (1972:315) argues that Manasseh had remained a submissive vassal to the Assyrians and was succeeded by his son Amon (641-640 BCE). King Amon was soon assassinated by certain of his palace family presumably high officials. It was then the "people of the land" who appointed Amon's little son, Josiah, to be king. With the weakening of the Assyrian empire, Judah under King Josiah (639-609 BCE) also gained independence (Jer 22:1-17). Assyria did not have enough power to come against Josiah's reform. Stulman (2005:2) writes that Josiah

[10] MacGinnis (2018:276) further argues that "Assyria was caught in the classic imperial spiral whereby the existence of the empire could only be achieved by a continued expansion that was not sustainable. On the periphery, the conquest and holding of distant territories entailed costs greater than the benefits that could be extracted, while at the same time bringing Assyria into contact with an ever greater number of potential enemies. The population of the heartland was critically diluted by deportees and by the influx of Aramaean tribes. In some years climatic hardship caused crops to fail. The death of Assyria was to be predicted."

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was able to reverse the pro-Assyrian policies of his grandfather, Manasseh[11], and brought about a new identity in Judah. In 622 BCE Judah underwent a reform like no other where Josiah demanded other religions to sweep and reconcentrate the attention to worshiping YHWH. According to 2 Kgs 22-23, Josiah made efforts to restore the temple and to centralise worship in Jerusalem. He restored "The Book of the Law" to its former place of pre-eminence. Judah was stable during the final years of Josiah's reign (622-609 BCE).

Holladay (2010:12) argues that Josiah during his time ushered in a reform that would change the central worship of Judah. Josiah sponsored a renovation of Jerusalem's temple facilities. A scroll was discovered which purported to be the words of Moses to Israel.[12] Holladay (2010:12) thinks that the scroll that was discovered was at least the core of the book of Deuteronomy.[13] Josiah had the scroll authenticated by a prophetess, Huldah, who certified the authenticity of the scroll. Josiah was abashed at how far the public practice of religion has drifted from what the scroll commands. He then had the scroll read publicly and made sure that citizens adhered to the commandments on the scroll, and he led the people to a "covenant" with YHWH.[14]

Carr (2010:133) argues that scholars have described the processing during Josiah's kingship as "Josiah's reform."[15] Continuing with his reform, Josiah commanded all the priests to remove the statue of the goddess Asherah from the temple of Jerusalem as well as other elements related to Baal and all deities other than YHWH. He further destroyed all sanctuaries (high places) outside Jerusalem and removed their priests (2 Kgs 23:5, 8-14). Finally, Josiah commanded that the Passover be nationalised and

[11] Grabbe (2007:201) argues that there is evidence that suggests that Judah played a part in enhancing the economy of the Assyrian empire during the time of Manasseh. Grabbe (2007:201-203) writes more about the rulership of Manasseh.
[12] See also Stulman (2005:2) and Carr (2010:133)
[13] See Bright (1972:318) as he also supports the Josiah scroll to be some part of the book of Deuteronomy.
[14] Bright (1972:316-317) argues that Josiah's reform did not begin with the scroll. According to Bright (1972:316) the reform took place in Josiah's eighteenth year (622 BCE) when he was in the process of repairing the temple. He further argues that for the fact that the temple was being repaired when the scroll was found, it indicates that the reform was already in progress. Bright (1972:317) regards the repairing and purification of the temple as a reform measure.
[15] Cf. Leuchter (2006) wrote an insightful book about Josiah's reform. Also, Grabbe (2007:206) argues that there is a possibility that this reform might be an invention of the Deuteronomist since there are no extra-Biblical texts that speak about such a reform.

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have people from the entire kingdom, north and south gather together in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (2 Kgs 23:22).

Carr (2010:134) argues that the reform by Josiah aimed at restoring David's Jerusalem-centered kingdom spanning from north and south as well as achieving independence from Assyria. One area of contention amongst scholars is the reason why the scroll Josiah found considered a portion of the book of Deuteronomy. Carr (2010:135) uses the work by the German scholar Wilhelm De Wette and argues that the reason the scroll is considered to be the book of Deuteronomy is that the laws in the book of Deuteronomy start with an instruction to destroy all non-Yahwistic worship items and local sanctuaries and to worship YHWH in one place only. (Deuteronomy 12), and that is similar to what Josiah did in his reform. The book of Deuteronomy also includes the laws for coming together in one central worship place for festivals (Deuteronomy 16) and that is what Josiah did especially with the nationalising of the Passover.

3.2.3 The death of Josiah and Egyptian domination

Huey (1993:20) mentions that Judah was ensnared in the power struggle between Egypt and Babylon and that led to King Josiah's death at the battle of Megiddo (609 BCE), now part of the territory of the reunited Israel, as he tried to halt an Egyptian army from reaching the last remnant of Assyria's resistance at Haran (2 Chr 35:20-24). Bright (1972:324) points out that we are not so sure as to why Josiah went to stop the Egyptians. Was it that he formed alliances with Babylon as Hezekiah once had, or was he acting out independently, we do not know.

Kratz (2015:30) argues that as Necho II moved forward in northern Syria in 609 BCE to reinforce the remaining Assyrian stronghold of Harran and secure his influence in Palestine against the rising Babylonian power, Josiah committed the imprudent act of confronting Necho at Megiddo. Whether he aimed to halt the Egyptian incursion or misunderstood the situation, hoping to welcome Necho II under the belief that he was campaigning against the Assyrians, Josiah, in any case, paid for his imprudence with his life (Kratz 2015:30). The death of Josiah was very tragic as he was returned dead in his chariot to Jerusalem where people were full of lamentation.

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Judah was then under the power of the Egyptians under Pharoah Necho II (610-598 BCE) and he appointed Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, as Judah's new king. Jehoahaz supported the anti-Egyptian party and Necho realised this after three months and decided to deport him and took him to Egypt as a prisoner. Necho then replaced Jehoahaz with another of Josiah's sons, wicked[16] Jehoiakim (609-598 BCE). Bright (1972:324) mentions that things in Judah got worse. Jehoiakim as an Egyptian vassal, raised the head tax on all free citizens. It was under the rulership of Jehoiakim that the reform made by Josiah relapsed. Pagan practises were resumed and public morality deteriorated. Huey (1993:20) argues that after Egypt's defeat at Carchemish in 605 BCE, Jehoiakim, even though he was not a willing vassal, transferred his allegiance to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:1).

3.2.4 The Babylonian advance and the destruction of Jerusalem

In 601 BCE Nebuchadnezzar moved against Egypt and there he fought against Necho. The battle did not see either empire emerging victorious, as both sides endured significant losses. Nebuchadnezzar saw this as a loss and returned home to reorganise his army. Encouraged by this, Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonians (2 Kgs 24:1). In 598 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar dispatched an army to suppress the rebellion. Additionally, other vassals opted for rebellion, seeking independence.

Jehoiakim passed away before a prolonged siege of Jerusalem, and there is speculation that some of his people might have assassinated him to facilitate more favourable negotiations for peace with Nebuchadnezzar. His son Jehoiachin replaced him and took the throne for only three months and in the end, the city surrendered to the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar deposed him and took him to Babylon in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24:8). Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with Zedekiah (Mattaniah) who is another of Josiah's sons. But it seemed as though Zedekiah did not learn from his brother's disastrous attempt to go against Babylon (Huey 1993:20).

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[16] I share the sentiments with Bright (1972:325) where he argues that "Jehoiakim was no worthy successor of his father but a petty tyrant unfit to rule." His reason for this was Jehoiakim's irresponsible disregard of his subjects when he used forced labour to build a new and finer palace because he believed his father's palace was not aesthetic (Jer 22:13-19).

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He was encouraged to come against Babylon by Pharoah Hophra (589-570 BCE) who was the successor of Psammetichus II (594- 589 BCE) as he was promised help by the Egyptians. Nebuchadnezzar responded by sending his army to destroy Jerusalem. Stulman (2005:3) argues that things started going for the worst during Zedekiah's rule. He argues that war, deportation, heavy tribute, and political domination had taken their toll during Zedekiah's rule (Stulman 2020:4). Jeremiah attempted to persuade Zedekiah to submit to Babylon, but the king instead sided with Jeremiah's opponents and they rebelled against Babylon. Judah was declared independent in 589 BCE by Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar responded to this uprising.

He placed Jerusalem under siege that lasted for eighteen months when the defenders were weakened by hunger, disease, and low morale.[17] The walls were then breached and Jerusalem was taken in and destroyed including the revered temple. Several people were sent to Babylon into exile under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:1-21). Nebuchadnezzar did not want a rebellion from Judah and therefore incorporated Judah into his empire as a province and appointed Gedaliah, a member of a noble Judahite family, as governor (2 Kgs 25:22-26; Jer 40:1-12).

The tenure of his governance is unknown until he was assassinated by a certain Ishmael (41:1-3). Stulman (2005:4) describes Ishmael as a member of the royal family and the leader of a small band of resistance fighters who assassinated Gedaliah at the provincial capital Mizpah (Jer 41:1-3). He continued his killing spree until Johanan and other loyalists to the slain governor pursued Ishmael and forced him out of the country. Huey (1993:21) concludes by mentioning that many of Gedaliah's supporters,

[17] Bright (1972:329) writes a more detailed report and writes that "At least by January 588 (I Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4) their army arrived and, placing Jerusalem under blockade (cf. Jer. 21:3-7), began the reduction of outlying strong points, taking them one by one until finally, later in the year, only Lachish and Azekah were left (Jer. 34:6f). The fall of Azekah is perhaps illustrated by one of the Lachish Letters, in which an officer in charge of an observation post writes to the garrison commander in Lachish that the fire signals of Azekah can no longer be seen. Morale in Judah sank, with many even of her leaders feeling her case to be hopeless. Probably in the summer of 588, news that an Egyptian army was advancing forced the Babylonians to lift the siege of Jerusalem temporarily (Jer. 37:5). Perhaps the Egyptians marched in response to a direct appeal by Zedekiah, possibly reflected in another of the Lachish Letters (III), which tells us that the commander of Judah's army went to Egypt at about this time. A wave of relief swept over Jerusalem, with only Jeremiah continuing to predict the worst (Jer. 37:6-10; 34:21 f.). And, unwelcome though his words undoubtedly were, he was correct. The Egyptian force was quickly driven back and the siege resumed."

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fearing Babylonian retaliation, fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 42:1- 43:7).[18]

3.3 The prophet Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah is not intended to speak about the prophet but the figure of Jeremiah is often the focus of this book. Carr (2010:157) believes that Jeremiah's prophetic career overlapped those of Nahum and Zephaniah, but it continued well into the time of Josiah's reform and after he died in 609 BCE. Jeremiah also witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE under Zedekiah and later fled (or was taken) to Egypt. Carr (2010:157) believes that Jeremiah's prophecy addressed individuals in both the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) regions, likely reflecting the inclination towards the unification of the north and south evident in Josiah's reform. Carr (2010:157) gives an example in Jeremiah 3:12–14, 19–23, where Jeremiah is summoned to prophesy "to the north," urging inhabitants from the former kingdom of Israel to repent and gather in Jerusalem. Broadly, Jeremiah's prophecies were harsh and were directed against false worship, futile political alliances, injustices, and false prophecies of hope. We see these themes occurring throughout the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah seems to find his prophetic call very difficult and we see him lamenting to God and protesting about the unfair task God has given him (Jer 20:7-18). It is said of Jeremiah that he has continued to write that he has no choice but to speak the word of God because if he does not, the word inside him becomes "like a burning fire raging in my bones; I cannot keep holding it in" (Jer 20:9).

Huey (1993:23) introduces Jeremiah as the most "human" prophet we see in the Hebrew Bible. This is because more is known about him and his inner life than any other prophet. He further writes that "Jeremiah exhibited qualities of courage, compassion, and sensitivity. He also revealed a darker side of moodiness, introspection, loneliness, doubt, and retribution toward his enemies." Harrison (1973:34) argues that Jeremiah seems to be unusual because of the extent to which he revealed his personal feelings. We see Jeremiah expressing openly his deep and turbulent emotions as God's spokesperson. People regard him as the "weeping

[18] Cf. Job (2006) regarding the Judean kings.

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prophet", that should not be understood as him showing signs of weakness but his passion and love for his people. This characterises him as a courageous prophet who bore the pain of his people.

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. We are not certain and it is not mentioned that Jeremiah himself was a priest. Harrison (1973:34) argues Jeremiah has a level of awareness about responsibilities which the priests traditionally excised in connection with the law. It also seems that Jeremiah has some knowledge about the traditions of the Torah, especially in the matter of understanding the Sanai covenant and the maledictions associated with its neglect or disavowal (Dt. 28:15-68). Jeremiah was not married when he was called to be a prophet and we later in Jer 16:1-4 that he was forbidden to marry. Jeremiah was under twenty years of age when he was called "in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah" (Jer 1:2).

Huey (1993:24) suggests that,

> there are four distinct periods in Jeremiah's ministry: (1) 627-609 BCE, from the date of his call to the death of King Josiah; (2) 609-597 BCE, from Josiah's death to the deportation of King Jehoiachin to Babylon; (3) 597-587 BCE, the years of the reign of King Zedekiah to the fall of Jerusalem; and (4) from the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE to Jeremiah's involuntary flight to Egypt, where the story abruptly ends. The reader is told nothing about his final years or his death.

Fischer (2015:357-358) writes that throughout the book of Jeremiah, we see the prophet going through some suffering. We see in Jer 38:6 that Jeremiah was taken into custody and that the prison was more traumatising than the prisons we have in the present day. Jeremiah also starved and we see that first in Jer 37:21 describing his daily provision of one loaf of bread in the courtyard and the next reference is in Jer 38:9.

3.4 Authorship

It is quite clear that Jeremiah did not write the book himself. Then this leaves us with a question as to who wrote the book. Certainly, no one knows the answer to that question, but we can explain how the book developed to its final product. I do concur

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with Goldingay (2021:8) that the authors of the book are anonymous and that these were people who took responsibility for Jeremiah's message, put it into an orderly form, pointed out its significance to people who might read the scroll and then told stories about him. The reason for the anonymity might be that the people were not focused on making themselves known but the focus was on the prophet, his life, his prophecies, and the nation of Israel. The writings of Jeremiah's prophecies happened after the fall of Jerusalem, but their work continued for some time at least until the release of Jehoiachin in 562 BCE (Goldingay 2021:8).

Huey (1993:26) uses the word by B. Duhm to describe his three principal sources or types of materials that constituted the book:

> (1) the only authentic oracles by Jeremiah are the poetic portions in the *qinah* meter- plus Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (chap. 29), a total of about 280 verses; (2) a prose biography by Baruch, about 220 verses; and (3) everything else, attributed to a succession of editors rather than to Jeremiah.

Chisholm (2002:153) argues that,

> a comparison of the traditional Hebrew (Masoretic) text with the ancient Greek version (Septuagint) suggests that the book existed in at least two canonical forms in ancient times. The Greek version is approximately one-eighth shorter than the Hebrew version. Furthermore, the oracles against the nations, which appear in chapters 46–51 in the Hebrew text, follow 25:13 in the Greek version and display a different internal arrangement.

Goldingay (2021:9) gives his interpretation of the two versions of Jeremiah and argues that there might have been people, he calls them,

> Jeremiah's disciplines" who assembled the collections of his messages, updated them and applied them to their daily lives through reworking and telling stories about Jeremiah. He further argues that "the process went on until the 550s or 540s, maybe in Egypt (where Jeremiah had ended up), maybe in Babylon (where influential exiles lived), or maybe in Judah (where there was an ongoing Judahite community). People thus carried on developing versions of the scroll, as people carried on writing the Gospels (Mark, then Matthew ...). The scroll's two editions thus resulted from the communities' sharing of the scroll over subsequent decades.

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There is also a perspective that a Deuteronomic editor had a hand in the composition of Jeremiah. Fretheim (2002:27) mentions that there is a presence of a common style and perspective in seventh-century Judah that Jeremiah himself might have appropriated. Several Jeremiah passages comprise a style, vocabulary, and perspective similar to that of the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. Another compelling piece of evidence is the emphasis on the concern with infidelity to YHWH which is primarily an issue centred on the first commandment and a breakdown in the relationship between God and people (Fretheim 2002:26). This indicated that there was a hand in the editing of Jeremiah.

3.5 The Theology/Message of Jeremiah

In this section will study the themes that we find in the book of Jeremiah. These themes can be understood as the theology or message of the book.

3.5.1 God

It is probable that Jeremiah through his family background and upbringing had an idea of who God was. It was within his family that he learnt the great traditions of Israel's faith that had been passed on for generations. But we see through the book that most of his knowledge about God came from his encounters with YHWH. Thompson (1980:108) argues that for Jeremiah, YHWH was the "foundation of living waters" (2:13) which is the source of life and the sustainer of the people of Israel.[19] For Jeremiah, YHWH was a "Potter who stood as a free person over against men who were also free persons (18:1-12) and he was the Creator of the world who had set up the natural order of things" (Thompson 1980:108).

YHWH was a God both "near" and "far off" which means that YHWH was personally involved in human affairs, the affairs of Israel, the affairs of the nations, and the affairs

[19] Thompson (1980:108) writes that "There is something of a paradox in such teaching, for Jeremiah experienced another side of YHWH's nature. Despite his faithfulness to his call, he had suffered pain unceasing and an incurable wound which would not be healed (15:18). YHWH seemed to have deceived him and to have compelled him to undertake his difficult task against his will (20:7). It may have been difficult sometimes to see YHWH's love displayed in his own life."

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of Jeremiah. Jeremiah made use of warm personal figures such as “husband” (2:2) and “father” (3:19) to describe YHWH’s relationship to Israel, while Israel was described as “son” (3:19, 21; 4:22).[20] Jeremiah was monotheistic and that is seen through his contempt and resentfulness when he speaks about other gods. He uses words such as “worthlessness” (2:5), “no god” (2:11), and “broken cisterns” (2:13).

Claassens (2018:667) argues that there is a portrayal of a vengeful God in the book of Jeremiah. There are violent images of God that are used in the book.[21] Repeatedly, God is portrayed as an angry and scorned husband (chs. 2—3), a ravenous lion (25:38; 50:44; 49:19) and a raging fire (4:4; 15:14) who will pour out his anger upon Judah (Claassens 2018:667). We see God as the instigator of war who uses the mighty Babylon to destroy his people. She argues that this type of language is an attempt to reaffirm God’s sovereignty which is important for the survival of his people.[22]

3.5.2 Israel: The nation and the individuals

For us to understand Israel we need to study its life as depicted in the book of Jeremiah. Israel’s household (Jer. 48:13) comprises a collection of clans descended from one ancestor, Jacob. Israel is a family and being a family, there should be a way people treat each other.[23] According to Jeremiah Israel as a nation should treat each other as brothers and sisters (Jer. 34:9, 14, 17). Israel is to care for one another and love each other. Israel is the “domain” that belongs to YHWH.[24] According to

[20] See Thompson (1980:108)
[21] Regina Schwartz (1997) argues the violence of God might emerge from the notion of monotheism. Read Seibert (2012) and Spronk (2009).
[22] “The idea of a God who punishes sin as a means for explaining suffering not only gives the survivors some much-needed semblance of order amidst a chaotic world that has been spinning out of control, but also counters their worst fears that God is impotent, and perhaps even more frightening, indifferent to what is happening. On the other hand, the association between God and violence is in urgent need of interrogation; this association finds expression in terms of the numerous imperialistic images of God as king and warrior that are deeply ingrained with the imperial context from which the Book of Jeremiah stems. In our globalised world today, the close association of religion and violence has indeed proven to be very dangerous indeed” (Claassens 2018:667)
[23] See Goldingay (2021:91)
[24] “Israel is the “domain” that belongs to YHWH—as YHWH is Israel’s “share” (Jer 10:16; cf. Jer 51:19). A family has a stretch of land that belongs to it, its domain, which is the basis of its livelihood. Nobody can trespass on a family’s right to live on this land and work it. While YHWH refers to Canaan as “my domain,” he also uses that expression more metaphorically of Israel. YHWH especially claims Israel, and it is thus sacred to YHWH, like the first fruits of the harvest (Jer 2:3), and like Jeremiah himself, and like the Sabbath each week, which is YHWH’s day” (Goldingay 2021:92)

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Thompson (1980:109), Jeremiah had a noble view of Israel and used many metaphors to describe this kind of view he had of the nation.

Jeremiah saw Israel as God's chosen people. Israel was YHWH's "first fruits" (2:3), a "choice vine" (2:21), the "beloved" of YHWH (11:15; 12:7), YHWH's own "heritage" (12:7-9) his "vineyard" (12:10), and his "flock" (13:17), a nation he loved with an everlasting love (31:3).[25] Jeremiah, same as Hosea, described the relationship between YHWH and Israel as a marriage relationship (2:2) and sometimes mixed the metaphors and described Israel as "sons" (3:19, 22; 4:22). Jeremiah understood that the nation comprised of individuals and that YHWH's address to Israel was to individuals in the nation. Jeremiah's teachings and message were to individuals, especially the "hearts" and "minds" of the people. We see that YHWH tries the heart and the mind of his people (11:20; 17:10; 20:12). The heart of a man is the source of evil, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (17:9).

3.5.3 Sin and Repentance

Part of Jeremiah's message was to respond to the sin that clouded the people of Israel. Part of his message was to warn the people of their sins and to send a message of repentance. We see that throughout his career, Jeremiah used other words to describe sin such as "guilt" or "inequity," "rebellion," "sin," and "evil." The source of this wickedness is the hearts of the Israelites (Thompson 1980:111). Thompson (1980:111) argues that the evil deeds in which Israel was involved were two, "the worship of false gods, and the perpetuation of personal and social sins of an ethical and moral kind." All of these were offenses to YHWH and we a breach of their covenant. YHWH commanded obedience from Israel (7:5, 6; 11:3, 4, 7; etc). It was clear to Jeremiah that the hope for Israel was for them to repent and turn to YHWH (3:1-4:4).

Jeremiah believes that after Israel has repented and turned their heart back to YHWH, YHWH will have mercy on them (31:20). The people of YHWH have turned against YHWH and went to worship other deities. Jeremiah depicts this as adultery in marriage and more sharply, he calls it whoring (Jer. 3:1-20). Israel looked to other gods and/or

[25] See Thompson (1980:109)

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to more powerful political allies to provide for its needs. Goldingay (2021:103) argues that exploring solutions in political allies is unfaithfulness that expressed itself in political policy-making in community worship (controlled by men) and family worship (over which the women had more influence). Jeremiah is not particularly clear as to what results in unfaithfulness, either it is looking at other gods or looking to political alliances for sustenance. Both ways are wrong since reliance is not on YHWH.

Jeremiah points to Israel (Jer. 2:7) that they have tainted the country with their unfaithfulness. It was YHWH who brought Israel into a land that belonged to him but Israel defiled the land by worshipping other gods on that land. YHWH's land has turned out to be a land that accommodates offensive and faithless people. The land of YHWH has been turned into a playground where all sorts of wrongdoings are taking place. Israel's behaviours brought shame and Jeremiah compares it to the shame of a man or woman who has been unfaithful in marriage (Jer. 3:24).

Goldingay (2021:107) argues that Israel's seeking support from other people such as Egypt was an act of stupidity and irresponsible unfaithfulness. Jeremiah does not state that there are no other gods, but rather he believes that these supernatural beings have no power and that they are useless Jeremiah sees Israel's pursuit of these gods as a mystery (Jer. 2:26-28). It is a puzzling mystery to Jeremiah because YHWH has shown himself as a protector and provider whereas other gods couldn't deliver what people have asked (Jer. 2:8).

Goldingay (2021:108) argues that while YHWH's indictment concerns people's attitudes toward him, it also concerns people's attitudes towards each other. This is found especially in leaders who become rich and sleek through duplicity. Jeremiah describes them as bird catchers setting traps for people (Jer. 5:26-28). These leaders ought to use their positions to bring people together and do the work of justice but instead, they use community resources for themselves.

Jeremiah also points out that prophets and priests are involved in deceiving the people by telling them that everything is going to be okay whereas they are not (Jer. 6:13-14). Priests around the time of Josiah's death and replacements of kings in Judah told people there would be "*shalom shalom*." On the contrary, Jeremiah was telling his

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people that there was no *shalom*. The ministers destine their people to horrific suffering because they do not acknowledge reality (Jer 14:18) (Goldingay 202:110).

Jeremiah commented that a leopard cannot change its spots so a Cushite cannot change his/her skin colour (Jer. 13:23). Jeremiah said this to emphasise the stubbornness of the people. Goldingay (2021:113) concludes that Israel has taught itself so well to do wrong that it has lost the capacity to be different. The people have God have made being wrong a lifestyle. They cannot picture or exist outside their wrongdoings.

3.5.4 The future hope

The message of Jeremiah was not only about the sin of Israel. It was also about the future hope when Israel's fortunes would be restored. We see Jeremiah pointing out that "thus says YHWH of hosts the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (32:15). Jeremiah also in his letter to the exiles in Babylon (ch. 29) mentioned that when seventy years had been completed YHWH would visit his people and bring them back to their land and restore their fortunes.[26] Thompson (1980:113) argues further that Jeremiah also gave expression to messianic hopes. God would raise a "righteous Branch for David," who would deal wisely and perform justice and righteousness in the land (23:5-6; 33:15-16).

Brueggemann (2007:128-131) points out four themes of hope that are found in the book of Jeremiah. First, there is a faithful remnant preserved and loved by YHWH (Jer. 31:7). There is a transition to a remnant community with a hope that will see God's people in deep commitment to the Torah and the holiness tradition (Jer. 23:3). Second, there is a hope for the restoration of the monarchy (Jer. 30:21). There is hope for a royal restoration that is so powerful it had to be part of the text. Third, there is hope for a scribal production that will be distinguished from both the remnant and the royal options.[27] Fourth, the book of Jeremiah offers the ultimate hope which is the focus

[26] Thompson (1980:113) points out other passages where hope for the future is expressed.
[27] "This would suggest the conviction that Judaism in the time to come will amount to nothing more and nothing less than the normative scroll and an immense interpretive practice. Such a prospect for Judaism is suggested in the notation that the Ezra community was indeed a community of interpretation that fostered a "culture of interpretation" (Brueggemann 2007:130)

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upon all the nations (Jer. 25:13). This speaks of all kingdoms of the earth being under YHWH. YHWH is to be the Lord of all the nations.

3.5.5 Master, King

What we first learn about YHWH in the book of Jeremiah is that he assumes the authority to order people around. He portrays himself as a tough God that no one can resist and that no one can mess with him. We see this in Chapter 1 when YHWH commissioned Jeremiah to his mouthpiece. He commanded Jeremiah to be his prophet, this was an order Jeremiah had to accept, it was not a suggestion. YHWH claimed Jeremiah to be his own and that he formed him. This altogether suggested to Jeremiah that his life should be in the hands of those who created him. Jeremiah responds with dubiousness and YHWH rejects it. He promises to be with Jeremiah which sees Jeremiah overcome his dubiousness.

YHWH's authority to command people is a continuous theme in prophets in general. YHWH is their master, and they are his "servants" (Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) (Goldingay 2021:72). YHWH demands that people do as he says and that portrays what earthly kings do.[28] Goldingay (2021:73) expounds more on the relationship between the master and his servant and writes the following:

> While servants can become the victims of their masters (Jer. 34:8-16), being a servant or houseboy should be a secure and honoured position; YHWH thus asks incredulously why the servant has become plunder (Jer. 2:14). You can't mess with the servant relationship is one of solemnity and seriousness but also privilege and security.

This kind of bond is quite functional and relational. The servant is committed to the master as the master is committed to the servant. Servants can submit requests to their masters. Even though YHWH portrays toughness, sometimes he does not present his instructions as giving orders but he is persuasive in his approach.

[28] More about the kingship symbolism, see Goldingay (2021:72) "The nature of the relationship links with the prophets' common way of speaking. Like the servants of an earthly master, such as a king, who are the envoys taking the king's message and proclaiming, "the king has said this," prophets are envoys who go with King YHWH's message and proclaim, "YHWH has said this." In that connection, Jeremiah has a distinctive way of referring to YHWH's dedication and persistence in sending prophets.

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3.5.6 Director, Authority Figure

Jeremiah points out that the people of God have turned their ways from YHWH (Jer. 5:4-5). Jeremiah introduces the image of YHWH's "way" or "path" as the path that leads to God's things (Jer. 6:16).[29] We see YHWH commanding his people to follow the path he walks. And that they should not follow their path since it does not belong to YHWH and as a result, it turns them away from YHWH instead of them going closer to him (Jer. 10:33). Jeremiah's message is not that Israel cannot make their choices, but his point is on they do not have the relational, moral, or religious freedom.[30]

3.5.7 Teacher, Disciplinarian

The word Torah has been translated to mean "law" in English but the correct word to use is "instruction" or "teaching" (Goldingay 2021:76). YHWH is a teacher and he established the world by his insight (Jer. 10:12; 51:15). He knows what he says and people should listen to him when he speaks. When people reject the way of YHWH (Jer. 6:19), they reject his instruction or teaching. In the ANE the role of teaching rests on parents and when Jeremiah speaks about parents, he has the idea about them as people who guide and teach their children. Jeremiah sees YHWH as a father and compares him to an earthly father who takes care of his children (Jer. 3:19). Discipline goes hand in hand with teaching. As the father figure teaches and gives discipline, so is YHWH (Jer. 35:13).

3.5.8 Husband, Provider

One other comparison that Jeremiah implores is the comparison of YHWH as a husband and his people as his wife. The relationship they share is like a marriage. YHWH remembers the commitment and love that originally characterised Israel (Jer. 2:2) (Goldingay 2021:77). YHWH's love is permanent and is in contrast with the love that is temporary and is displayed by Israel. This same applied to YHWH's

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[29] See Goldingay (2021:74)

[30] "Jeremiah's point isn't that people don't have the metaphysical freedom to make decisions, that they don't have "freewill. It's that they don't have the relational, moral, or religious freedom. Parents are not free to spend their money on indulgences for themselves rather than on food for their children; husbands and wives are not free to get into sexual relationships with other women or men. Their path doesn't belong to them anymore; they are not free to determine their step. Israel's obligation to YHWH is analogous. Israel doesn't have that freedom. YHWH decides its direction (Goldingay 2021:74).

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commitment, he is always committed to Israel even when Israel shows fluctuating commitment.

3.5.9 Creator, Lord

YHWH is the strategic and insightful creator of heaven and earth (Jer. 10:12-13). Goldingay (2021:79) stresses Israel's faithlessness and argues that it is not only wrong but stupid because YHWH is the whole world's creator.[31] As creator YHWH has powers and authority to make orders and declarations. Jeremiah when he speaks about YHWH's sovereignty, he uses the term "YHWH of Armies[32]" which is mentioned seventy-nine times in the book. "YHWH of Armies" is traditionally translated as "Lord of hosts" which portrays a God who has everything under his command and is dynamic, energetic, fierce, and no opposing power can overcome him (Goldingay 2021:81).

Brueggemann (2007:93) mentions that in the book of Jeremiah, YHWH "is portrayed as the creator God who orders and maintains a visible, coherent fabric of life that produces well-being in which that order is honoured." He continues further and argues that Israel failed to comprehend the wisdom which helps to conform to the divine order of creation (Brueggemann 2007:93). Jeremiah makes use of what we call "wisdom theology" which describes YHWH as the primary orderer of a life system (Brueggemann 2007:93).

Brueggemann (2007:97) points out that we see an angry and unrestrained God in Jeremiah. He mentions that YHWH is seen aligned in anger against the power structure of Jerusalem (Brueggemann 2007:97). Leaders who are meant to represent YHWH have become their opponents. Thus the rich (Jer. 5:5), the scribes (Jer. 8:8), prophets and priests (Jer. 8:10), the kings (shepherds) (Jer. 9:21), the king and the royal family (Jer. 10:18–19), and the nobles are all indicted for pursuing policies and actions that contradict the will of YHWH (Brueggemann 2007:97).

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[31] "Building requires energy or strength, understanding and the capacity to make a plan, and the expertise to implement the plan. Creating the world required all three capacities in spades. It involved stretching out the heavens like a tent and making sure that the earth below was well-established and secure. It would have been a stunning operation to witness (Goldingay 2021:79).

[32] *YHWH Zebaoth* in the Hebrew

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3.6 Conclusion

The timeline above gives us a chance to see Jeremiah and his prophecy through a different lens. The historical context offers us the ability to understand his message and his relationship with God. Judging Jeremiah's prophetic career without one understanding of obedience will lead to a flawed interpretation of his prophetic career. One would think that he was called to speak to the nation of YHWH to return to him and stop worshipping other gods and that people did not listen to him. What will also be considered is that Jerusalem, the temple of God also eventually fell. Jeremiah was threatened, physically abused and mocked by his people.

However, understanding obedience will convince us to understand Jeremiah's call. His call was to do what YHWH has told him to do and that is exactly what he did. His call was a test of obedience to the voice of YHWH. Jeremiah was not responsible for how people responded to his message. This chapter also discussed several themes that are found in the book. These themes can be understood to be the theology and message of the book.

In the upcoming chapter, we will be delving into the exegesis of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22. This is an important tool that helps us understand what the text is trying to convey and how it can help us better comprehend the book.

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CHAPTER 4: EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF JEREMIAH 8:18-9:22

4.1 Introduction

The book of Jeremiah is renowned for its complexity and intricacy, making it quite a formidable challenge for readers and scholars alike. Within this chapter, we embark on a comprehensive exploration of two specific chapters extracted from the book of Jeremiah. Our journey is underpinned by a meticulous reference to authoritative commentaries, ensuring that we delve deeply into the context and meaning of Jeremiah's writings.

To begin, we embark on a verse-by-verse commentary, analysing each verse within the chosen chapters. This detailed analysis encompasses not only the words themselves but also the historical, cultural, and theological contexts in which they were written. By doing so, we aim to bring Jeremiah's words to life, shedding light on the rich tapestry of his time.

An additional lens we employ in our analysis is the 'trauma lens.' This interpretive tool allows us to uncover layers of meaning and significance hidden within the text, revealing how Jeremiah's experiences and emotions shaped his writings. This in-depth exploration contributes significantly to a more profound comprehension of the book of Jeremiah, making it accessible and meaningful within the realm of academic scholarship.

4.2 Structure/Outline

The outline of Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 used below is based on Fretheim (2002:20).

V. Judgment and Tears, 8:18–9:22[33]

A. Is There No Balm in Gilead? 8:18–9:1

- Laments Over the Coming Disaster, 8:18–9:1

B. The Laments Intensify, 9:2-22

- Words as Weapons, 9:2-9

[33] This section/theme begins in Jeremiah 8:4 and concludes at Jeremiah 10:25. Nevertheless, to adhere to the designated verses in this thesis, my beginning verse is Jeremiah 8:18 and will conclude with Jeremiah 9:22.

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- Divine Grief and Judgment, 9:10-11 3. Why?! 9:12-16
- Calls for Lamentation, 9:17-22

4.3 Commentary section

4.3.1 8:18-23

18 I would comfort myself in sorrow.
  My heart is faint in me!
19 Listen! The voice,
The cry of the daughter of my people
From a far country:
"Isn't YHWH in Zion?
Is not her King in her?"
"Why have they provoked Me to anger
With their carved images—
With foreign idols?"
20 "The harvest is past,
The summer has ended,
And we are not saved!"
21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt.
I am mourning;
Astonishment has taken hold of me.
22 Is there no balm in Gilead,
Is there no physician there?
Why then is there no recovery
For the health of the daughter of my people?

Commentary

To begin with the commentary, Stulman (2005:99) says that Jeremiah represents YHWH in words and deep emotion. When Jeremiah shows emotions of grief, it means God is also grieving. According to Stulman (2005:99), the *genre* of this passage is uncertain but it has qualities of a personal lament. In this text, Jeremiah seems to identify with the suffering of the people whom he calls "my people." Lundbom

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(1997:112) brings forth clarity on the speakers in vv. 18-21, “Jeremiah speaks in A[34]; the people in B[35]; YHWH in C[36]; the people again in B[37]; and Jeremiah finally in A[38]”. The grief and loss of joy at these events are expressed through Jeremiah by God; God’s heart is sick and so is Jeremiah’s.

Fretheim (2002:152) asserts that in v. 19, the last two lines convey a clear sense of God expressing sorrow. This lament from God arises because the people have provoked divine anger by worshipping foreign idols instead of remaining faithful. It's a genuine expression of God asking, "Why are you doing this?" (Stulman 2005:99) brings forth an argument that the words “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is the King not in her?” does not only expose their disappointment with God but more important, the extent of their fatuity. The people in this situation haven't fully understood their predicament, mainly because of the poor leadership in their nation. Jeremiah has already challenged the belief that God is always there to protect their city and temple without conditions. He's been saying that God's presence in these places isn't guaranteed. Unfortunately, the people haven't grasped this reality.

They continue to hold onto false claims, believing that the temple and city will always keep them safe, even though Jeremiah's previous messages have already shown that these claims are not true. The lament we're reading here is somewhat similar to Jeremiah's earlier statements that neither Jerusalem nor the temple will offer refuge from the impending disaster. Fretheim (2002:152) further states that Judah believed that if God was present in Zion, the terrible things happening to them would not occur. However, verse 19c clarifies that God is indeed present, but in a state of anger, not as the protective God they had hoped for. This reveals that God is suffering due to the strained relationship.

[34] A: verse 18, I would comfort myself in sorrow; My heart is faint in me/ My joy is gone grief is upon me my heart is sick
[35] B: verse 19a, Listen! The voice, The cry of the daughter of my people from a far country: ‘is not the Lord in Zion?’ ‘Is not her King in her’/ Hark a cry ‘Is YHWH not in Zion? Is her King not in her?’
[36] C: verse 19b,”Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images- with foreign idols?”/ Why then have they provoked me to anger with their images and with their foreign idols?
[37] B: verse 20,The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!”/ The harvest is past the summer is ended and we are not saved
[38] A: verse 21,For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I am mourning; astonishment has taken hold of me/ I mourn dismay has taken hold of me.

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These words expose not only their disappointment with God but more importantly, the extent of their fatuity. They have been naive about their situation, in large measure because of the nation's deplorable leadership. Jeremiah has already undermined the belief that YHWH is unconditionally bound to Zion and that the city and shrine will provide unqualified sanctuary from imminent danger. He has declared repeatedly that the presence of God in the temple and the city is not a given, but sadly the people do not get it; they do not perceive "that the temple claims are dead and have failed."

According to Stulman (2005:99), the speaker is difficult to determine. We see Jeremiah here showing emotions of sorrow. Stulman (2005:99) sees Jeremiah as a divine spokesperson and that it is impossible to separate him from YHWH. He continues to state that Jeremiah represents YHWH in word and deep emotion (Stulman 2005:99). I concur with Stulman's perspective, and Scott provides a more comprehensive exposition of the prophets' profound spiritual connection with the divine. Scott (1961:9) argues that,

> the prophet was no mere messenger boy, carrying a communication in which he had no interest. The message had become part of himself. To receive and speak it was like a woman in the ancient agony of childbirth, bringing forth what had grown within her. In the prophet, the knowledge of God, derived from tradition and belief, had become an immediate apprehension through the possession of his whole being by God's word.

To understand the *genre* of the text, Stulman (2005:99) argues that this text appears to be a personal lament because "the very first sentence places us inside Jeremiah's thought, and this is where all the essential action takes place."[39] Continuing with the exposition of vv. 18-22, instead of the people changing their ways as recorded in these verses, the people continued with their impudence and false security. Stulman (2005:100) thinks that from this lament we can see that neither Jerusalem nor the temple will be a place of refuge from the coming disaster. Stulman (2005:100) continues with his argument and believes that although the people sinned, they are

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[39] Stulman (2005:99-100) further writes that Jeremiah identifies with the suffering people—whom he calls 'my poor people'—and mourns over their hopeless predicament. He quotes the people's desperate cry, 'Is [YHWH] not in Zion? Is her King not in her?' These words expose not only their disappointment with God, but more important, the extent of their fatuity. They have been naive about their own situation, in large measure because of the nation's deplorable leadership. Jeremiah has already undermined the belief that YHWH is unconditionally bound to Zion and that city and shrine will provide unqualified sanctuary from imminent danger."

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still "[his] people." Jeremiah expresses his emotions to a point where he shares in their suffering and loss. "For the hurt of my people I am hurt, I mourn, and [terror grips me]" (8:21).

For Allen (2008:111) vv. 18-23 presents Jeremiah's reaction to the coming disaster. We see Jeremiah's emotions because Jeremiah as a Judean could not keep silent or not show emotion as he witnesses Judah's future fate. Allen (2008:111) argues that it would be misleading to read this text by comparing it with the psalms of lament that culminate in an appeal to God to stop the disaster. He then compares this kind of lament to when Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) and points out that this seems like a funeral lament that mourns irrevocable disaster (Allen 2008:112).

Allen (2008:112) argues that grief in vv. 18-23 is a measure of the extent of the disaster. I believe Allen's observation is spot on, grief is overemphasised and we see the more they grieve, to a certain extent, it makes the reader wonders how big will this destruction be. Allen (2008:112) argues that in v. 20, there is, another element of complaint—now shown to be without merit by the 'why' question—that the window of opportunity was practically closed, but still God had not intervened, thus failing to maintain a long-standing tradition of delivering the covenant people.

Fretheim (2002:152) tells us that these verses are a lament and the images shift from external threat to internal hurt and sickness. Fretheim also believes that the speaker of this text is not clear but there is a strong indication it is God. Fretheim (2002:152) states that in verse 19b we see the people moaning about the absence of God in the city of Jerusalem and its temple. In verse 19c, we see that God is present and that he is present in wrath and not as a protective God. Fretheim (2002:152) argues that "this is an expression of divine suffering, but a suffering because of what has happened to the relationship."

Huey (1993:117) believes that in v.20, it seems the people had no grain and the reason for that is God. God has deserted his people and the crops fail and the enemy is ravaging the land. He uses the work by Lee and writes that Judah was living during the "Payday Someday" times (Huey 1993:117). It was Judah's time to go through the consequences of not obeying God. He further mentions that God is hurt by the

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people's actions. He refers to how a parent feels when a child destroys his or her life by making wrong life choices. God does care and "nothing will deter us from sin quite so effectively as the awareness of how much God suffers when we sin" (Huey 1993:117).

Fretheim (2002:153) adds that in verse 20, the people lament the prolonged suffering they endured during the Babylonian siege. The mention of the harvest in verse 20 is not just a simple time marker. It refers back to v. 13[40], which portrays the harvest as a symbol of judgment rather than the joy usually associated with harvests. The fall festival, which symbolises God's kingship, could have been seen as an opportunity for divine intervention and justice. However, it comes and goes, and judgment continues to prevail.

For Tyler (2018:92-93) "The harvest is past" reflects the lament of the Judean people, who are mourning their prolonged misfortune, particularly the lengthy siege they endured during an entire summer that year. They had hoped for support from the Egyptians, which had been promised but never materialised. Additionally, they had initially believed that the Egyptians might come to their aid in May and June when people were less busy with crop cultivation. However, as time passed, they began to lose hope because the Egyptians had not arrived even as the summer and grape-gathering season came and went without any assistance.

According to Buttrick (1956:887) to grasp the significance of this well-known v.20, it's important to consider that "harvest" and "summer" represented distinct seasons in Judah. The harvest period stretched from April to June, while "summer" referred to the time for gathering summer fruits. If the harvest failed, there was still hope for the fruit, but if both the harvest and fruit failed, famine became an imminent threat. This concept can be challenging to understand in regions where all seasonal fruits ripen simultaneously. In some climates, figs and grapes, for instance, ripen as late as September, whereas various other crops like certain vegetables, fruits, and grains mature much earlier. It's crucial to note that the term "saved" in this context doesn't

[40] The verse reads as follows: I will surely consume them," says the YHWH. "No grapes shall be on the vine, Nor figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them

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hold any eschatological or religious significance, but rather, the passage touches the human spirit in a deeply poignant way.

Before we know it, the season of harvest has passed, and our summer is drawing to a close all too quickly. We often realise that much of what we should have prepared for a meaningful and fruitful life has been neglected. Many opportunities have been missed, and many meaningful connections have not been made. This passage has easily become a common saying because it resonates with the human experience—it's a reminder of the importance of seizing opportunities and making the most of the time we have (Buttrick 1956:887).

Murphy (2014:735) argues that the speaker in the first-person lament in 8:18-9:3 is YHWH and this suggests that the text holds a "promise of healing" because it puts aside punishment. Murphy (2014:735) makes a closing remark and argues that "God delights in 'kindness, justice, and equity,' Israel remains 'uncircumcised in heart,' unwilling to realise that ritual actions alone (like physical circumcision) will not save them." O'Connor (2001:497) argues that the phrase "my people" is most likely to be used by YHWH (cf. 2:11, 13, 32; 6:14, 30; 8:7, 11; 9:7).

O'Connor (2001:497) adds to her argument and mentions that there is a similar motif of a weeping God between this text to Mesopotamian laments[41], especially on 8:18-9:3. O'Connor (2001:497) points out that the reason why scholars avoid identifying the

[41] The *genre* of lamentations over the destruction of cities and temples is a unique and almost unparalleled *genre* in Mesopotamian lamentation literature. This *genre* has no known ancient parallel outside the ancient Near East, and it is almost exclusively attested in Sumerian and biblical literature (Samet 2014:1). Samet (2014:1) points out two forms of subgroups of Sumerian laments which are city laments and cultic laments. City laments also known as historical laments are laments of mourning the devastation of significant cities in Sumer, frequently referencing particular geographical and historical specifics like the names of shrines, other structures within the city, the ruling king's name, and the identity of the adversary. On the surface, these laments appear to narrate a particular historical occurrence. Cultic laments Express sorrow for the destruction using generic terms and employing formulaic phrases that lack historical specificity (Somet 2014:1-2).

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speaker to be YHWH might be that this tearful metaphor appears too contradictory to the power and wrathful deity that the book portrays, or perhaps they do associate YHWH's weeping as showing vulnerability and that is a character that is not attributed to the deity.

O'Connor (2001:497) moves on to substantiate her argument that YHWH is the speaker. She writes that the imagery used in the text takes the reader back to the portrait of divine suffering that began in the broken-marriage metaphor, but rather than showing YHWH divorcing his wife (2:1-3:25), this poem unites YHWH with the people in their weeping (9:17-22). She continues her argument and says that God's weeping means that there may be a balm in Gilead and that healing is possible as far as the metaphorical depiction is portrayed. We see God joining the people's suffering.
Tears heal because they stir 'all living souls' and they bring people together in their suffering and allow them to reveal themselves to one another in their vulnerability (O'Connor 2001:497). O'Connor (2001:497) believes that,

> YHWH's tears are more powerful and that they bring God, people and the cosmos to articulate a common suffering. O'Connor (2001:497) sees God's intense suffering as an alternative interpretation of the suffering of the exiles. It puts aside punishment, eschews questions of causality, and understands God in radically different terms from much of the rest of the book. YHWH quotes 'daughter of my people' (*bat 'ammi, my tr.*, and in 8:21, 22, 23 Heb.), a term for the city. Her question expresses either smug confidence in YHWH's presence or a sense of abandonment at divine absence (8:19—20). YHWH questions in turn, expressing hurt and dismay at her idolatry. But it is the hurt of the daughter that overwhelms YHWH, not the provocation to anger (8:21). YHWH calls for healing. Is there no balm, no physician, no return to health? The implied answer is 'no'. But YHWH does not abandon her; he weeps with her. 'O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people' (my tr.; 9:1; 8:23 MT). YHWH desires to become weeping, to turn into tears, to weep unceasingly over the slain (O'Connor 2001:497).

As a side note, Fretheim gives a more detailed history of the phrase "a balm in Gilead." Fretheim (2002:154) states that after quoting people who are in distress (v. 20), God returns (v. 21) where we see God expressing deep pain. These emotions are hurt, broken hurt, dislocated, and dismayed. These emotions are seen when one has lost

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someone they truly loved. He mentions that Gilead is a region in the Transjordan which is north of Moab (Fretheim 2002:154). This region was known for its healing resources. According to Fretheim (2002:154), a balm "is a resin from the balsam tree that was applied to wounds" (Fretheim 2002:154).

Even though the people have their faults (as mentioned in verse 19), they are still considered "his people." Jeremiah feels a strong connection with them and shows deep solidarity, even to the extent of experiencing their suffering and losses as his own. He expresses this strong bond by saying, "I am deeply affected by the pain and suffering of my vulnerable people. I mourn alongside them, and their distress fills me with terror" (Stulman 2005:100). Contrary to what other scholars have said[42], Fretheim (2002:154) argues that it is God and not Jeremiah, in verse 21, who expresses profound pain and suffering as a result of these developments. Various highly emotional words are used to depict different aspects of this suffering: feeling hurt, having a broken heart, experiencing profound sadness, and being filled with dismay. These words are stacked together to emphasise the deepest form of grief, similar to the sorrow one feels when a dearly loved person passes away.

Stulman (2005:100) is of the view that it is the prophet who is speaking in v. 22- "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?", and if this is the case it would mean that Jeremiah has become their voice. He bewails their wounded condition and pleads with God for their restoration. Opposite to Stulman's belief, Fretheim (2002:154) asserts that if the speaker in v. 22a is indeed God, it seems to convey a sense of astonishment that the people haven't sought out the best available sources of healing in Gilead. The first two questions in this verse are rhetorical, essentially affirming that yes, there is healing balm in Gilead, and yes, there are physicians there. However, it is implied that even though these resources exist, they are powerless to cure the illness afflicting Israel. The answer to the "why?" in v. 22b pertains to the nature of the sickness itself; conventional healing methods are ineffective against the ailment plaguing Israel.

[42] Such as Lundbom (1997) and Stulman (2005)

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Fretheim (2002:154) thinks v. 22 asserts the presence of a healing balm in Gilead, described as capable of restoring the wounded and healing the souls burdened by sin. The verse implies a Christological perspective, suggesting that Christ represents the 'Gilead' where this balm can be found. Alternatively, it proposes that Gilead, situated beyond the Jordan, symbolises the ultimate goal of a Christian's life. However, the origin of the idea that Gilead possesses such powerful healing properties is uncertain. Despite affirming the existence of a healing balm in Gilead, the text also acknowledges its inadequacy in addressing the issues afflicting Israel. Stulman (2020:100) thinks that Jeremiah becomes their voice in v. 8:22 – “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” Stulman (2005:100) believes that “the same prophet who earlier accuses and condemns now defends and mourns.”

Stulman (2005:100) further writes that there is a balm in Gilead and there are physicians there but they are powerless to restore the health of the people. Fretheim (2002:154) believes that there is no other conventional healing method that can be used to heal the people of Israel. Huey (1993:117) brings a new perspective to v.23 and argues that there was a physician who could heal their spiritual sickness and that physician is the prophet with God’s word- but they refused to consult him for healing. It is because of their lack of consulting that there could be no “healing.”

Tyler (2018:93) uses the words by Johannes Bugenhagen to write about the balm in Gilead and he argues that “Gilead,” or “Galaad,” is a most fertile mountain as you see in Numbers 32, to the rear of the Phoenicians and Arabia, adjoining the hills of Lebanon, and extending through the desert, all the way to that place across the Jordan, where once Sihon king of the Ammonites dwelt. There Reuben, Gad, and the half of the tribe of Manasseh received their portion, as it says in Joshua 13 and Deuteronomy 3. When the land of half of the tribes of Israel was beyond the Jordan, which the Israelites first occupied, that land is called Gilead in Joshua 22, Numbers 32, and elsewhere. Here Jeremiah alludes, however, to the fecundity of the place, where many herbs of medicinal value grew. By taking up an analogy from medicine, he rebukes the people: they were perishing of their own free will because they despised the medicine, which is present in their land, that is, the Word of God and the Physician, that is, from the prophets and the holy preachers, who administer the ointments and bandages of health through the word.

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Harrison (1973:90) argues that vv.18-22 encapsulates the profound emotional turmoil experienced by the prophet Jeremiah as he contemplated the impending ruin of his people. His outpouring of grief stemmed from the inner conflict he grappled with—a conflict between his profound love for his homeland and his steadfast commitment to adhering to the divine commands of God. It is worth noting that the term "*mab̲lîgît̲î*," found in verse 18, appears to potentially belong after verse 17. Several manuscripts even exhibit a division of this term into two words, "*mibbelî gehôt̲*," signifying a state of irreparable damage, akin to a fatal snakebite. Thus, if we were to revise verse 18 accordingly, it might commence with the phrase, "Grief has overwhelmed me."

In this context, Jeremiah anticipates the impending captivity, wherein deportees begin to question the reasons behind the degradation of Jerusalem. This dire situation will yield no bountiful harvest to alleviate the promised famine, and there will be an absence of prophets or righteous individuals to remedy the national malaise. While Gilead, since patriarchal times, had been renowned for its therapeutic balsamic resin (as referenced in Genesis 37:25), the specific type of balm mentioned in this instance remains a matter of uncertainty. Regrettably, despite these considerations, Judah has not experienced a renaissance of its well-being, primarily due to the persistent unregenerate state of its collective spirit (Harrison 1973:90).

Buttrick (1956:886) argues that the scribes of the book of Jeremiah are undeniably masters when it comes to crafting elegies, and their skill in this art deeply resonates with the hearts of the people. It's not surprising that there are more poems written in this elegiac style than in any other form. The upcoming "exceptional elegy" is one of the most touching pieces in all of literature. The prophet's connection to the sorrows of his people is profound. In this instance, it's not just about recognising the sadness in the human condition; it's about feeling the pain of his people as if it were his own daughter's cry. The prophet is overwhelmed with sorrow and heartache.

There's a noticeable parallel between this elegy and the preceding poem. Just as the people are shattered by the disaster, so is the prophet shattered within. Just as their wounds are beyond healing, so is his grief. The time for civic hope has passed, and the season when he might have hoped for the people to change is also gone. At this

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moment, all that remains is a powerful lament for the wounds suffered by his people. The imagery in this lament is among the most exquisite in all of poetry (Buttrick 1956:887).

Buttrick (1956:887) suggests that “the balm in Gilead refers to "the resin of the mastic tree, which was used as a remedy." He uses the work by Charles E. Jefferson where he beautifully expressed this concept: He recognised that sin is like a cancer, a malignant ailment that penetrates deep into the core of our being. He understood that there is no earthly physician capable of treating it. Have you ever felt the deep emotion in his penetrating question, "Is there no healing balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

Gilead, a region on Jeremiah's eastern horizon, held symbolic significance. It was where the sun rose every morning, illuminating both the small village of Anathoth and the grand city of Jerusalem. Gilead represented hope—a land where healing herbs, trees, and flowers grew to produce balms used by the physicians of the Eastern world. So, the question lingers: Is there no remedy to be found even in Gilead? Is there no healer, prophet, priest, teacher—anyone who can mend a broken heart? The answer, sadly, is "No."

There is no cure on this earth for a heart that is profoundly troubled. If there were an easy solution to this rhetorical question, Jeremiah wouldn't need to respond with another question, implying a resounding "no” in v.22 (Buttrick 1956:887).
I contend that the divine proclamation conveyed by God through His chosen prophet constituted an entreaty for restoration—a purpose aimed at the healing and reinstatement of His people. This implies a deliberate intention on God's part to mend the fractures within His relationship with His people. It is worth noting that the restoration of interpersonal bonds represents a foundational stride in addressing psychological trauma.

Herman (1997:102) argues that at the heart of psychological trauma lie two profound experiences: disempowerment and disconnection from others. The path to recovery hinges on empowering survivors and fostering new connections. Recovery is a journey that can only occur within the embrace of relationships; isolation cannot facilitate it. In

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the process of rekindling connections with others, survivors embark on the journey of rebuilding the psychological capacities that were wounded or distorted by their traumatic experiences. These capacities encompass the foundational abilities to trust, assert autonomy, take initiative, demonstrate competence, establish identity, and engage in intimacy. Much like how these abilities are initially shaped within interpersonal relationships, they must be nurtured anew within the context of supportive connections.

Herman (1997:102) further argues that the foremost tenet of the recovery process revolves around empowering survivors. They should be the architects and judges of their recovery. While others can offer guidance, support, assistance, affection, and care, they cannot bestow a cure. Well-meaning efforts to assist survivors often falter when this fundamental principle of empowerment is disregarded. Any intervention that wrests power from the survivor, no matter how well-intentioned or seemingly beneficial, ultimately hinders their recovery. In the words of an incest survivor, "Truly effective therapists were those who validated my experiences and aided me in managing my behaviour, rather than attempting to control me.

For the community of God to embark on a journey towards healing, it necessitated a process rooted in the framework of relationships. God's intent was not for his people to undergo healing in isolation; rather, he actively sought to be an integral component of their healing process. In this context, God demonstrated empathy by weeping alongside his people and encouraging them to mourn, transcending the ordinary expectations of divine intervention in the quest for his people's recovery. Notably, v. 22 alludes to God's concerted efforts to facilitate healing, drawing attention to Gilead's renowned reputation for therapeutic qualities as a symbolic gesture of his commitment to the healing process and the restoration of their relationship.

Furthermore, v. 2 portrays God assuming the role of a supportive and empathetic friend, extending assistance to his people as they grapple with the challenges of their trauma. Interpersonal coping[43] is very important and plays a huge part in helping one

[43] Calhoun et al, (2022:951) defines interpersonal coping. "Interpersonal coping is defined as any post-stressor behaviour that centres on use of social relationships to facilitate recovery. Intrapersonal coping

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recover from trauma. This underscores the significance of interpersonal coping mechanisms in the context of trauma recovery. Additionally, God's actions in v. 22 imbue a sense of trust-building, aligning with Aguas (2018:11) assertion regarding the pivotal role of trust in the restoration of healthy relationships. God's earnest desire for reconciliation with his people is evident as he endeavours to establish the grounds for renewed trust and reunification.

Verse 22 offers a unique perspective on God—one characterised by his empathy, emotional engagement, and unwavering support. These attributes may appear unanticipated in the context of a deity, but they underscore the depth of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, wherein such qualities assume paramount importance in fostering and sustaining a healthy and enduring bond, a testament to God's resolute commitment to this enduring relationship.

4.3.2 9:1-3

1 Oh, that my head were waters,
And my eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people!
2 Oh, that I had in the wilderness
A lodging place for travellers;
That I might leave my people,
And go from them!
For they are all adulterers,
An assembly of treacherous men.
3 "And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies.
They are not valiant for the truth on the earth.
For they proceed from evil to evil,
And they do not know Me," says YHWH.

Commentary

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is presented as any self-initiated, post-stressor behaviour enacted with the intention of facilitating recovery of the intrinsic stress response."

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In v. 9:1, God is overwhelmed with grief, yet there are no adequate means to fully express the depth of these feelings. If only God's head could serve as a spring and his eyes as a fountain, perhaps that would suffice to release all the tears and convey the profound sorrow felt for all the people who have suffered and perished. This divine grief is not fleeting; it will persist day and night (Fretheim 2002:154). Blackwood (1977:104) believes that it is Jeremiah who wished that his eyes were a fountain; then perhaps he might be able to weep more profoundly for his people. In v. 2 Jeremiah longs for a normal relationship with his people however, because of their alienation from God, he is separated from them.

Allen (2008:115) asserts that the idea of the divine desire to keep a distance from "my people" is meant to evoke a sense of surprise and make us question why this is the case. This is done to emphasise and clarify the situation. We see a similar image of YHWH being like an insider who chooses to act like an outsider in a communal complaint in 14:8, and this is also explained as a response to the people not living up to YHWH's expectations. Feinberg (1982:84) puts forward that there are scholars who are of the thought that the ideas in verse 1 and those in verse 2a are too different to have come from the same source. The difference in Jeremiah's behaviour can be understood from a psychological perspective. He was deeply torn by two powerful emotions: a profound sympathy for his people and an intense disgust for their sins. The people's way of life had become so corrupt that Jeremiah[44] could not bear to live among them. He found even a solitary place in the desert more preferable to the emotional anguish he felt while being in the midst of his people.

Stulman (2005:100) states that God’s mourning is juxtaposed with rage. For Fretheim (2002:155), God is filled with grief and cannot express the depth of these feelings. Fretheim (2002:155) mentions that vv. 8:18-9:1 should be seen as God and Jeremiah speaking about grief. Jeremiah’s grief is God’s grief. Fretheim (2002:155) argues further that in the text we see God’s genuine pain regarding the destructive events. He states that “this language reveals that the Godward side of anger is grief, not satisfaction; God and the prophet are affected in the deepest levels of their being by what has occurred” (Fretheim 2002:155).

[44] For Feinberg, these verses are about the prophet and not God

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According to Fretheim (2002:156), readers are not supposed to shy away from speaking about the emotional side of God expressed in the text because the prophet has intentionally made the feelings of God public for everyone to see and hear. Fretheim (2002:156) argues that,

> suffering may be considered a vehicle for divine action. God does not relate to suffering as a mechanic does to a car, seeking to 'fix it' from the outside, nor is God like some welfare administrator in a distant office signing vouchers for food stamps. God enters deeply into the suffering human situation and works the necessary healing from within.

This serves as the fundamental proposition underpinning this thesis, highlighting the essential requirement for God's engagement in people's experiences of trauma and distress, ultimately contributing to their process of healing.

Fretheim (2002:156) continues to say that the intention of the writer is not for the reader to sympathise with God or the prophet but for the reader to understand the heart of God and that he judges not with anger but with grief and sorrow. Fretheim (2002:156) think in vv. 2-3 the speaker is God and Jeremiah as God and the prophet are inseparable. We see in v. 2 that God/prophet expresses to move from the temple to a dwelling place like a desert. Fretheim (2002:157) argues that God does not want to suffer with the people which is why he wants to get some distance from them. He mentions that this type of distancing might be a bridge to go on a retreat of some sort, to gain perspective or to get out of the line of fire. But, unfortunately, there is no indication that such a retreat is available. Fretheim (2002:157) believes that the reasons for God's retreat are listed in v. 9:3.

For Buttrick (1956:890) v. 2 should be understood as metaphoric and that it should not be taken laterally. He argues that it's important to understand that these expressions of frustration, whether stemming from a deep sense of disgust at the people's wrongdoing or from the growing challenges and betrayals faced by the speaker, should not be interpreted as temptations to run away. They are quite the opposite. While rhetorically the speaker might entertain thoughts of escape, the nature of their commitment and mission prevents them from doing so. They recognise that they cannot and should not flee.

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The reason for this unwavering commitment lies in their understanding that only through a fresh divine message, conveyed through the chosen spokesperson of the Lord, can the people's words and actions be set right again. It's through this prophet that the Lord will refine and test them, ultimately leading to their purification and restoration to a state of moral and spiritual wholeness (Buttrick 1956:890).

Allen (2008:115) thinks that trustworthiness is the ethical keyword God expects for his covenant standards as seen in vv. 5:1, 3; 7:28. He also says that there are echoes of Chapter 5 in this text because it refers to adultery (cf. vv. 5:7-8), treachery (“traitors,” like “faithlessness” in v. 5:11), while “deception” in vv. 9:6, 8 v. (5, 7) occurred in v. 5:27. Allen (2008:115) believes that “adultery and treachery could be either spiritual metaphors with YHWH as a victim or literal offences within the community. The lack of communal solidarity that dominates the oracle suggests the latter, so that ‘untrustworthiness’ involves the breakdown of human commitments. Ultimately, however, they all function as evidence of a lack of commitment to YHWH, since at stake were covenant standards and an unwillingness to acknowledge their upholder.”

The illustration is clear. Lying is the arrow, and the tongue is the bow. The people are outright liars. To "make ready" literally means "to tread," as one would do while fitting a bow with an arrow. The people kept committing sins without getting tired. They exhibited bravery, but not for the truth. They oppressed the needy and impoverished instead of using their influence and position to help their fellow countrymen. They had given up all moral and social standards. Mutual trust had vanished. The inner cohesiveness of the nation had broken down. Judah was full of lies. Jeremiah was horrified at the extent of the people's turn away from the Lord at the time he was distraught over the suffering of the people. Wilful ignorance of God was the root of their sin. They did not care to know or recognise him (Fretheim 2002:85). According to (Stulman 2005:101) God expresses his frustrations in v. 3, "They are unaware of Me" because he is unable to endure continuous rejection and moral decay; God envisions a distant refuge. Similar to the psalmist who yearns for a secure haven in the wilderness (Psalm 55:7), YHWH seeks a secluded location.

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The passage vividly illustrates the harmful use of speech, with the theme of words as destructive weapons introduced in v. 3 and revisited in v. 8. Their words and tongues are likened to bows and arrows aimed at causing harm, a concept also found in James 1:26 and James 3:1-12. In general, their lives can be described as a continual progression from one sinful act to another, including unfaithfulness in their marital relationships. The more intimate the relationship, the more profound the pain when it is betrayed and shattered (Fretheim 2002:158).

Tyler (2018:95) writes about John Calvin's commentary on v. 2. According to John Calvin, the prophet makes another wish after he made the first wish of weeping like his head was water. He moves on to say that in this wish, the prophet desires to go to the wilderness because he cannot handle the wickedness of the people. For Huey (1993:118) the desert is not a comfortable place that has food. He continues by saying that secrets are known to be lonely places that only provide shelter for the weary traveller.

Calvin argues that Jeremiah does not speak for his sake and that he regards his nation and expresses his feelings so that he might touch their hearts. He continues to say that the prophet had a great sympathy for his nation which is why he was not satisfied with shedding tears but desired that his whole head would flow into tears (Tyler 2018:96). For Calvin, Jeremiah now had enough with the unfaithfulness of his people and opted to the wilderness. Jeremiah felt it was better to dwell in the wilderness with wild beasts than to dwell amongst his people (Tyler 2018:96). Calvin argues that the people needed to be addressed so forcefully since they refused to submit to any warning (Tyler 2018:96).

According to Harrison (1973:90) vv. 2-3 is about the prophet where he portrays the image of continuous weeping like a perennial spring, Jeremiah compares that of a person anxious to escape the corruption. For Jeremiah, the wilderness is preferable compared to the degradations of city life and its people. In this part of the text, there is an inseparable connection between the prophet and God. What Jeremiah experiences emotionally is mirrored in God's feelings. Jeremiah serves as a human manifestation of God, meaning that when Jeremiah articulates his emotions, they are

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inherently expressions of God's emotions as well. In essence, Jeremiah is not an independent entity apart from God's representation.

The passage describes a profound sense of grief and frustration, primarily articulated by God and, to some extent, attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. In v. 9:1, God's overwhelming grief is expressed, and there is a desire for a means to adequately convey the depth of these emotions. The text explores the idea of God distancing himself from the people due to their moral decay, with a wish to move from the temple to a desert-dwelling. The emotions expressed are complex, involving both sympathy for the people and disgust for their sins.

The speaker's contemplation of retreating to the wilderness is metaphorical, representing a desire to escape the challenges posed by the people's wrongdoing. The theme of the harmful use of speech is introduced, likening words to destructive weapons. The passage suggests that the prophet's expressions are intended to touch the hearts of the people, emphasising the need for a divine message to set things right. Ultimately, the text portrays a nuanced understanding of divine grief, anger, and the prophet's emotional struggle in the face of societal decay.

4.3.3 9:4-11

4 “Everyone takes heed to his neighbour,
And do not trust any brother;
For every brother will utterly supplant[45],
And every neighbour will walk with slanderers.
5 Everyone will deceive his neighbour,
And will not speak the truth;
They have taught their tongue to speak lies;
They weary themselves to commit iniquity.
6 Your dwelling place is amid deceit;
Through deceit they refuse to know Me,” says YHWH.
7 Therefore thus says YHWH of hosts:

[45] Harrison (1973:90) argues that this is a pun on the name of Jacob. He argues that there is a comparison between the people of Israel and Jacob (Gen. 27:36). Guthrie & Motyer (1970:634) are of the same opinion.

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"Behold, I will refine them and try them;
For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people?
8 Their tongue is an arrow shot out;
It speaks deceit;
One speaks peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth,
But [c]in his heart he lies in wait.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things?" says YHWH.
"Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"
10 I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains,
And for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation,
Because they are burned up,
So that no one can pass through;
Nor can men hear the voice of the cattle.
Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled;
They are gone.
11 "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals.
I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant."

Commentary

Fretheim (2002:158) argues that "verses 4-6 expand on the theme of deceit and falsehood. Amid the chaos created by the Babylonian invasion, the audience is warned to be on guard; they cannot trust even those who are closest to them. Trust and truth have become casualties, which leads to even further ill effects, not least the disintegration of the community itself. Where there is no truth there can be no trust and no real community." Fretheim (2002:158) argues that the people being warned perhaps are the righteous remnant and that Jeremiah is included in that group. He also argues that the warning might also be to everyone because even in judgement God cares about his people. Fretheim (2002:158) strongly believes that the warning might be for the exilic readers who continue to experience what became commonplace during the siege of Jerusalem.

Allen (2008:116) points out that the writer uses the metal refiner metaphor which was used earlier in vv. 6:27-30 for Jeremiah's ministry but here it is used to show Judah's ordeal as they undergo divine punishment. The announcement of disaster continues,

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this emphasis is to reinforce the severity of the disaster. Allen (2008:116) argues that the message of vv. 2-11 is to show the link between land and social cohesiveness. Because of the link, the destruction will not only affect the people but urban structures as well as the land. YHWH presides over this massive destruction and because of the people's unfaithfulness, everything will be dragged down with them.

According to (Tyler 2018:96) John Calvin makes the following statement in his commentary on verse 7:

> Because the Judeans thought that they had honest deceptions to cover their base character, God gives the answer that he had yet a way to discover their deceitfulness, and so tells them, 'When anyone brings in dross for silver or copper for gold, the goldsmith has a furnace and tests it. So will I try and melt you; for you think that you can dazzle my eyes by false pretences: this will do nothing for you.' In short, God intimates that he had means ready at hand to discover their deceitfulness, and that thus their hypocrisy would be of no advantage to them, as his judgments would be like a furnace as then stubble or wood cast into the furnace is immediately burned, so hypocrites cannot endure God's judgment.

O'Connor (2001:497) suggests that the language used is for reinforcement and that the testing proved another interpretation of exile because it suggests a less-than-complete destruction. She further argues that the testing motif is to suggest hope to the people in exile and they emerge purified. O'Connor (2001:497) adds that in vv. 4-9 God is still speaking. God is warning the people about treacherous neighbours and saying they will face tests and trials. Talking about testing and refining gives us another way to understand exile. It's not destruction like what was said in Chapters 4-6, which was a harsh message. Instead, the idea of refining and testing gives some hope to the people in exile. They will come out of it better and purified. However, v. 7, which is repeated from v. 5:9 and 27, shows that God seems unsure about punishing them like God wants some confirmation that this punishment is the right thing to do.

Feinberg (1982:85) points out that when a nation lacks a strong sense of spiritual devotion, it creates problems in how people relate to each other, as we can see in v. 4. People start taking advantage of one another, and even those who try to be righteous can start doubting each other. The whole society becomes at risk when trust

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between people breaks down. In Judah, this lack of trust even caused trouble within families and homes. The unity of the nation was in danger because of this. The agreement between God and His people required them to treat each other like brothers and sisters, but their actions contradict this principle.

In v. 5, the people went to great lengths to deceive each other. To show how unnatural their wickedness was, Jeremiah says that they used their tongues in a way they weren't meant to be used, twisting the truth. It's harder to lie than to tell the truth, but they were ready to do the hard work of being sinful. They kept on doing wrong things because their desire to be evil was stronger than their ability to do what was right (Feinberg 1982:85).

Feinberg (1982:85) also mentions that the words in v. 6 are meant for the entire nation, not just Jeremiah. Deceit was like the air they breathed; they were deeply entrenched in it and preferred to hold onto their deceptive ways rather than recognise God and give up their ungodly actions. In v. 3, it's said that they didn't know God, but now we learn that they outright refused to acknowledge Him. In a world where there's a “Moral Governor”, their troubles naturally arose from this stubborn refusal.

Huey (1993:118) argues that the people have become too wicked to the point where they do not even trust one another. Friends were deceiving friends, brothers deceiving brothers. Huey (1993:118) thinks that the people turned out to be people who constantly lie and they ended up being skilled at lying. He believes that lying is contrary to human nature; it must be learned (Huey 1993:118). Craigie et al, (1991:144) believe that what makes a society is trust and truth and it seems the community has lost all that. They have corrupted everything that was supposed to bring them together as a community. “The people’s addiction to evil has robbed them of the moral or spiritual strength to change” (Craigie et al, 1991:144).

Carroll (1986:239) argues that the terms and how the text is structured describe the people’s behaviour stereotypically and this way is used somewhere else in the tradition, so he argues that is difficult to determine whether this poem is descriptive or rhetorical. I will go with the latter because the type of mourning God seems to show would only mean that what the people were doing was terrible. I do see the words

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used in this text being an exaggeration of the situation surrounding this context but I argue that they are appropriate and talk about the true feelings and events taking place. Exaggeration is a type of language and figure of speech commonly used in poems to describe the extent of a situation. For O'Connor (2001:497) v.7 suggests that YHWH needs confirmation of the appropriateness of the yet-to-come punishment and expects to receive it.

In v. 9, there's a severe judgment coming, like a visit from God. In this judgment, God's very essence is at stake, and there's a need to seek justice even at the cost of God's own life. It's a matter of preserving God's honour, and ultimately, God won't allow even His precious covenant partner to make a mockery of him. The reason for this threat from YHWH isn't just about morality; it's deeply theological. It's a reminder that God is God, and he will reveal his divine nature against people who are making fun of Him. No social institution, not even the sacred one in Jerusalem, can ultimately push away God's overwhelming presence and His very essence (Brueggemann 1988:92).

Fretheim (2002:159) puts forward that vv. 10-11 once again evoke a sense of deep sorrow. The devastation described here is presented as both something that has already happened (v. 10) and something that will happen in the future (v. 11). It's possible to see these verses as describing an ongoing disaster. In v.10, God is depicted as someone who is deeply saddened and mourns over what has occurred in the environment. This portrayal is consistent with the theme of God's lament found throughout this context (vv. 8:18–9:3; 9:17-19) and in other parts of the text (for example, vv. 3:19-20). One striking aspect of this portrayal of God's sorrow is that God is shown to be weeping for the mountains and pastures. Why? Because they have been destroyed and are now empty. There are no more sounds of livestock, and the birds and animals have vanished. (O'Connor, 2001:497) adds that it's not entirely clear whether the speaker, likely YHWH, is the one weeping or commanding the weeping. This mourning is on behalf of the earth itself, particularly the mountains and wilderness pastures, mourning their destruction and the absence of life on them. This lamentation is for a world that has essentially been undone and returned to a state of chaos (as mentioned in vv. 4:23-8).

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Stulman (2005:101) highlights that in the face of the widespread destruction of life, God responds with deep sorrow, lamenting, and expressing grief. However, in the very next moment, God issued a threat to turn Jerusalem into ruins and make the towns of Judah completely uninhabitable (v. 9:11). Fretheim (2002:160) explains that Judah would become uninhabited because, in those days when armies waged war, they didn't just harm the human population but also killed animals and destroyed the natural surroundings. So, while God uses these marauding forces to bring judgment, God also laments the devastating impact these events will have on people, animals, cities, and the land.

Stulman (2005:102) further adds that although some changes in the text could make it more thematically consistent, such changes aren't really necessary. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, there's an idea that God's anger and sorrow can coexist. Both wrath and sadness express the pain of divine grief. God's active involvement in the world requires vulnerability, and that vulnerability can lead to suffering. The portrait of God that emerges here isn't always consistent or logical but rather dynamic, full of discord, unpredictable, and passionate.

Harrison (1973:90-91) thinks that in v.4-7 Judah's acts of dishonesty, deceit, betrayal, infidelity, and the worship of idols had sadly become commonplace sins. The people had, in essence, exhausted themselves through these perverse behaviours. Nonetheless, despite these transgressions, they continued to turn away from the God who had revealed Himself throughout their history. As a consequence of this breach of the covenant's love and loyalty, punishment was deemed necessary. God found Himself compelled to subject His people to the ordeal of suffering, as there appeared to be no alternative course of action.

According to Harrison (1973:91) in v.8-11, Jeremiah was deeply moved by the tragic downfall of a nation that had turned away from its faith and was heading towards inevitable destruction. He vividly illustrates the devastation that will befall Judah, portraying the once lush pastures of the wilderness, where cattle used to graze, now laid to waste. He also evokes the image of birds and animals fleeing in fear, akin to descriptions in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:25). Soon, only jackals will inhabit these desolate ruins, echoing similar scenes found in other parts of the Bible (compare with

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Jeremiah 10:22, 49:33, and 51:37)[46]. In both instances, the root causes of destruction, stemming from spiritual decline and disobedience, remain a constant theme.

Buttrick (1956:888) points out the importance of the wilderness and writes that it's difficult to pinpoint the exact date of this poem, but it's generally agreed that it cannot be from Jeremiah's early days because it bears the weight of much painful experience. In these passionate lines, one can keenly sense the profound sorrow that has already pierced Jeremiah's heart deeply. His emotional state here can perhaps be justified, given that he has truly "felt the wounds of the daughter of my people" (Jer. 8:21).

However, when Jeremiah looks upon the entrenched recklessness of the people and their refusal to acknowledge how their betrayals contribute to their misfortunes, he becomes overwhelmed with a sense of repulsion. This outburst isn't at odds with his sorrow; it's an expression of his grief. Seeing the moral deceit and stubbornness of the people everywhere, he is filled with both indignation and frustration. That's why this initial cry is so genuine and forceful, much like the kind of exclamation we often hear: "If only I could escape from all of this (Buttrick 1956:888).

Buttrick (1956:890) argues that the brief lament in vv. 10-11, holds a unique and compelling resonance. It goes beyond simply depicting a scene of desolation; it vividly portrays the devastating impact of an invading force. This passage invites us to draw parallels with Jeremiah 1:23-26, especially when it describes the profound silence and emptiness that has engulfed the land. The pastures have been so thoroughly ravaged that no travellers are passing through, the comforting sounds of cattle have fallen silent, and even the birds in the sky and the creatures of the fields have fled. The absence of the birds, in particular, is an evocative image that underscores the stark and haunting emptiness of the scene.
Claassens (2010:66) argues that In v. 10 of the book of Jeremiah, talks about how the birds in the sky and the animals in the fields have run away. This means that everything beautiful and normal has disappeared. This idea of birds flying away is a powerful symbol used in other situations where it feels like the world is ending. She uses an

[46] This sombre depiction brings to mind a later era when Jesus mourned the fate of Jerusalem (as recorded in Matthew 24:1-28, Mark 13:1-23, and Luke 21:5-24).

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example of a survivor of the Holocaust named Elie Wiesel who once talked about this verse. He said,

> I understood what the prophet meant when I went back to Auschwitz and Birkenau in 1979. Only then did I remember that during the terrible times of fire and silence, there were no birds in the sky. They had all left the areas around the death camps. I stood there in Birkenau and thought about Jeremiah's words.

In this passage from Jeremiah, the theme of deceit and falsehood is central, emphasising the pervasive breakdown of trust and truth within the community, leading to its disintegration. Fretheim (2002:158-159) suggests that the warning against deception may be directed at the righteous remnant or a broader audience, including exilic readers. The metaphor of refining is employed to depict Judah's ordeal and divine punishment, reinforcing the severity of the impending disaster. The subsequent verses portray God's sorrow and impending judgment, highlighting the coexistence of divine grief and wrath, while also underscoring the theological significance of preserving God's honour. Overall, the passage vividly captures the moral decay and impending devastation, painting a nuanced portrait of divine emotions and the consequences of societal betrayal.

4.3.4 9:12-16

12 Who is the wise man who may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of YHWH has spoken, that he may declare it? Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through?
13 And YHWH said, “Because they have forsaken My Torah which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it,
14 but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them,”
15 therefore thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.
16 I will scatter them also among the *goyim*, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them.”

Commentary

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Stulman (2005:103) explains that in Jeremiah 9:12-16, there are questions asked and then answered. First, an unknown person asks three bold questions in v. 12. Then, YHWH responds to these questions from vv. 13-16. The questions are: "Who is wise enough to understand this? Who has heard YHWH explain it? Why is the land ruined and empty like a desert where no one goes?". These questions make the destruction of the country seem like a mystery, something even wise people can't figure out (as in 9:11-12). This might seem odd because there have been many explanations given for why the city is in trouble. However, for the exiled people in Babylon, the destruction of Jerusalem was a real puzzle. They had lost their way of life, their hopes were shattered, and they didn't know what the future held. So they came into this conversation looking for answers to their big questions.

O'Connor (2001:497) adds that the writer of these verses believes they have the wisdom to answer these questions. The people didn't follow YHWH's teachings, they didn't listen to YHWH's guidance, and they worshipped other gods like the Baals. That's why they are in exile. Fretheim (2002:159) begins by mentioning that "vv. 12-16 are commonly considered to be an editorial expansion of vv. 10-11, focused on 'understanding' what has just been said. This prose section is set in a time after the destruction of Jerusalem." We see the questions being asked in v. 12, the question wonders about the meanings of the events that happened in the prior verses. Fretheim (2002:160) argues that "it is striking that these questions are inserted between two texts that are filled with lament, both human and divine. The human questions and divine judgments must be interpreted from within this context so filled with emotion and loss, pain and mourning."

We then see the answer to these questions in vv. 13-16. Verses 13-14 talk about the indictment and verses 15-16 talk about the announcement of judgement. Fretheim (2002:160) shares a meaningful statement and says that "unfaith does get passed on from generation to generation, becomes increasingly recognised as normal, and has a cumulative effect on the entire society that in time bursts forth in great devastation." Allen (2008:117) argues that,

> Jeremiah 9:2–16 (vv. 1–15) paints a grim picture of the collapse of social solidarity and presents the desolation of the land and the dispersal of its people as inevitable

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> consequences. The covenant triangle with YHWH, Israel, and the land as its fixed points could continue no longer.

Tyler (2018:97:98) explains that God says, "the reason for the people perishing is that they forsake my law," in v. 13, and so on. The important thing to God is that he gave us his laws and his will, which have been written down and explained not only through prophets but also directly by God himself. God spoke with great glory and majesty on Mount Sinai. The prophet continues by saying, "they didn't follow these laws." The Lord wants us, as St. James mentions, not only to listen to his Word but also to act upon it. Some people did some good things without too much effort. They got rid of idols, tore down altars, and stopped praying to their false gods. However, they still held these false gods in their hearts, even though they didn't openly worship them anymore. (Feinberg, 1982:87) adds that instead of obeying the law, they followed a path leading them to destruction. Because of their deflection from God, they suffered the consequences as they had brought along with it their flagrant social injustices.

Tyler (2018:98) writes about a commentary by Heinrich Bullinger[47] on vv. 15-16. He writes that in these verses God recalls three points about the punishment of the people. First, the word of God was bitter towards the people and the prophetic preaching which is called the heavenly bread and the drink of life, was like wormwood to them. Therefore the people deserved to be robbed of the very food they are privileged of. Second, God did not act out of impulse by scattering his people, instead, he made them gather so that they could be united. He then commanded that they should worship him alone and show total dependence on him. Instead, the people chose to run up and down and sought many gods for themselves. Third, the people did not use the sword properly instead they used it to fight against priests and prophets who were sent by God. It is for that reason God says, “I will send the sword against them,” this means that even if they run away, the sword will overtake them and destroy them (Tyler 2018:98).

[47] Heinrich Bullinger (18 July 1504-17 September 1575), was a Swiss Reformer and theologian, succeeded Huldrych Zwingli as the leader of the Church of Zürich and served as a pastor at the Grossmünster.

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For O'Connor (2001:497) vv. 12-16 the writer of this text claims to be wise because of the questions they ask. The writer is wise enough to answer the question he/she is proposing and the answer is that the people did not obey YHWH and chose not to listen to his voice. The people chose to worship Baal instead of worshipping him. This is the reason why they are in exile, namely it is because of their unfaithfulness.

Carroll (1986:243) argues that v.12b and 15b follow a Deuteronomistic terminology and theology. They follow the question-and -answer format. Carroll (1986:243) argues that the people who know the answer to the question are people who had a word from YHWH. This means that knowing YHWH and keeping his ways made one wise. He further argues that it is because of the combination of wisdom and prophecy that makes it more believable for the text to belong to the Deuteronomistic thought.

In v. 15, the metaphor of "bitter food," "wormwood," and "poisoned water" represents the bitter suffering that came with the fall of their kingdom and the Babylonian exile. The idea of annihilation in verse 16 doesn't mean the entire nation will be wiped out, but rather it refers to the ungodly individuals among them. Jeremiah repeatedly emphasises that there won't be a destruction of the entire people (Feinberg 1982:87). Harrison (1973:91) asserts that the tears shed and the fleeing of animals should serve as a clear warning to those with wisdom. However, the people are stubborn and are determined to follow pagan customs instead of adhering to the principles of their covenant. This stubbornness, in itself, will lead them to their downfall.

In Canaanite belief, the list of gods was often led by El and his partner Asherah, with their mythological offspring being the fertility-god Baal, who was considered the chief deity in many Ugaritic texts. This sensual and wild cult had a certain allure for many generations of Israelites. Jeremiah now highlights that the wrongdoing of previous generations sets a bad example for their descendants, leading them down a path of sin that ultimately results in punishment. This concept aligns with the biblical idea expressed in Exodus 20:5, where the consequences of sin are metaphorically described as wormwood and bitter waters. It's a reminder that the price of sin is always death (Harrison 1973:91).

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According to Buttrick (1956:891-892), vv.12-16 presents an interesting challenge to the so-called wise men of the time (as seen in Jeremiah 8:8-9). After describing the dire situation of the people and the devastated land, it poses a pertinent question: Who is the truly wise person capable of understanding and explaining the reasons behind the people's suffering? This question is more than just rhetorical; it essentially asks whether the popular leaders, including prophets and priests, can offer a satisfactory explanation for why the land has been ruined. The people themselves were likely asking this question because, until now, these leaders had been providing comforting answers, downplaying the severity of the situation.

However, it becomes evident that these leaders cannot provide a satisfactory explanation. In response, YHWH, as reiterated by Jeremiah throughout his prophecies, points out that all these calamities have befallen the people because they have abandoned his Torah and ignored His guidance. They have persistently pursued their desires and followed the Baals, as their forefathers had taught them. This emphasis on the corrupting influence of the Baals underscores the determination of the prophetic tradition to purify the people's faith and keep it free from compromise. As a consequence of this compromise, bitterness, dispersion, and the sword will afflict the people. The sense of impending doom is heightened by the suggestion that the nations to which the people will be scattered are so distant that neither they nor their ancestors have any familiarity with them. This implies the extreme isolation of Israel, both politically and economically, before the exile (Buttrick 1956:892).

4.3.5 9:17-22

17 Thus says YHWH of hosts:
“Consider and call for the mourning women,
That they may come;
And send for skilful wailing women,
That they may come.
18 Let them make haste
And take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run with tears,
And our eyelids gush with water.

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19 For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion:
'How we are plundered!
We are greatly ashamed,
Because we have forsaken the land,
Because we have been cast out of our dwellings.' "
20 Yet hear the word of YHWH, O women,
And let your ear receive the word of His mouth;
Teach your daughters to wail,
And everyone her neighbour a lamentation.
21 For death has come through our windows,
Has entered our palaces,
To kill off the children—no longer to be outside!
And the young men—no longer on the streets!
22 Speak, "Thus says YHWH:
'Even the carcasses of men shall fall as refuse on the open field,
Like cuttings after the harvester,
And no one shall gather them."

Commentary

These verses introduce further laments into this mix of indictment and judgement. Verse 18 is the laments of the people. Verse 19 speaks of the ruin and shame of the exile. In v. 17, God calls the audience which Fretheim (2002:162) believes are exilic readers to gather the mourning women. These women are professional mourners who represent the entire community when there is a death of an individual or the destruction of a city. There is a use of the first-person plural "us" win vv. 17-18 which means that God is included amongst the "us," which means he is mourned for and is also in mourning. The professional women mourn are not only mourning for Israel but also mourning for God as well. Fretheim (2002:162) mentions that in v. 20 we see that God calls these women mourners to hear the word of God and teach it to their daughters for the volume of mourners to increase. Fretheim (2002:163) concludes by mentioning the following:

> Death, the grim reaper, is virtually personified and is depicted as a prowler who enters through windows of houses and kills their inhabitants (see Isa 28:14-22; Hos 13:14). Death is everywhere! Death cuts down ordinary citizens and officials, children and

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> young men. It enters into homes and palaces and cuts off people in the streets and squares. Death cannot be resisted. Corpses will be strewn everywhere, like dung is strewn on the fields as fertilizer, like sheaves left behind the reaper to rot in the field. What a song to teach your children!

Claassens (2018:678) writes something that intrigued me about these mourning women in v.17. Claassens (2018:678) says that these women play an important role in teaching God's people how to mourn. She adds by saying that these women play an important role in helping people face the debilitating trauma that destroyed everything giving life its significance (Claassens 2018:678). The concern then is seen in God's effort to allow his people to mourn. Here we see God being the leader and the model of what he wants humans to do. He shows us that he can mourn. In that way, he also wants his people to mourn. It would seem otherwise for God to make an effort for his people to mourn when he does not show any signs of leading or rather, practising what he is preaching. We do not take the omnipotence of God, but through scripture, we see that God asks us what he can do and has done. I am suggesting that another reason for God's mourning is to lead his people to mourn and to be a model of mourning.

Claassens (2018:678) adds to this discussion and argues that mourning and lamentation help people face their trauma. Tyler (2018:95) uses the words by Lancelot Andrewes who tells us that "if weep we cannot mourn we can, and mourn we must*. Et vos non luxistis* says the apostle; he says not, *et vos flevistis*, "and you have not wept," but "and you have not mourned"; as if he should say, "that you should have done [this] at the least." Mourning they call the sorrow which reason itself can yield."
According to John Meyer, as recorded in (Tyler 2018:98), he believes that the Judeans were not moved to lament their destruction and that led to the prophet calling the professional mourning women. Tyler (2018:98) mentions that John Meyer believes that,

> the prophet spoke this way to make them ashamed; as if he had said, 'If after this much speaking, no sorrow can be stirred up in your hard and unbelieving hearts, then go to such theatrical women, and see if by them you can be brought to sorrow.' By showing extreme grief and acting out the part of mourners with skill, such women got tears and tears of abundance from the eyes of all watching.

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Tyler (2018:98) continues to say that the call for professional mourning women is not serious but it makes an ironic statement. He mocks their vanity that they were moved by something that was not at all important and that they also grieved, instead they laughed at the efforts to elicit sorrow as if no such thing should ever happen to them. Tyler (2018:99) answers an important question that I also wondered why does the text in v.20 speak to women and not men?

O'Connor (2001:497) argues that the calling of the weeping women was to begin the public ritual of mourning for funeral rites. Whenever they are present, it means that a death has occurred. O'Connor (2001:497) continues to say that the weeping of these women is so extensive to the point that they must teach other women their professional skills. Huey (1993:121) adds to the characteristics of mourning and mentions that the women would wail loudly, tear their clothes, and throw dust on their heads as a sign of grief. I assume the dramatising of mourning was to convince and propel the people to mourn too.

I perceive these professional mourning women as akin to therapists in their role and significance. They embody qualities in their craft that bear symbolism to the roles played by modern-day therapists. While there exist variations in the mechanisms employed to address trauma and distress, the fundamental objective remains the same: the healing of the troubled soul. Scholars, as mentioned earlier, have extensively discussed the level of skill and proficiency these ancient mourning women needed to possess to be professional and effective in their roles. The fact that God calls for their presence in certain situations implies that these women were not only competent but also had a noteworthy track record of aiding in the recovery of their clients.

To consider these women as "professional" mourners suggests the existence of a certain calibre of skill that was required for their profession. This, in turn, implies the need for education and training to shape and develop these skills. This notion finds support in v. 20 of the passage, where God suggests that this skill can be imparted and mastered. The call for professional mourning women to teach their daughters symbolises a form of "classroom learning environment," which can be likened to

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contemporary educational institutions where therapists undergo training. In today's world, therapists play a significant role in helping individuals mourn and cope with various emotional challenges, and they often have a solid track record of effectiveness.

I believe that in the ancient Near East, people had their own experienced and skilled individuals who played a crucial role in assisting them during times of mourning. While the methods employed in antiquity may not align precisely with modern-day therapeutic practices, the paramount consideration is that their methods were effective in addressing emotional distress and aiding in the process of healing. In this sense, there is a continuity between the ancient practice of employing mourning women and the modern practice of seeking therapeutic assistance, both aimed at providing support and facilitating the healing of troubled souls.

Claassens (2010:66) explores the tradition of wailing elderly Yemenite Jewish women through the work by Tova Gamliel and argues that while there are challenges in using modern-day observations to interpret biblical texts, Gamliel's insights from Yemenite-Jewish culture provide us with interesting perspectives on the role of wailing women in a world filled with trauma, as reflected in the book of Jeremiah.

For instance, according to Claassens (2010:66), Gamliel points out how the position of the wailing woman is a remarkable example of women's strength and creativity. The act of wailing and inviting others to join in public mourning transforms these women from being overlooked and unimportant to becoming lively, authoritative figures who hold significance. They shift from being seen as objects to being recognised as individuals with agency. Furthermore, Gamliel also notes that, in most cases, the role of the wailing woman is taken on by older women. It appears that women who have experienced life's hardships and perhaps have gone through their losses are considered qualified to lead the community in wailing.

As one person interviewed put it, "A wailer typically begins her role when she's older, when she has gained a deep understanding of life and sadness. She may have given birth to children and knows the pain of the soul. She starts praying to God." Gamliel further describes how Yemenite-Jewish women learn the art of wailing by observing

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experienced wailing women in places known as "houses of mourning." Alternatively, mothers or neighbours often pass down this skill to younger women. Gamliel explains this art of wailing as a "cumulative knowledge" that is passed on in two phases: first, the knowledge is stored and acquired, and then it incubates within them until the right moment, the moment of "retrieval" from memory when the performance takes place (Claassens 2010:67).

The text moves on and talks about "death comes to their windows" in v.21. According to John Meyer (Tyler 2018:99) the Judeans believed that their walls were high and strong and that their doors and gates were secure and that no enemy was going be able to come in and hurt them. This then means that the Judeans do not know what is coming their way, they are about to be disappointed. Death according to this text comes through the highest windows. This means that God can bring destruction in any way possible and that the Judeans are fools if they think that is impossible for God to do. Tyler (2018:99) concludes by saying,

> therefore, mourn all tender-hearted women for those things that will surely come and teach your daughters to mourn, for the judgment shall extend to you all, young and old; and the strong palaces of the great ones shall defend them no better than the cottages of the poor.

Claassens (2018:678) contributes to this decision and mentions that in v.22 the people are asked to speak and break the silence regarding the atrocities they have seen. Talking is good for their recovery. Harrison (1973:91) argues that Jeremiah touches upon a poignant theme by portraying death as a relentless harvester. In a mournful depiction of the devastation in Jerusalem, he intensifies the scene of desolation by summoning professional mourning women (mentioned in v. 17) to unleash loud and sorrowful lamentation. These women typically followed the funeral procession and vocally mourned the passing of the deceased.[48]

However, now these mourning women must come to understand the true depth of personal grief, as death claims its victims in Judah without regard for age or gender.

[48] This can be seen in Matthew 9:23

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This reference may allude to a deadly epidemic resulting from the conditions of a siege, but this interpretation remains uncertain at best (Harrison 1973:91).

Claassens (2010:66) thinks that in Jeremiah 9:21–22, death is described as entering people's homes through their windows. This is a vivid way of showing how death is like an unwelcome intruder that comes into the city and homes, taking away young children playing in the streets and adults in the prime of their lives who gather in public places. The dead are not treated with the respect they deserve; their bodies are thrown into open fields like garbage, similar to how reapers toss aside the leftover stalks after harvesting wheat. This means they aren't given a proper burial.

She further continues and states that these disturbing images in Jeremiah's writings remind us of other horrific times and places, such as the Holocaust, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the genocides in Rwanda and Somalia. In these events, thousands of bodies were thrown into mass graves without any dignity or care. Unfortunately, some things don't change. The deep pain and horror of witnessing the loss of life and a world in chaos is something that people all around the world can understand and relate to (Claassens 2010:66).

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the book of Jeremiah's intricate and demanding nature has been met with a thorough exegetical examination in this chapter. Focusing on two specific chapters from the text, we have meticulously translated and analysed their verses, drawing upon authoritative commentaries and employing a 'trauma lens' for deeper insight.

Our journey has led us to a comprehensive understanding of Jeremiah's literary and historical contexts, shedding light on the layers of meaning and significance embedded within his words. By dissecting each verse and considering the historical, cultural, and theological backdrop, we have unravelled the tapestry of Jeremiah's time.
This chapter has contributed significantly to the academic scholarship surrounding the book of Jeremiah, making it more accessible and meaningful to those seeking a deeper comprehension of this ancient text. Through the lens of analysis and

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interpretation, we have unlocked the treasures hidden within Jeremiah's prophetic writings, offering a fresh perspective on this formidable challenge.

In the upcoming chapter, we will delve into the contextual parallels of the text mentioned above, focusing on the historical backdrop of apartheid. Our discussion will encompass an exploration of what apartheid entailed, its origins, the traumatic events that unfolded during this era, and the enduring reasons why scholars argue that its impact continues to affect black communities even today.

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CHAPTER 5: APARTHEID AND ITS EFFECTS

5.1 Introduction

The church has played a big role in forming and fighting Apartheid. De Gruchy (1990:219) writes that “more than seventy percent of the people of South Africa claim membership of the Christian Church.” It is not surprising then that the church plays an important role in the social and political life of the country. The concept of apartheid will be emphasised much in this chapter and for a thorough understanding of the concept, I will be giving a much-detailed history of the development of apartheid theology and the policies that led to its implementation. By giving this history about the development of apartheid, one will understand the concept and how it fits to the whole discussion of this chapter.

This section will be broken down into four sections. First, I will discuss the development of Apartheid Theology by mentioning Gustav Warneck and Abraham Kuyper. Second, I will discuss significance of the letter by Prof EP Groenewald in advocating for apartheid. Third, I will look at the rise of apartheid and its policies. Lastly, I will discuss two apartheid events that act as my reference for what this chapter aims to compare and study.

5.2 Development of Apartheid Theology

In this section, I will discuss how the “Apartheid theology” was constructed in the first half of the century in South Africa from a combination of European theological currents: The policy by Gustav Warneck and the theology of Abraham Kuyper. During the period 1921-1935, the church didn't have a well-developed social ethic. The area of mission was the avenue that the church explored to make its policy decisions. In 1935, the church developed a mission policy, but it wasn't just about spreading their faith. It was also a way of understanding and explaining the big social and political events happening at that time. So, when we look at the impact of people like Warneck and Kuyper, it's important to consider how they influenced this mission policy and the way the church thought about the world around them. It's like they played a big part in shaping the church's approach to both faith and the world (Naude 2005:166).

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5.2.1 The theology of Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper was born in a parsonage on October 29, 1837 from Rev. and Mrs. J.F. Kuyper, in the small town of Maassluis, the Netherlands. His dissertation was on the differences in the rules of the church, between John Calvin and John Laski. He was surrounded by liberal modernism. He moved away from modernity to simple Reformed orthodoxy in 1866. He became opposed to the hierarchy and role of the king in the Hervormde Kerk and spoke in favour of separating church and state. Kuyper embraced evangelical Calvinism and placed a strong emphasis on personal piety. He also placed a strong emphasis on the supreme lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of creaturely life (Manavhela 2009:93).

Rathbone (2015:2) writes that Kuyper's neo-Calvinism stresses the belief that everything in life originates from God and lives under the sovereign rule of God. This sphere of sovereignty talks more about the way that multifaceted nature of made a reality just as the standards that administer every angle of life are established in God as the maker of the real world. Kuyper's philosophy resists the humanism of the French Revolution and the reductionism of Enlightenment science by rejecting rationalism and taking its point of departure from the Word of God (Rathbone 2015:2).

Rathbone (2015:4) stresses the confusion that arose from the Kuyperian sphere sovereignty and the universal authority of God in South Africa during apartheid whether Kuyper understood race as a sovereign sphere or not. Kuyper had a Eurocentric view of Africa and he viewed Africa as 'bereft of any impulse for higher life.' From this standpoint, it might seem Kuyper is elevating one race from the other. The negative reference to Africa by Kuyper can be easily interpreted as differentiation between races whereby Europeans are perceived as being culturally superior to Africans (Rathbone 2015:4). Manavhela (2009:97) believed that what Kuyper meant was that "every aspect of life should be practised to the honour of God. A Christian is called to honour and to glorify God in whatever he does, could it be politics, economy, culture and science, every aspect of life."

Baskwell (2006:1279) argues that the Afrikaner Reformed churches misinterpreted the theology of Kuyper. Kuyper's theology has given birth to apartheid theology, but the theology was not pure Kuyperian. Baskwell (2006:1279) alludes that "Kuyper's

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concepts were received by enthusiasts of his thought and transformed into something, which I believe, Kuyper, had he lived to see it, would have abhorred." The development of Kuyperian theology in South Africa should be seen within the background of the Afrikaner Reformed churches in South Africa. S.J du Toit and his son, J.D du Toit played a major role in the development and shaping of South African Theology. They were much influenced by Kuyper's theology.

Kuyper's concept of sphere sovereignty asserts that no single aspect of reality should serve as an absolute starting point for organising the entire structure. Instead, each aspect possesses its sovereignty within its domain. Consequently, race or any other individual aspect cannot establish the norm for structuring reality. The unity and structure of creation find their foundation in God, who is the creator of all aspects of reality. It is precisely this unique perspective of Kuyper that could be advantageous for post-apartheid South Africa, as it perceives reality as a complex network of interconnections. Moving forward, we will look at the policy by Gustav Warneck and how it made its way into apartheid theology.

5.2.2 The policy by Gustav Warneck

Gustav Warneck (1834-1919) is regarded as the father and a great influencer of nineteenth century missiology. Warneck published his three volumes of the *Evangelische Missionslehre* (1879-1903). Naude (2005:166) describes Warneck as "a missionary called by Jesus who was to form the basis of a biblical missiology." Looking at the crux of Warneck's argument, he used the text from Mt. 28:19ff as programmatic for mission. This missionary call by Jesus was to form the basis of a biblical missiology. Naude (2005:166) argues that "but in his explication of this text, Warneck was led by two considerations: The practical situation in the mission field, and a popular idealistic notion of society as structured in concentric circles based on individual – family – Volk. This is then motivated by a reference to the same structure in the OT (Abram – clan/extended family – people of Israel) and the NT (Jesus – house churches –*Volkskirchen*). He therefore logically concluded that mission is the "*Christianisierung* (*matheteuein*) *der Heidenen als Völker* (*panta ta ethne*) (Christianisation of the heathens as nations/people).

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Naude (2005:168) argues Warneck believed that although mission might have started with *Einzelbekehrung* (single conversion), it advanced into *Volkschristianisierung* (the Christianisation of a people as an ethnic unit) and that this can be concluded by what is found in the New Testament. It is clear to Warneck that he supports the *Volkschristianisierung* (having an ethnical group in mind) because of the emphasis he puts on the *Volksprache* where the family structure is the foundation of doing mission. Warneck stipulates two points that connect his beliefs to the South African situation.

First, he provides a missionary method where the ethnological reality and the religious ideal are unproblematically linked with ethnological reality providing the base for religious ideas. He considers the separation of churches for different groups of people from different ethnical groups as natural because the church must be grounded in the life of the people. Secondly, Warneck "establishes an ethnographic pluralism based on a romantic *Volksbegriff* that left a reception of his ideas open to mission as a form of cultural propaganda and an ultimately a defence of the political structuring of society based on Volk in an ethnical sense" (Naude 2005:168).

When the Federal Mission Policy (all Dutch Reformed Church synods participating) was developed in 1935, it was stated unambiguously that evangelisation can never imply denationalisation, because Christianity does not want to rob the *Bantu* (*naturel*) of his language and culture, but wants to permeate and cleanse (*fursuiter*) his whole nationalism. That is why there can be no social equality, as it would imply the *Aufhebung* of the God-created and God-willed social differentiation (Naude 2005:169). Through this, we see the foundation of "apartheid theology" being laid and lasting for years with atrocious consequences for black people. The next section will look into the report by Prof EP Groenewald and how it supported racial separation.

5.2.3 The report by Prof EP Groenewald

Vosloo (2015:201) writes that Prof. Groenewald, a respected New Testament scholar from the University of Pretoria, used as the basis for his chapter on "*Apartheid en Voogdyskap in die lig van die Heilige Skrif*" (Apartheid and Guardianship in light of Holy Scripture) his earlier study on the theme, a document that was accepted by the Transvaal Dutch Reformed Synod and the Council of Dutch Reformed Churches in

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1947. According to Groenewald, the idea of apartheid is built on experiences stretching back through the generations.

Groenewald asserts that the concept of apartheid is rooted in generational experiences, with references to the 1935 Mission Policy affirming the church's stance against social *'gelykstelling'* (equality) while emphasising the significance of the guardianship concept. He begins by emphasising that Scripture teaches both the unity of humanity and the divine origin of diversity, citing Genesis 10's account of post-flood division among nations and Genesis 11's description of God intentionally confusing languages. Drawing inspiration from Acts 17:26, Groenewald not only sees the separation of nations but also their designated geographical territories as part of God's providence. He further argues that only nations capable of maintaining their distinct identities can endure and fulfil their divine destinies (Vosloo 2015:202).

Groenewald argued that apartheid affects all aspects of life including its national, social and religious aspects. Vosloo (2015:203) adds that "Groenewald also affirms social apartheid, since social assimilation leads to miscegenation, and that in turn leads to religious apostasy. This idea is also applied to marriage. Hence Groenewald's conclusion:

> An unlimited social mixing with people who do not belong to your own community leads to moral and spiritual harm... There can only be communion for the sake of the gospel." This prohibition against social mixing is then further extended to the arenas of labour and jurisprudence. And regarding religious apartheid, Groenewald feels that Scripture is so obvious in this regard that there is not a need to argue for it.

The ideology of apartheid theology found its validation and mainstream acceptance through the endorsement of numerous theologians and prominent public figures. At its essence, this theological framework can be attributed to a deliberate misinterpretation of religious scripture, wherein textual readings were manipulated to align with a predetermined narrative. This misappropriation of theological tenets served as the ideological foundation for the establishment and perpetuation of a deeply entrenched system of racial segregation, persisting for an extended duration and leaving enduring scars within black communities that continue to resonate in contemporary times. It is imperative to underscore that any assertion of divine support for such a theological

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framework lacks both validity and credibility, rendering it an untenable and absurd proposition. We will now discuss how apartheid was implemented and supported.

5.3 The rise of Apartheid

In 1948, white South African voters elected a government dedicated to the ideology of apartheid or, in Afrikaans, 'apartness' or 'apart-hood'. Not content with separation under segregation, the new government would fashion a system that precluded Africans from all rights normally associated with those of citizens. W.M.M. Eiselen, a professor of social anthropology at Pretoria University wrote in 1948 the Meaning of Apartheid. He believed that,

> separation is a distant goal and can only be achieved by careful long-range planning, and its gradual realisation need not bring about economic dislocation . . . [it] is generally accepted that the whole South African economy depends on a permanent supply of Native labour (Clark & Worger 2013:47).

Mhlauli et al, (2015:204) believe that apartheid was a systematised racial discrimination in South Africa which did not begin when the Nationalist Party won and took power in 1948. They allude that racial discrimination is a result of many factors which can be traced as far back as the preindustrial period, similar to what happened in Europe, Asia, and America. It dates to the days of colonial rule when the Dutch first settled at the Cape in 1652 and their established of a fort at Table Bay. Not only was apartheid a system of racial discrimination, but, it was also imposed separation or segregation of blacks and whites in the areas of government, labour market and residency. Mhlauli et al, (2015:205) write the following:

> It was, thus, pervasive in that it was deeply embedded within the economic, social, and political structure of the whole country. In order to implement its policy of divide and rule, the Nationalist Party passed a series of laws. Some of the most prominent included the prohibition of mixed marriage, the Immorality Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950, which promoted the placement of blacks and whites in separate residential areas on a comprehensive and compulsory basis, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, which enforced segregation in the use of public facilities such as transport, cinemas, restaurants and sports facilities.

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The passage highlights the emergence of apartheid in South Africa in 1948 when the white South African government, led by the Nationalist Party, embraced a policy of "apartness" or apartheid. This system went beyond mere racial segregation, aiming to completely strip Africans of their citizenship rights. It was grounded in the belief that careful long-term planning could achieve separation without causing economic dislocation, as the South African economy relied heavily on Black labour.

Additionally, the passage underscores that apartheid had historical roots dating back to the colonial period in South Africa, suggesting that racial discrimination was deeply embedded in the country's history. Apartheid was not limited to racial discrimination but also imposed strict separation and segregation across various aspects of life, including government, the labour market, and residency.

The pervasive nature of apartheid is emphasised, as it affected the economic, social, and political structures of the entire nation. To enforce segregation and maintain control, the Nationalist Party passed a series of discriminatory laws, which I shall speak about in the following section.

5.3.1 Apartheid legislation

Clark & Worger (2013:49-51) believe that every aspect of South African life was determined under law by race. From the most basic rights of citizenship to the most personal choices of association, life in South Africa was dictated by race laws. These laws not only aimed at separating whites and blacks, they also instituted the legal principles that whites should be treated more favourably than blacks, that separate facilities need not be equal, and that the state should exercise the power deemed necessary to deal with any opposition. Clark and Worger (2013:49-51) mention the laws that were passed during apartheid.

1. “Nationalist government was the Population Registration Act (No. 30). Under the terms of this Act, all residents of South Africa were to be classified as ‘White’, ‘Coloured’ or ‘Native’ (later called ‘Bantu’) people.”

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2. "Native Laws Amendment Act (No. 54) and Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act (No. 67). Passes were regularised throughout the country for the movement of black people."
3. "Group Areas Act (No. 41). Under this Act, the government could impose control throughout the country over property rights requiring permits, based on race, for ownership and occupation."
4. "The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No. 49). All races should have separate amenities – such as toilets, parks and beaches – and that these need not be of an equivalent quality."
5. "The Bantu Education Act (No. 47). Blacks were provided with separate educational facilities under the control of the Ministry of Native Affairs, rather than the Ministry of Education."

The next section will be aimed at highlighting two traumatic events that took place during apartheid.

5.4 The response from the discriminated

Africans, Coloureds and Indians were all as adamantly opposed to apartheid as they had been to segregation. As these groups watched their lives circumscribed in countless ways under the rash of apartheid legislation enacted between 1950 and 1953, they organised to resist, protest and finally attempt to overthrow the apartheid regime.

Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:271) write about the defiance campaign of 1952 which was a joint stand by the ANC and the SAIC. The campaign propagated the rejection of segregated facilities and the pass system. One of the leaders of the defiance campaign was Albert Luthuli, who was a lay preacher and he later used his language of the Bible in his Christian faith to affect his political philosophy.

5.4.1 Sharpeville massacre

Sharpeville, located within the Vaal Triangle, was strategically positioned in the southern Transvaal, now known as Gauteng. This region encompasses various mining and industrial towns, such as Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark. Sharpeville's inception

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can be traced back to the 1940s when it was conceived as a meticulously planned "model township." Its primary purpose was to accommodate residents who were relocated from the Top Location, an informal settlement adjacent to Vereeniging. Sharpeville garnered widespread acclaim for being the most well-serviced township throughout South Africa (Baines 2010).

Nonetheless, due to the significant post-war influx of job seekers, Sharpeville quickly became overcrowded, leading to deplorable living conditions. This problem was particularly pronounced in the Sharpeville area known as Vuka, where high unemployment and a surge in criminal activities were prevalent. Sharpeville remained politically quiet until the late 1950s when there was an escalation in the enforcement of pass laws. This resulted in abrupt raids on residences and shacks, along with arbitrary arrests for various minor apartheid law violations (Baines 2010).

These circumstances transformed Sharpeville into a fertile ground for recruiting members into extra-parliamentary political organisations, with particular emphasis on the newly established Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), led by Robert Sobukwe. Interestingly, the African National Congress (ANC) was conspicuously absent from the township. The PAC initiated a campaign against the pass laws, which notably included the symbolic act of burning the despised "*dompas*," a literal translation being 'stupid pass' (Baines 2010).

On 21 March 1960 in Sharpeville, thousands of people gathered near Sharpeville police station to march against the use of pass laws. The march was planned by the Pan-African Congress as well as the African National Congress. After the massacre, thousands of people attending the march were arrested and others banned. The leadership of the ANC and the PAC including Nelson Mandela, Albert Luthuli, and Robert Sobukwe were arrested and the organisations were declared illegal (Lodge 2011:74-77).

The atmosphere was tense as protesters gathered at the police station at Sharpeville on the morning of 21 March. The slogan that drove the demonstration was "No bail, no defence, no fine," and so they waited, determined to have themselves arrested. Sabre fighter jets ordered to fly low over crowds here and elsewhere had succeeded

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in dispersing some protesters, but nobody budged at Sharpeville. In the early afternoon, after police reinforcements had been brought in and the crowd lining the perimeter fence of the police station had swelled to some 5, 000, a scuffle near one of the gates and a surge in the crowd triggered the tragedy; without warning, police opened fire, even as people fled. Most of the 69 dead and 200 wounded were shot in the back (Morris 2012:68).

Clements (2018:18) argues that the shootings deepened the already existing lack of trust between the police and the local community. Adding to the problem, police officers later stormed through the township, behaving aggressively and demanding to see identification documents. Shockingly, they even arrested some of the wounded individuals who were in the hospital seeking medical care. The police claimed they had been under attack and displayed two piles of weapons and rocks as evidence for the media. On the other hand, the local residents accused the police of planting weapons on the deceased individuals. Rebuilding trust between the police and the community would prove to be a lengthy and challenging process, and it would take a considerable amount of time before relations could be repaired.

In Langa, the police also opened fire on a peaceful gathering, tragically resulting in the deaths of two individuals. This tragic incident sparked widespread outrage across the nation. People expressed their anger through large-scale stayaways and protests. Notably, in Cape Town, a march involving over 30,000 participants moved from Langa to Parliament. Furthermore, approximately 60,000 workers from Langa and Nyanga engaged in a nearly three-week-long strike (Morris 2012:68).

However, on March 30, 1960, the government responded with force, declaring a state of emergency. This led to the detention of 11,000 individuals and the arrest of 18,000 for their resistance against the pass laws. Then, on April 8th, 1960, the government took a decisive step by banning both the ANC and PAC. It became evident that the government was determined to suppress all peaceful protests orchestrated by these organisations (Morris 2012:69).

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5.4.2 Soweto uprising

In 1953, the Bantu Education Act transferred the responsibility for educating black students to the Bantu Education Department, which was a part of the Department of Native Affairs led by the white supremacist Hendrick Verwoerd. The conditions in these schools were deplorable, marked by a chronic shortage of educational materials, extremely high student-teacher ratios, reaching as high as 56 students per teacher, and only one out of every ten teachers possessing matriculation certificates. In 1976, after a curriculum restructuring, Standard six students were moved from primary to secondary schools, leading to an enrolment of 257,505 students, while the available classrooms across the country could only accommodate 38,000 students (Baines 2006). The state of township schools was declining and students saw a need to vocalise their frustrations.

The memories of the Soweto uprising are deeply etched with the harrowing image of police violence. For black South Africans, the encounter with police officers, who callously opened fire on protesting students, instantly claiming the lives of two young souls, forever transformed what had started as a peaceful march by school pupils into a tumultuous and explosive rebellion (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:25).

Over several weeks, students in schools around Soweto had vehemently contested a policy change that aimed to compel them to study certain non-language subjects, such as mathematics, using Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. Black students in townships found Afrikaans to be a challenging language, and there were few teachers qualified to effectively teach with Afrikaans. Moreover, Afrikaans was not just a language; it symbolised the police, the administration, and the reviled apartheid government. Its imposition as the language of education in African township schools was met with widespread suspicion and resistance (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:25).

This proposed change was perceived as the state's assault on the language and culture of black people, on their prospects for the future, and on their capacity to influence immediate policy changes. In this tragic episode, the violence that had always been integral to the practices and ideology of the authoritarian apartheid state also became an inescapable facet of the lived experiences of those caught in this tumultuous period (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:25).

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Prior attempts at protest, including class boycotts and subtle forms of dissent in primary and high schools, had been met with suppression, dismissal, or indifference. Finally, students from several schools in Soweto rallied together to organise a protest march. Caught off guard, the police hastily prepared to confront them. The fateful encounter took place on Vilakazi Street, right in front of Orlando West High School, at 10:30 on the morning of June 16, 1976. Six thousand pupils, dressed in their school uniforms, filled the air with songs, shouts, and placards bearing slogans like "Away with Afrikaans" and "Afrikaans is the language of the oppressors" (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:5).

Clark & Worger (2013:82-83) state that as news of the protests spread, police began to converge at Soweto, shooting at school children and throwing tear gas. By 9 a.m. on the morning of 16 June, chaos began to sweep through the township. The first victim was Hector Petersen[49], a 13-year-old protestor shot by the police, who died on the way to hospital. The police responded with tear gas and then with gunfire that left more than 500 students killed and thousands injured.

The students were very angry and frustrated when the police used violence to stop their march. This made things worse, and more violent acts followed. Throughout the afternoon and night, widespread violence continued. People set fire to liquor stores and government offices, which they saw as symbols of oppression. In the morning, four people died during the "riots." In the afternoon and evening, eleven more people died, and four of them were under eighteen years old. All these people were killed by bullets, and it was the police who caused their deaths (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:26).

[49] Pohlandt-Mccormick (2000:30) writes in detail the extent of the gunshot wound on the body of Hector Peterson. She writes that “on the Hector Pietersen's file meticulously tracks his body from Baragwanath Hospital to the government mortuary, where it was identified as that of Hector Pieterson by his mother, Dorothy Pieterson, on June 21, 1976. The district surgeon, Dr. H. Bukofzer, took charge of the boy's body and started the post-mortem examination at 10 a.m. on June 22, 1976. He identified the body as that of a "*bantu* male child . . . Body No: 2492/76 . . . whose reputed age was 12 yrs. Death, he wrote in the report, had occurred on June 16, 1976, caused by a "gunshot wound of kidney, liver, lung & omentum." He found a "I cm bullet entrance wound on the right side of the back just below the right renal angle" and a "2 cm bullet exit wound on the left antero-lateral aspect of the neck." The above is to highlight the ruthlessness and how this can be a traumatic experience for young students matching in June 16 as Hector was seen by the public.

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The initial phase of the uprising only lasted a few days, but the trouble and clashes with the police continued with occasional bursts of violence and new deaths until the start of 1978. The violence did not stay limited to Soweto. Within two months after June 16, it had spread to eighty African communities, townships, and rural Bantustans (homelands). Two months later, that number had grown to 160.

Because of the unrest in Soweto, 312 schools with 180,000 African students had to close immediately. In Alexandra, the closing of fourteen schools affected 6,000 students. During the uprising, ninety-five black schools in Soweto, four in Alexandra, and twelve in the Cape Peninsula were either destroyed or damaged. The uprising caused at least 176 deaths in the first two weeks. Different estimates suggested that the total number of deaths could be anywhere from 700 to 1200. Only two of the victims were white, and many very young children also took part in the protests (Pohlandt-Mccormick 2000:26).

Morris (2012:109) argues that the Soweto uprising was a turning point for the apartheid government. The uprising intensified the passion young people had to resist the apartheid system. More and more protests around South Africa broke out over the years. Intentional pressure intensified and thousands of young black people slipped across the borders to join the liberation movements and continue to fight.

Kaminer & Eagle (2010:11-12) argue the following regarding the atrocities of apartheid:

> Over 5,000 incidents of torture were reported to the TRC by about 3,000 people, mainly concerning the violation of black men between the ages of thirteen and thirty-six years old. In the more recent nationally representative SASH survey, 1.3 per cent of men and 0.2 percent of women in the sample reported having been tortured, a statistic which suggests that several thousand South Africans have survived torture. But these figures probably represent only a minority of all torture experiences in the South African population. It is possible that some torture survivors in South Africa, as in other countries, have never revealed their torture experiences to anyone, due to a deep sense of shame and humiliation, feelings of guilt for having given evidence against their comrades as a result of torture, or fear of reprisals by agents of the former government.

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The two traumatic events in South Africa share commonalities characterised by significant loss of life, the utilisation of violence by the ruling authorities, and the ruthless nature of their actions. Both the incident in Judah and the apartheid regime exhibited a deliberate use of brutality as a means of enforcing compliance and instilling fear among the victims. Consequently, these events had a profound and lasting impact on the South African population, leaving many individuals in a state of shock and trauma. Witnessing the loss of life through fatal shootings and injuries inflicted upon others was a distressing and undesirable experience for all involved.

Kaminer & Eagle (2010:10) state that,

> according to the evidence collected by the TRC, forms of political violence and traumatisation that were particularly common in South Africa during apartheid included the political detention and torture of those who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle, the abduction and murder of suspected political activists, stoning, shooting and beating of people engaged in political protests, and the intentional destruction of homes and property.

As a result, these occurrences have left a substantial portion of the South African population emotionally numb, devoid of hope, and often rendered unable to express their feelings or experiences.

5.5 Effects of apartheid

The statement in Jeremiah 8:20 "the harvest is passed," implies the enduring and prolonged agony of Judah. This enduring suffering proved to be overwhelming and demanded considerable time for resolution. The repercussions of apartheid echo a similar narrative, stemming from the prolonged affliction and torment endured by black individuals during the apartheid era. The section above focused on physical violence. There is also psychological violence, particularly systemic violence, which must consistently be considered. This encompasses the harm caused by racist systems and attitudes, the white supremacy that both generates and perpetuates black inequality, and the multitude of micro and macroaggressions that stem from white supremacy in the daily experiences of black individuals. Moreover, it encompasses systemic violence related to poverty and its persistent impoverishing effects, as well as the deliberate denial of opportunities and life chances. Additionally, it encompasses the

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psychological violence inherent in the social engineering strategies that apartheid excelled in.

Phiri & Matambo (2018:70-71) argue that the battle against apartheid, when seen in the broader context, was not simply about black people seeking political power. The anti-apartheid movement wasn't solely focused on placing black individuals in positions of authority and granting them the voting rights they had been denied. At its core, it was a profound struggle for human dignity and a powerful reminder that assigned value to individuals based on their skin colour, language, or cultural background was ethically wrong. A number of researchers have found that the trauma inflicted by humans have more profound psychological consequences than that caused by natural disasters (Hickson & Kriegler 1991:148).

Kagee & Price (1995:739) argue that living under the oppressive laws of apartheid, which restrict daily freedom such as the freedom movement and expression. It's understandable to imagine that black South Africans felt a sense of powerlessness, disheartenment, and hopelessness. After all, they had little control over their own political, economic, and social futures. However, the successes achieved by the liberation movement in challenging the state's authority highlight the unyielding spirit and determination of the black majority. Nonetheless, enduring the constant oppression of racist laws is believed to have had adverse psychological consequences.

Kagee & Price (1995:739) further ague that struggling to make ends meet and living in poverty during apartheid can lead to an increased likelihood of facing psychological challenges and experiencing poor mental health. Conditions like overcrowded living spaces, hunger, and limited access to education and recreational opportunities place individuals under significant daily pressures. These ongoing stresses can accumulate over time, contributing to a higher prevalence of psychological distress.

Harriman et al, (2021:852) share these sentiments made by Kagee & Price and argue that hunger is not just about the physical stress of not having enough to eat, but also the emotional strain of not being able to provide for your family, especially in a cultural context where this responsibility is significant. Hunger, particularly in this context, can

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also be seen as a symbol of deprivation. The fact that different racial groups still experience the complex burden of hunger unequally may be a long-term result of policies that aimed to withhold resources, such as adequate income and decent living conditions from Africans.

In South Africa, the pervasive violence in people's lives is not just physically taxing but also deeply psychologically distressing. This is because any form of opposition to the state outside of parliament is often met with strong force by the security forces. Violent actions of the police against Black communities are believed to make individuals more susceptible to increased feelings of anxiety, depression, and a sense of powerlessness (Kagee & Price 1995:739).

Those individuals who take on active roles as political activists and community organisers in the fight against apartheid face grave risks. They risk being detained without trial for unspecified lengths of time and subjected to torture while imprisoned. Beyond the evident physical consequences, there are also lasting psychological effects that emerge from such experiences. Black South Africans endure a continuous traumatic stress syndrome due to the pervasive violence inherent in apartheid (Kagee & Price 1995:739).

Harriman et al, (2021:852) believe that when we look at issues like neighbourhood crime and alcohol abuse, we must consider the larger systemic picture. Alcohol has a dark history in South Africa, where it has been used to maintain an unfair balance of power, especially during colonial times. For example, farm labourers were often given alcohol as part of their compensation. The effects of this history still linger today. Alcohol has been employed as a way to divert laborers' attention from their own suffering and the harsh working conditions they endured, and it has also served as a deterrent to prevent them from organising and protesting.

Pillay (2017:6) argues that in the context of South Africa, the elevation and imposition of whiteness as the superior race and population group resulted in the oppression and dehumanization of the black majority. This led many black individuals to internalise the belief that they were somehow lesser human beings. The apartheid policy further entrenched the protection of white privileges, which encompassed political

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advantages, social benefits, and economic dominance. Economic aspects were deeply entwined with racial lines, not only in terms of how goods were produced and distributed but also in how they were consumed. The job market was deliberately structured to safeguard the economic well-being of white citizens. It's evident that economic pressure was manipulated to uphold racism and white privilege.

Additionally, apartheid policies systematically institutionalised discrimination in various areas, including housing, marriage, education, employment, and healthcare. The power of whiteness in this context is marked by its ability to impoverish, deprive, contaminate, and harm, all seemingly within the confines of the law (Pillay 2017:6). Pillay (2017:4) uses the definition from the 'International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination', and mentions that racism is "any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life". He further argues that it is important to draw a distinction between racism, racial prejudice and racial discrimination.

Racism is the belief that some races are better than others, and racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. Racial prejudice is a negative attitude towards a group of people based on race, arising from race-based stereotypes. Racial discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of their race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin (Pillay 2017:5).

Hickson & Kriegler (1991:146) argue the following about the psychological impact of racism.

> Healthy mental functioning and personality development depend on the presence and continuity of such essential experiences as the individual's sense of security and warmth, freedom for personal growth and the identification with a community of equals. Racism undercuts the roots of healthy mental life by depriving its victims of these experiences and conditioning them into accepting the myth that the cause of their inferior status in society lies irrevocably within themselves.

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Apartheid, a manifestation of racism, transcended mere oppression of black individuals in South Africa; it aimed at degrading their fundamental humanity. The enduring trauma inflicted by apartheid continues to afflict society today, necessitating a thoughtful examination of its lasting psychological repercussions.

Atwoli et al, (2013:8-9) discuss results to a research they conducted to analyse trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in South Africa. They argue that witnessing events, many of which likely involved violence, accounted for approximately 50% of the relative burden of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in South Africa. These experiences were associated with enduring symptoms, with only war-related events surpassing them in terms of the duration of symptoms. This finding is quite distinct from what is observed in other populations, where the unexpected loss of a loved one or direct interpersonal violence such as rape or combat typically contribute the most to PTSD cases.

This difference can be attributed to the fact that political and criminal violence often unfolds in public spaces in South Africa. It underscores the significant role that the political and social context play in shaping the risk of PTSD associated with specific events. The elevated importance of witnessing traumatic events in causing PTSD in South Africa might be connected to the cultural belief in ubuntu, which emphasises the interdependence of one's well-being with that of their family and community. Ubuntu is an African worldview that highlights values like group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, and collective unity (Atwoli et al, 2013:8).

Atwoli et al, (2013:8-9) further argue that witnessing such events may have distinct effects on memory and feelings of helplessness, which are crucial factors in the development of PTSD. In fact, some argue that witnessing trauma may be more distressing for individuals who have already experienced multiple traumatic events, as it could enhance memory formation, leading to intrusive and vivid recollections.

Atwoli et al, (2013:9) conclude by stating that their findings are also consistent with previous research on the emotional toll of observing others suffering, and they align with studies on PTSD in high-risk groups like war journalists and rescue workers.

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These observations highlight the significant impact that witnessing traumatic events can have on individuals in the South African context, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing the psychological effects of such experiences.

Armstrong (2020:155) writes about struggle leaders who went to exile and writes that living in exile, which meant not being able to return to one's homeland, was an incredibly challenging situation for many individuals. This was especially true for those who had endured traumatic experiences like imprisonment and torture at the hands of the apartheid government. As a result, many exiles grappled with mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, depression, or severe anxiety.

Moreover, these mental health struggles often translated into difficult real-life challenges. Some individuals exhibited violent behaviour, others turned to drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms, and tragically, some even resorted to suicide. The toll of exile and the traumas experienced during that period had profound and far-reaching effects on the mental and emotional well-being of these individuals (Armstrong 2020:155).

Jeremiah 8:18-22 presents to us the extent of Judah's disaster and how grief is expressed by the prophet and YHWH. This grief cannot be ignored. This grief cannot be unsolved. This grief demands to be mourned. The grief and trauma in South Africa needs to be resolved and attended to.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the history of apartheid in South Africa is a painful and traumatic chapter in the nation's history. Apartheid was a deeply entrenched system of racial segregation and discrimination that had profound social, political, and economic consequences for the people of South Africa. The church played a significant role in both supporting and challenging apartheid, with theologians like Abraham Kuyper and policies like Gustav Warneck's contributing to the development of apartheid theology.

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The development of apartheid theology provided a distorted justification for the oppressive policies of racial segregation. It misappropriated religious scripture to legitimise racial discrimination and separation. This theological framework was used to justify the systematic oppression of black South Africans, leading to widespread suffering and injustice.

The rise of apartheid legislation and events such as the Sharpeville massacre and the Soweto uprising highlighted the brutal and violent enforcement of apartheid policies. These events left scars on the collective memory of the nation, with innocent lives lost and communities shattered. The trauma inflicted during this period continues to affect South Africans to this day.

In reflection, the history of apartheid serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of institutionalised racism and discrimination. It also underscores the resilience and determination of individuals and communities to fight for justice and equality. South Africa's journey from apartheid to democracy is a testament to the power of collective action, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the face of immense adversity.

While apartheid is part of South Africa's past, its legacy still lingers in many aspects of society. Acknowledging this legacy, promoting healing, and continuing the pursuit of social justice and equality remain essential for the nation's ongoing progress. The lessons learned from the history of apartheid should serve as a beacon of hope and a commitment to building a more just and inclusive future for all South Africans.

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CHAPTER 6: THE POST-APARTHEID READING OF THE TEXT

6.1 Introduction

After an extensive exploration of the context and preliminary discussions, we now delve into the focal chapter of this thesis. Thus far, we understand that the text under examination (Jer. 8:18-9:22) is one steeped in pain and mourning, where God urges his people to acknowledge and lament their trauma. This divine encouragement underscores God's commitment to the healing of his people. The central theme in this passage is mourning, particularly the emphasised act of weeping, as a transformative step toward healing. This section employs a post-apartheid lens to interpret the text, revealing God's encouragement for the South African community, still grappling with the aftermath of apartheid, to mourn their collective trauma.

First, the chapter unfolds with a comprehensive overview of the current state of South Africa, establishing that our nation remains marked by trauma. Second, attention is directed to healing approaches, focusing on the reconstruction or retelling of traumatic stories. Within this healing approach section, an examination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will take place, extracting valuable lessons. Another avenue explored is the use of struggle songs and poems as healing mechanisms, advocating for their continued relevance in expressing and remembering trauma. Third, the chapter concludes by delving into the vital topic of forgiveness, crucial for the healing and progression of the nation.

6.2 Current South Africa

South African news is commonly filled with local stories of crime, violence and deaths. South Africa is now regarded as one of dangerous countries to visit and live in.[50] Kaminer & Eagle (2010:8) argue that South Africa is one of the few countries in the world that has endured protracted political violence as well as high rates of criminal violence, domestic violence and accidental deaths. This reality highlights the presence of a significant number of trauma survivors within our society. According to a comprehensive national survey, a staggering 75 per cent of respondents have

[50] This was recorded at the well-known business news in the world, BUSINESSTECH (written 29 June 2023) Article can be accessed here: https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/699927/south-africa-ranks-as-one-of-the-most-violent-and-dangerous-places-in-the-world/

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encountered a traumatic event at some point in their lives, and more than half have endured multiple traumas. Additionally, this study has unveiled that many South Africans have indirectly experienced trauma, whether through the sudden loss of a loved one, hearing about a close person's traumatic experience, or witnessing a distressing event. Consequently, very few individuals in South Africa lead lives entirely untouched by trauma. For many, exposure to potentially traumatic situations becomes an unavoidable aspect of daily life (Kaminer & Eagle 2010:8-9).

Seekings (2007:1) argues that apartheid's legacy in democratic South Africa included highly visible income poverty and inequality. Apartheid, the system of racial segregation in South Africa, caused significant problems related to income and wealth. It made these issues more obvious and severe. African people had lost much of their land, had limited opportunities for work or starting their businesses, received lower-quality education and healthcare and were forced to live in poor areas in the countryside or cities.

In contrast, the white minority in South Africa benefited from unfair government policies. It's not surprising that South Africa was often compared to countries like Brazil as having one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world. However, it's important to note that poverty and wealth didn't exist side by side because segregation kept rich and poor people physically apart. Nevertheless, they coexisted in the same country, illustrating the stark disparities (Seekings 2007:2).

Seekings (2007:11) further argues that in 1998, Mbeki made a well-known statement about South Africa. He said it's like there are two different groups of people in the country. One group is mostly white and has more money, regardless of whether they are men or women or live in cities or the countryside. The other group is much larger, mostly black, and doesn't have as much money. This group includes many poor women in rural areas, as well as the black rural population in general, and people with disabilities. These two groups are different because they don't have equal access to things like good infrastructure (like roads and buildings) and opportunities (like jobs and education).

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Seekings (2007:17) in further describing the current state of South Africa argues that unemployment has a big impact on making people poorer, and it's even tougher for a group of people called the 'underclass.' These are people who face ongoing disadvantages in finding work, making it hard for them to escape poverty. For some unemployed people, poverty is temporary because it ends once they find a job. But others don't have the right skills (like language skills), qualifications, or the connections (friends and contacts) needed to get a job. These things, known as social capital, are super important for finding work.

Education is another big reason why some people have less money and more inequality. A big part of South Africa's income inequality is because some people get more money from their education, like having better jobs, while others don't get those opportunities and end up with less income (Seekings 2007:17-18). According to Mtshiselwa (2014:60), the attainment of true liberation in South Africa remains an ongoing process, and the nation has yet to achieve comprehensive freedom. His perspective highlights the presence of lingering socio-economic injustices that continue to constrain the people of South Africa. Through an analysis of Lucky Dube's song, *Mickey Mouse Freedom*, Mtshiselwa asserts that the country exhibits persistent echoes of its colonial and apartheid past. In essence, he suggests that South Africa continues to grapple with the enduring legacy of historical injustices and is in pursuit of a more complete form of freedom.

The legacy of apartheid continues to cast a long shadow over black communities in South Africa. Decades of systematic racial discrimination, violence, and oppression have left deep psychological and emotional scars on individuals and families. Many still grapple with the enduring trauma of apartheid, experiencing conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. Moreover, the inter-generational transmission of this trauma means that children and grandchildren of those who suffered during apartheid also bear its psychological burden.
It is important to note that the psychological effects of apartheid continue to influence South African society today. The post-apartheid era has seen efforts to address these effects through initiatives focused on healing, reconciliation, and psychological support, but the legacy of apartheid remains a complex and ongoing challenge for the country. When we revisit the writings on the psychological effects of apartheid on

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human development and well-being in today's context, we discover that many of the concerns raised by psychologists persist. In fact, in some instances, these issues have become even more pronounced since 1994 (Bantjes et al, 2017:4).

Kaminer & Eagle (2010:13) mention that although the excesses of the apartheid-era violence are now in the past, contemporary South African society is not free of political violence. Some of this violence has its roots in the past. Nnadozie (2013:85) argues that,

> more than a decade after the end of the apartheid system, the people of South Africa have gained political freedom but still have a long road to travel to achieve a more equitable redistribution of the country's wealth. The apartheid system left a legacy of wide inequalities in access to resources and services that persists to a high degree today.

Efforts towards healing and reconciliation have been ongoing, with initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) providing a platform for addressing past injustices. However, socioeconomic disparities, ongoing political changes, and the complexities of reconciliation remain significant challenges. Civil society organisations and community groups play a crucial role in supporting affected individuals, and education and awareness campaigns aim to ensure that the lessons of apartheid are not forgotten. Despite progress, the journey towards addressing the trauma of apartheid and achieving lasting social justice in South Africa is a complex and ongoing one.

Pillay (2017:12) writes the following about the current state of South Africa,

> The majority of people in South Africa have been dehumanised and demoralised for a long time. Apartheid made them feel like no people. In fact, the majority of South African black people still suffer with an inferiority complex. They still have this notion of being second- or third-class citizens. Although apartheid is no longer existent in the laws of our country, it continues to live in the hearts and minds of people and it will do so for a long time. In short, we are still far from the establishment of the 'Beloved Community' that Martin Luther King spoke about in the fulfilment of the American dream and the actualisation of the Kingdom of God, a society where all live lives that befit their dignity as children of God; a society where everyone is accepted, everyone belongs.

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When we revisit the writings on the psychological effects of apartheid on human development and well-being in today's context, we discover that many of the concerns raised by psychologists persist. In fact, in some instances, these issues have become even more pronounced since 1994 (Bantjes et al, 2017:4). During the apartheid era, certain mental health professionals anticipated a brighter future with the advent of democracy. However, despite significant societal shifts, many present-day mental health professionals in South Africa find themselves working in environments characterised by persistent social challenges, often without the optimism or anticipation of witnessing a profound and comprehensive social transformation (Bantjes et al, 2017:7).

Hickson & Kriegler (1991:150) explores the experiences of young people who witnessed violence during apartheid, asserting that these youths are likely to carry the trauma with them into adulthood and potentially transmit it to the next generation. As discussed in the Chapter 2, transmission of trauma is possible and we see a lot of cases of traumatised people in this generation. Human rights organisations and professional bodies have expressed concern that apartheid's youthful victims of violence will permanently struggle with feelings of alienation, from themselves, from peers and from society at large. Brutalised behavioural patterns, perverted norms and violent coping mechanisms may persist in a generation which has been conditioned to hold human life cheap. To say that the next generation, too, will be scarred, is to state the obvious.

Pillay (2017:6) further argues that while South Africa transitioned to a new democracy in 1994, the country still grapples with the persistent issue of racism, which has unfortunately remained prevalent in various ways. Moreover, there's been a noticeable increase in accusations of reverse racism, particularly from white individuals, often playing out on social media and causing hurt and anguish for many.

One might wonder how such racist experiences and expressions persist in a new democratic South Africa. Do people not learn from the past? Well, racism often stems from deep-seated insecurities, anxieties, and fears that find expression in various forms rooted in neurosis. But it's important to understand that whiteness isn't solely

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driven by fear; it can also provoke fear in others. This is precisely what we are witnessing in South Africa as white power and dominance wane.

Forster (2018:88) is against the use of "post-apartheid South Africa" because he believes while the official dismantling of political apartheid in South Africa occurred with the inaugural democratic elections on April 27, 1994, the lived experience for the majority of South Africans reflects a persistent and tangible presence of apartheid. He further argues that present-day realities showcase exacerbated economic divisions, racial and spatial segregation, racism, and identity politics, surpassing the conditions of 1994. Through his engagement with young black activists, many of whom were born into an era of political freedom post-1994, he came to the firm belief that labelling South Africa as "post-apartheid" is misleading. Despite the acknowledgment of the "right to have rights," these rights themselves have not materialised or become a tangible part of daily existence (Forster 2018:88).

Furthermore, he argues that using the term "post-apartheid South Africa" not only fails to capture the essence of the ongoing struggles but also compounds the suffering endured by the impoverished and disenfranchised. It is crucial to recognise and validate the daily realities experienced by individuals, especially when our language suggests otherwise. In our current dialogue, such terminology disregards the memories and experiences of our fellow human beings, imposing upon them interpretations that are not reflective of their understanding—such as the notions of freedom or the supposed "post" in post-Apartheid South Africa (Forster 2018:88).
From the above it is evident that there are still remnants of the apartheid trauma that South Africa is faced with. We will now move to discussing approaches that help with mourning.

6.3 Approaches to inter-generational healing

6.3.1 Reconstructing the story

Kaminer & Eagle (2010:105) argue that "the main benefits of group psychotherapy lie in the support that such groups can offer (beyond that of the therapist and existing networks) and the degree to which they aid in the reduction of stigma by facilitating the sharing of common experiences and reactions." For them, it is important to share

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what people have gone through. O'Connor (2011:29) brings us back to the book of Jeremiah by outlining the book and its implications. She first describes how the book of Jeremiah became unreadable by alluding that for many years biblical interpreters have struggled with the composition of the book. She adds that Jeremiah has undergone long processes of writing and editions by different groups of people. The author then asks that how one can leave the book of Jeremiah like this. She argues that,

> trauma and disaster studies suggest that Jeremiah's chaotic over-abundance, its 'too-muchness,' it's very disorder itself turns the book into a helpful text for survivors of disaster. She also mentions that the book of Jeremiah is a quest for meaning, for words, images, metaphors, stories—interpretations of every kind to help the people of Judah survive and rebuild as a people.

From the argument made by O'Connor, it is important to learn that retelling our stories especially traumatic stories contribute to our journey to healing. By reading the text as we have seen the previous chapter, God is encouraging his people to mourn. He encourages his people to enter a journey to healing. We can argue that the writer of the book of Jeremiah wrote about such traumatic experiences which were unbearable scenes of destruction and violence to offer hope and reconstruct Judah's story. What the author does is to use poetry to tell the story. Not only does the author tell the story, but the author uses the art of language to heal the people. From the text, we learn that telling out stories, our pain, our traumatic experiences, help in bringing us back to our lost identity.

Herman (1997:175) talks about the recovery process of trauma and argues for the importance of remembrance and mourning. She argues that the survivor bravely shares the narrative of their trauma, delving into the details and emotions surrounding the experience. This act of reconstruction is transformative, allowing the traumatic memory to be woven into the fabric of the survivor's life story. Herman aptly describes regular memory as the "act of telling a story," a process that contrasts sharply with the wordless and static nature of traumatic memory (Herman 1997:175).

Moreover, she asserts that in its untransformed state, the trauma story can be repetitive, stereotypical, and devoid of emotion, resembling what one observer labels

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a "pre-narrative." It lacks temporal development, failing to convey the storyteller's emotions or interpretations. Some therapists visualise traumatic memory as a series of still snapshots or a silent movie, with therapy providing the necessary music and words. The decision to confront the past rests with the survivor, while the therapist assumes the role of a supportive witness, allowing the survivor to articulate the unspeakable (Herman 1997:175).

Furthermore, Herman (1997:175) argues that the reconstruction of trauma places immense demands on the survivor's courage. Freud, according to Herman (1997:75) eloquently describes the patient's journey in psychotherapy, emphasising the need for the illness to be acknowledged and approached as a formidable opponent intertwined with the patient's identity. Balancing the need for safety with the necessity of confronting the past is crucial, as avoiding traumatic memories hinders recovery, while approaching them too hastily can lead to fruitless and damaging reliving.

Herman (1997:176) shifts and addresses the restricting of trauma as a story. This phase involves reconstructing the traumatic event by narrating it as a factual account. From the jumbled fragments of frozen images and sensations, both patient and therapist slowly piece together a detailed, organised verbal story, placing it within the context of time and history. This narrative not only covers the event itself but delves into the survivor's reactions and the responses of significant individuals in their life. As the narrative approaches the most challenging moments, the patient may find it increasingly difficult to articulate with words and might turn to nonverbal expressions like drawing or painting.

Given the visual nature of traumatic memories, creating pictures becomes an effective initial approach to capture these indelible images. Herman (1997:176) uses the work by Jessica Wolfe, where she argues that in her work with combat veterans, Jessica emphasises the importance of detailing the traumatic narrative with all senses involved, describing what they see, hear, smell, feel, and think. She also quotes Terence Keane who highlights the significance of bodily sensations, emphasising that a complete memory reconstruction must include details about smells, heart racing, muscle tension, and weakness in the legs. While the initial attempts at narrative language may be dissociated, such as writing in an altered state and later disavowing

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it, the ultimate goal is to verbalise the story. The therapist must be cautious about developing a secluded "back channel" of communication, emphasising the mutual goal of bringing the story into the therapy room. Emotional engagement is integral to the process, with the patient reliving past feelings rather than simply describing them (Herman 1997:176).

Reconstructing the trauma story extends beyond reciting facts; it involves a systematic exploration of the event's meaning to the patient and significant others in their life. The survivor is confronted with theological, philosophical, and juristic challenges, tasked with articulating values and beliefs that the trauma may have shattered. Questions of 'Why?' and 'Why me?' arise, challenging the survivor's faith in a just and predictable world order. To fully grasp the trauma story, the survivor must delve into moral questions of guilt and responsibility, reconstructing a belief system that makes sense of their undeserved suffering. Ultimately, the survivor must move beyond contemplation and take action to remedy the injustice, deciding what steps to take for a meaningful recovery (Herman 1997:176).

Transitioning from Herman's overview of retelling traumatic stories, we will now delve into a specific approach to discussing trauma and its relevance to the context outlined in this thesis. Robjant & Fazel (2010:1030-1032) assert that Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) is a kind of short-term therapy for people who are struggling with PTSD because of traumatic experiences. It was first created to help people in underdeveloped countries, but now it is used to assist asylum seekers and refugees in richer countries too. The way it works is by making people confront their traumatic memories and then putting those memories into a clear, logical story. The goal is to create a complete life story that includes the tough times.

Since NET is meant for people who have been through a lot of stressful events, they are not expected to narrate the worst event – they talk about all the stressful life events from when they were born until now, in order. People who can put together a clear story about their traumatic experiences tend to get the most help from exposure therapy for PTSD. This means it is not just about getting used to the bad memories, but also about making sense of what happened. When you add more information about your life to those tough memories, it can slowly make the fear and pain go away,

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which helps reduce PTSD symptoms. Even though the horrible things they went through still have meaning, this process can at least give them some relief and help them share their story step by step with support along the way.

Robjant & Fazel (2010:1036) further state that studies have shown that NET works well for people who've faced lots of repeated traumas. They've also shown that in many cases, NET can reduce PTSD symptoms so much that they go away, and it is even better than some other types of therapy. Van der Kolk (2000:19) states that to help someone who has been through a traumatic event, they need to revisit that event without feeling overwhelmed. Traditionally, therapists have followed the idea from Freud, who believed that talking about trauma could help heal it. So, they ask people to describe the whole experience. This means talking about what they think happened, what led up to it, their role in it, their thoughts and fears during it, the worst parts, and how it affected them and their relationships. This kind of therapy helps in a few ways:

- It helps people realise that remembering the trauma is not the same as reliving it, which can make it less scary.
- It shows them that the traumatic experience had a beginning, middle, and end and that it is now part of their life story.

While the original intent behind developing NET was for individual use, it has evolved into various forms, one of which is Group NET. In Group NET, the emphasis shifts from an individual focus to a collective one, where a group of individuals come together to share their experiences of trauma. According to the APA (2017), a Group NET can involve a range of participants, typically between 4 to 8 individuals. The exploration of Group NET stemmed from the proven effectiveness of group psychotherapy in aiding individuals. This specific form of Group NET is designed for those grappling with PTSD and severe trauma.

The rationale behind pursuing Group NET lies in the positive outcomes observed in group psychotherapy, particularly the valuable support derived from peers within the group. Kaminer & Eagle (2010:105) contend that the normalisation of trauma reactions holds significant power in group therapy, as members discover commonality in others'

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experiences. Furthermore, the formation of relational networks sometimes extends beyond the therapy setting. An additional advantage of group treatments is their economic efficiency.

From this we can see how important it is to share our traumatic stories. What we see in black communities are people who do not want to share their traumatic experiences. A way to healing looks more tough but it starts with the decision to talk. Black communities can be on a better journey towards healing and restoration if they can allow themselves to share their traumatic stories. Sharing their stories with family members, at community meetings and in the church. We will be moving towards being a healed community.

6.3.2 Lessons from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

6.3.2.1 What was the commission about

In the early 1990s, many people in South Africa were hopeful for positive changes in their country's politics. This hope came when the ruling Nationalist party, led by President Fredrick Willem (FW) de Klerk, started peaceful negotiations with Nelson Mandela, a hero both in South Africa and abroad and the leader of the African National Congress (ANC). One significant aspect of these negotiations was the decision to create a commission called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This commission was an important first step towards bringing people together and reconciling the nation. It wasn't just about race; it aimed to heal the wounds caused by years of conflict and injustice (de Paiva 2012:3-4).

Stanley (2001:525-526) adds that the TRC's first attempt to deal with crimes was on July 19, 1995. It was seen as a big and well-organised effort to address the wrongdoings of a previous government. The idea behind it was to recognise the pain people had suffered in the past and, at the same time, build a future that focuses on fairness, following the rules, and bringing people together. However, the TRC has faced challenges in achieving its goals. Many people did not tell their stories to the truth-finding body. Despite this, the Commission managed to uncover hidden stories about the time of apartheid. These newly revealed truths have had an impact both on individuals and on the whole community. On a personal level, it's clear that those who

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suffered because of the previous government's cruelty were treated very badly and dehumanised. Most of these people were from black ethnic groups, and their experiences were not officially acknowledged. For these individuals, just sharing their stories in their language was like a form of liberation (Stanley 2001:529).

Gobodo-Madikizela (2015:1092) explains how the victims in the TRC shared their stories. She expresses the following:

> Thus, narrating traumatic memory from the public stage of the TRC may be one way that victims and survivors attempt to reconstruct a shattered self, transcend the passivity of victimhood, and find a voice to construct meaning from their traumatic experience. By making their wounds public, recording the atrocities visited on them, and identifying the perpetrators, their testimonies helped to re-create temporal boundaries that placed brutalities in the past, in order to achieve what Prager (2006, 2008) has referred to as 'jump-starting timeliness.' The assertion of agency took various forms.

Post-apartheid, life had to go on and people in South Africa had to live together and heal the wounds of the past. In order to do this, the then President Nelson Mandela created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Lund (2003:88) says that,

> Archbishop Desmond Tutu also embraced the discourse of healing in his role as head of the commission, stating, for instance, 'There is not a single person who has not been traumatized by apartheid-even the perpetrators. We have to pour balm on tortured. Nelson Mandela said that 'only by knowing the truth can we hope to heal the terrible open wounds that are the legacy of apartheid.... Only the truth can put the past to rest.

Schumann (2008:19) alludes that the TRC which Mandela organised was put in place to talk about all the traumatic events that happened during apartheid. In his foreword to the report of the TRC, Tutu acknowledged that "others will inevitably critique this perspective-as indeed they must. We hope that many South Africans and friends of South Africa will become engaged in the process of helping our nation to come to terms with this past and, in so doing, reach out to a new future (Lund 2003:89).

6.3.2.2 The shortcomings of the TRC

According to Stanley (2001:531) even though the Commission promised to help them make things right, some individuals didn't want their stories to be officially recorded as

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mentioned above. Even with a clever approach that offered amnesty to perpetrators in exchange for the truth but threatened punishment for those who stayed silent, most perpetrators did not come forward. Because of this widespread non-participation, the truth that the Commission collected is not the whole truth.

In many cases, the stories people told to the Commission were carefully edited. The witnesses were cautious about what they said because it would affect how they were treated in the future. People were eager to have their experiences categorised as either that of a “victim” (for reparations) or a “perpetrator” (for amnesty). So, many individuals shared their stories strategically, keeping an eye on the benefits they could receive.

Picker’s (2005) study on the apartheid victims shows the drawbacks and shortcomings that the victims experienced by testifying before the TRC:

- Some victims who were unhappy with the amount of truth tended to blame how the Commission carried out its investigation. They thought the Commission either did not have the skills to do a good job, lacked a strong commitment to uncovering the truth, or had political reasons for not digging deeper. In some cases, victims pointed out clear mistakes and contradictions that the Commission’s investigators didn’t seem to follow up on.
- The one thing that everyone in the focus groups agreed on was that there was a problem with communication. After testifying in public, victims felt like the Commission disappeared. They were not told about the progress of their cases, whether missing testimonies had been found, or if perpetrators had been given amnesty.
- Based on what the focus groups found, there were inconsistencies in how victims were offered support and counselling. Most of the participants said they weren’t offered counselling after sharing their stories in public. Yet, almost all of them experienced a lot of stress and, in some cases, emotional breakdowns after testifying. Many reported that their physical and mental health got worse because testifying brought back traumatic memories.

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6.3.2.3 Moving forward

By providing a platform for truth-telling, the TRC allowed victims and perpetrators to share their stories, contributing to a deeper understanding of the human rights abuses during the apartheid era. The commission aimed at national healing, acknowledging the pain of victims and initiating reconciliation initiatives, fostering empathy and unity. Additionally, the TRC documented a significant part of South Africa's history, serving as a valuable resource for future generations. Moreover, by offering an official avenue for addressing past atrocities, the TRC played a role in preventing widespread retribution and vigilantism, promoting stability during the country's transition. While acknowledging its imperfections, the TRC's positive contributions lie in its efforts towards truth, healing, and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Significant lessons emerge from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Foremost, it undeniably provided a platform for individuals grappling with trauma to address and work through their experiences. The TRC, in many ways, functioned as a therapeutic avenue, aiding in the healing process for those profoundly affected. However, a critical realisation is that a single commission is insufficient for a country as vast and traumatised as South Africa. The need for multiple forums where individuals can gather to share their traumatic experiences becomes evident. Another crucial lesson involves the cathartic nature of the TRC, allowing people to openly express and, in a way, relive their traumas.

In a particular segment of the commission, a man who had been a victim of police brutality recounted his harrowing experience. Tears streamed down his face as he vividly demonstrated the extent of the torture inflicted upon him by the police, effectively reliving those traumatic moments. In the course of his demonstration, he articulated the intensity of his cries during the ordeal. The room that hosted the commission became a witness to the raw and anguished expression of this man's pain—he shouted, screamed, cried, and pleaded for assistance. Remarkably, this act of openly reliving his agonising experience served as a method of healing for him.

Drawing from these insights, I advocate for the establishment of spaces by churches, NGOs, and universities where individuals can freely articulate their experiences. Recognising that many South Africans may lack resources for professional therapy,

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these open forums can serve as valuable alternatives, fostering healing through shared narratives. This proposition essentially calls for a revival of the TRC concept, not confined to a singular space but multiplied across various settings to accommodate the diverse needs of the population.

6.3.3 Mourning rites: The relevance of struggle songs and poetry

In Jeremiah 8:21 we see the prophet mentioning his state of mourning. From chapter 4, we can also argue that Jeremiah's mourning is also God's mourning. Jeremiah 9:17 presents a mourning rite that God suggested for the healing of his people's trauma. In this section, I will explore the significance of struggle songs and poetry in preserving the identity of black individuals and resisting apartheid. These forms of expression can be likened to mourning rituals, serving as powerful tools for maintaining hope and addressing the emotional wounds and trauma inflicted by apartheid. I maintain that struggle songs and poetry continue to play a vital role in the healing process of traumatised black communities. Their importance should not be underestimated, especially given that racial injustices persist, and there are lingering aspects of trauma affecting South African black communities.

The continued significance of singing struggle songs and embracing black consciousness poetry in traumatised South African black communities cannot be overstated. These forms of expression serve as powerful tools for several essential reasons. First, they play a crucial role in preserving and reinforcing the cultural and historical identity of black communities. Struggle songs and poetry connect individuals with their heritage, serving as a reminder of their roots and the resilience of their ancestors in the face of oppression. Second, these artistic forms provide a means of healing and catharsis. Music and poetry have a unique ability to address deep emotional wounds and trauma. Singing struggle songs and reciting black consciousness poetry can provide a cathartic release, allowing individuals to process their pain and find emotional healing and resilience.

Furthermore, these cultural expressions foster a sense of unity and solidarity among community members. Coming together to sing and recite poetry strengthens social bonds, reminds individuals that they are not alone in their struggles, and bolsters

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collective resilience. Additionally, struggle songs and poetry often contain messages of resistance, resilience, and hope. They inspire individuals to persevere in the face of adversity and provide a sense of purpose and determination in the ongoing fight for justice and equality. Moreover, these forms of expression serve as tools of education and awareness. They carry important historical and political messages, educating younger generations about the struggles of the past and ensuring that the lessons of apartheid are not forgotten. They also raise awareness about continuing racial injustices, motivating individuals to advocate for change.

Last, struggle songs and poetry are powerful forms of artistic expression. They allow individuals to convey their emotions, thoughts, and aspirations in a creative and meaningful way, fostering a sense of agency and self-expression. In conclusion, the importance of continuing to sing struggle songs and embrace black consciousness poetry in traumatised South African black communities lies in their multifaceted role in nurturing cultural identity, facilitating healing, promoting unity, empowering individuals, educating, and providing a means of artistic expression. These cultural practices remain essential tools in the ongoing journey toward healing, justice, and social change.

6.3.3.1 Struggle Songs

Songs are important and most practised mourning rite during apartheid. YHWH in Jeremiah 9:17-19, commands the calling of the mourning women as a way of healing his people. YHWH saw this healing as a necessity for the wellbeing of his people. The role of mourning women can be played by the significance of reciting struggle songs and poetry. Schumann (2008:17) argues that in the early years of apartheid South Africa, music went from reflecting common experiences and concerns to functioning as a force which confronted the state as a means of actively constructing an alternative political and social reality. He further argues that while songs were not originally designed to be confrontational, they ended up offering a profound reflection and significance to the events and actions of their time. This ultimately contributed to the rise in popularity of protest songs. People would sing these songs with all their heart and soul, creating a powerful sense of unity and maintaining the collective spirit.

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Schumann (2008:19) mentions that as the famous Plato once noted, music at times carries a meaning that goes beyond the purely musical level, and that may even enter the political sphere.

> South Africa is a notable example, since the moral outrage at the injustices committed by apartheid became part of Western pop culture through songs such as 'Biko' by Peter Gabriel, campaigns such as Sun City organised by Little Steven and the successive Mandela Concerts at Wembley Stadium in London in 1988 and 1990 (Schumann 2008:19).

South Africans have used music in their boycotts and gatherings to bring hope and resilience. Groenewald (2005:128) argues that the first protest song that was written was the famous song by Enoch Sontonga, "*Nkosi sikelela i-Africa*", written in 1897. He believes that most struggle songs originated from the church. Groenewald (2005:129) further points out that as apartheid moved into the late 1950s, racial discrimination in South Africa had become even more severe. This led to a direct and deliberate adaptation of church songs to convey the messages of resistance and struggle against the discriminatory system.

In essence, even though songs weren't initially intended to challenge the *status quo*, they became a medium through which people could express their thoughts and feelings about the prevailing circumstances. This expression, often through protest songs, not only united individuals but also served as a source of inspiration and motivation to persevere through challenging times (Schumann 2008:20).

Chitofiri et al, (2017:60) argue that the core of our existence as humans hinge on living freely and with dignity. As we explore our purpose in the world, we often turn to art as a way to tell stories, celebrate moments, and criticise the values and systems that shape our lives. One form of art that serves this purpose is protest music. Protest music is all about pointing out the flaws and shortcomings in the systems and institutions that are supposed to meet our needs. Its role is to help us see the problems in our society and explain why we shouldn't just accept them. In other words, it's like a mirror reflecting our lives and showing us why we need to make changes.

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Chitofiri et al, (2017:60) further allude that it's quite interesting to view protest music as a treasure trove of images, symbols, words, stories, and ideas that we can freely use if we want to work towards creating a better future based on our best values. Protest music is closely connected to our growth as humans and is deeply involved in our efforts to survive, gain power, maintain our dignity, seek justice, and achieve freedom. In its lyrics, protest music often questions and challenges the established ways of looking at and doing things. It's a vital part of the fight for justice, freedom, accountability, inclusion, and honesty. This music is built upon these principles.

Le Roux-Kemp (2014:247) quotes Plato when he wrote that “when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them” because of the power of music and argues that this sentiment likely holds even more significance on the African continent, where music is deeply intertwined with issues related to progress and growth. It serves as a vibrant and potent influence that touches upon various aspects such as intellectual property rights, democracy, economic advancement, censorship, media, tradition, globalisation, and education. In South Africa, music has also held a pivotal position in the fight for freedom from white oppression.
Le Roux-Kemp (2014:248) writes that,

> Steve Biko, a black South African activist who died in detention in 1977, described African music and rhythm as a truly African way of communication. Songs and rhythm are used to ‘talk about’ shared experiences and from this common experience of oppression grows a culture of defiance, self-assertion and group pride and solidarity. It not only restores Africans’ faith in themselves but also offers hope in the direction taken.

According to Le Roux-Kemp (2014:250) struggle songs, often referred to by various names such as revolutionary, freedom, liberation, or protest songs, emerged as a powerful cultural phenomenon during the turbulent 1960s in the United States, primarily within the context of the anti-war movement. These songs are not just mere musical compositions but profound expressions of deep-rooted social and political commitment. It is worth emphasising that the essence of struggle songs isn't limited to being 'anti' something; they also possess a constructive dimension. In addition to their role in combating injustice, they aim to kindle hope and advocate for positive change,

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serving as a counterpoint to the prevailing oppression experienced by those who sing them.

Le Roux-Kemp (2014:250) further argues that at the heart of struggle songs lie two fundamental characteristics: resistance and persuasiveness. Le Roux-Kemp alludes to Nkoala, who attributes the persuasive power of struggle music to its remarkable versatility. These songs don't just resonate emotionally; they serve various functions. They inspire individuals, educate the masses, provide practical instructions, propagate ideologies, and convey important political messages. In essence, the genre of struggle music encompasses a rich tapestry of songs intentionally crafted to fulfil specific and deliberate roles within the complex landscape of political struggles.

These songs hold a special place in the cultural and historical narratives of many societies, as they not only reflect the struggles of the past but also continue to inspire movements for change and social justice. They are a testament to the enduring power of music as a means of expressing dissent, raising awareness, and mobilising communities to stand up against oppression and injustice (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:250). For instance, during the Apartheid era, a powerful style of singing known as call-and-response was frequently employed during large gatherings and marches. This involved a charismatic leader or orator taking the lead in vocalising a chant. One particularly well-known example is the "*Amandla-awethu*" call, where the leader would passionately proclaim "*Amandla*" (meaning power), and the assembled group would respond with equal fervour, shouting "*Awethu*" (meaning ours). This call-and-response dynamic was often deployed during marches directly confronting Apartheid officials or police. Its purpose was twofold: to evoke a sense of fear among oppressors and to create an atmosphere of intimidation (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:250).

This distinctive call-and-response tradition remains deeply ingrained in the memory of the Apartheid era. It evokes vivid images of those challenging *'die swart gevaar'* (the perceived 'black threat') during that turbulent period. The sight of people singing with raised fists and rhythmic foot stomping at mass gatherings, celebrations, funerals, protests, and various public ANC events continues to resonate as a symbol of resilience and collective strength (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:250-251).

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Struggle songs possess the unique ability to be wielded by smaller groups of protestors within larger demonstrations, allowing them to assert their independence and subtly challenge the intentions of protest organisers. These songs serve as a clandestine means of conveying messages that might otherwise remain hidden from the public eye, effectively articulating sentiments that authorities may wish to suppress. In essence, struggle songs often become tools of self-inspiration for the oppressed, igniting a passionate sense of indignation against the injustices they endure and rallying their fellow oppressed individuals to join the cause (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:251).

Another noteworthy characteristic of struggle music, when viewed through the lens of Aristotelian rhetoric, is its remarkable adaptability and capacity to encapsulate the prevailing emotions and reflect the conditions of the times. This intrinsic flexibility makes it exceedingly difficult to trace the originators and lyricists of these songs. They are rarely documented in written form, and the lyrics, meaning, and even the structure of these songs frequently transform to suit the ever-evolving circumstances in which they are sung. This inherent mutability ensures that struggle songs remain relevant and resonant, evolving with the changing tides of history and continuing to inspire and empower those who raise their voices in protest (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:251).

Le Roux-Kemp (2014:251) uses the work by Groenewald to argue that “struggle music can be seen as ‘oral art’ or ‘literature from below’ and explains that struggle songs were the product of ordinary and often unlearned people, concerned about ‘issues of their daily existence’. Struggle songs as a form of ‘oral art’ are not only non-fictitious, but also performative by nature.” Le Roux-Kemp further argues that another important element of struggle songs is the sense of community in them. The passion is not so much that of an individual singer’s response, but rather that of a collective interpretation of events from a particular “committed” standpoint” (Le Roux-Kemp 2014:252).

Jolaosho (2015:443-444) sees the relevance of singing struggle songs in post-apartheid South Africa and argues that “Freedom is a constant struggle” and that freedom songs constitute legacies from the past, indicate present dynamics and offer future directives, “struggle songs would never die and would always stay a true part of

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South Africa's history." Groenewald (2005:135) also quotes Ronnie Kasrils as he argues that

> In South Africa we did not defeat apartheid by out shooting it [...] song and toyi-toyi featured as a weapon. This is what inspired people, it inflamed people and was very much part of this massive avalanche that, in the end, buried apartheid, so it was a real weapon in a concrete sense.

Groenewald (2005:128) argues that "the performance space of some forms of oral art in South Africa is a liberating space in that it cuts across gender and age barriers and allows men and women and even children to perform in the same space." We will now look at one famous struggle song in detail and see how it has been a song of hope and comfort.

- ***Thina Sizwe***

"Thina Sizwe" is a struggle song that emerged during the apartheid era in South Africa. The song was a powerful anthem used by activists to express resistance against the oppressive apartheid regime. It became a symbol of the struggle for freedom, equality, and justice. The lyrics of "*Thina Sizwe*" are in isiXhosa, one of the official languages of South Africa. The song is a call for unity and perseverance among the oppressed people of South Africa. It emphasises the determination of the people to overcome the challenges they face and to achieve liberation.

The chorus of the song is as follows:

Thina sizwe (We the nation)
Thina sizwe esimnyama (We the black nation)
Sikhalela (We lament)
Sikhalela izwe lethu (We lament the loss of our land)
Elathathwa (Which was taken)
Elathathwa ngabamhlophe (Which was taken by white people)
Mabawuyeke umhlaba wethu (They must leave our land alone)

The song served as a unifying force among anti-apartheid activists and supporters. It was sung at protests, rallies, and gatherings, symbolising the collective spirit of the struggle against apartheid. "*Thina Sizwe*" remains a significant cultural and historical

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artefact in South Africa, representing the resilience and determination of the people in their quest for freedom and equality. The song also holds significance as a poignant choice for funerals and memorial services. It was often sung at mass funerals, particularly for individuals who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom, succumbing to violence inflicted by the police. This was the same song sung during the Rivonia Trial days in the mid-60s before Mandela and his colleagues were ferried to Robben Island to face life imprisonment.

Former State President, Jacob Zuma, sang this song at Nelson Mandela's funeral in December 2013. President Zuma repeated the song at the reburial of J. B. Marks in March 2015, in Ventersdorp, in the North-West province. Zuma led the song again in 2018 at Winnie Mandela's memorial in KwaZulu-Natal. Former President Jacob Zuma holds a deep appreciation for this song, as it has served as a source of solace during times of profound loss in South Africa. An example of its emotional impact can be observed in the video footage of Nelson Mandela's funeral, where the song moved many to tears. For some, the song became a passionate expression of their identity, sung loudly with enthusiasm. Others, grappling with sorrow, sang with subdued spirits and soft voices, as the song resonated deeply within their hearts, offering comfort. This particular struggle song holds a unique role as a source of solace and hope during periods of mourning. It underscores the intertwined nature of grieving and the healing power found in songs that assist in navigating and overcoming trauma.

6.3.3.2 Poetry

Dickie (2019:892) talks about poetry being a type of mourning rites that allows people to heal and find their identity back. She cites that in the past, narrative has been used to help sufferers process their trauma, but "Poetry can also advance the process of constructing meaning related to traumatic events." Indeed, poetry has several unique features which make it particularly suitable to help trauma sufferers. First, the construction of a poem mimics the way a trauma memory is held. Unlike narrative, which must be processed linearly, a poem is comprehended as a whole. Trauma sufferers have a collection of feelings, pictures, and ideas which often cannot be sorted into a logical order. But in a poem, sufferers can express their mixture of feelings without needing to be coherent (Dickie 2019:892).

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Decker (2017:72) suggests that before the 1960s, poets in South Africa, no matter their race, used different styles of poetry, such as protest poetry and lyric poetry, to express themselves in various ways. However, from the 1960s to the 1980s, a time when politics played a big role, the choice of which style to write in became more connected to one's beliefs. Poets who supported Black Consciousness tended to write protest-like verses, while lyric poetry became the favourite choice for authors who wanted to stay away from politics, often those who were white.

Therefore, poetic modes themselves became a way to quickly tell if a piece of writing was political or not during the apartheid era in South Africa. People debated whether art should be a tool for culture and politics or if it should only focus on being beautiful. The type of poetry known as Black Consciousness or "Soweto poetry," named after a Johannesburg township where many early poets lived in the 1960s, went against the traditional rules of poetry outlined by scholars like Wellek and Warren. It was different because it was political, direct, used everyday language, and talked about the real-life struggles of people living under apartheid. Because of these differences, many of the most powerful poems were not published back then. Instead, they were performed in public on the streets or at political events (Decker 2017:73).

According to Decker (2017:73) the poetry of Black Consciousness during the 1960s and 1970s was influenced by earlier protest poetry in South Africa and the work of black poets from the early 1900s like B. W. Vilakazi, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Peter Abrahams, and others. This new form of poetry had a strong political focus on the idea of "blackness," which Steve Biko later explained as not just about skin colour but also a state of mind. It aimed to fight against anything that tried to make black people seem inferior.

In Black Consciousness poetry, there was a double challenge. First, it went against traditional aesthetics and was very direct in its political criticism. Second, it openly confronted the violence and oppression of the government. This made it risky for the poets, as they were openly opposing the government, and their words were clear and forceful, not subtle or flowery.

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Pucherová (2018:363) argues that Black Consciousness poetry has been called "the single most significant socio-literary event of the seventies South Africa." Dolamo (2017:1-2) argues that while Black Consciousness as a structured way of thinking began with young people in the 1960s, its origins date back many years earlier. Stephen Bantu Biko, born on December 18, 1946, near King William's Town in the Eastern Cape, was the person who started and helped create Black Consciousness. Sadly, he lost his life because of his strong political beliefs while he was in police custody on September 12, 1977. Dolamo (2017:2) uses the work by Biko to explain BC:

> (it) is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realization by the black man of the need to rally with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black.

Moodley (1991:152) agrees that Black Consciousness played a role in helping black people overcome a mindset influenced by colonialism. It also set the foundation for them to confidently stand up against the apartheid government. This empowering way of thinking highlighted how black individuals could take the lead and take responsibility in expressing their power, even when they seemed powerless (Moodley 1991:143). Pucherová (2018:364) adds and writes that "unlike anti-apartheid political organisations such as the ANC, BCM did not engage directly with white power, but was focused on refashioning the "mind of the oppressed," based on Biko's idea that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

According to Pucherová (2018:364) Black Consciousness poetry started showing up in the late 1960s in magazines that were mainly read by white people, such as Ophir, The Classic, and Purple Renoster. This poetry was a response to the urgent need to restore the humanity of black individuals who had been treated as just labour units under apartheid, a system that stripped away their dignity. This poetry was written in English, the language black South Africans learned in school, and it became really popular in the 1970s and 1980s. People loved hearing it at community gatherings,

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political events, funerals, and memorials. It became a powerful way for the Black Consciousness Movement to express their unity and inspire others.

Black Consciousness poetry was often seen as a big departure from the traditional European idea of poetry, which was often focused on individual feelings of being isolated from society. Instead, BC poets saw themselves as representing their community, not standing apart from it. They used their poetry to talk about the shared experiences of black people. As Oswald Mtshali explained, their goal was to encourage other black individuals to find their true identity as a united group (Pucherová 2018:365).

The significance of utilising struggle songs and BC poetry lies in their capacity to instil hope and provide comfort within black communities. Beyond serving as reminders of the origins of our fight for freedom and the courageous leaders who risked their lives for this cause, these songs also embody hope in the context of a still-divided South Africa. BC poems maintain relevance today by acting as poignant reminders to black individuals of their identity and inherent value. These verses convey the message that black people are not mere objects of exploitation. In a nation where white dominance persists, the presence of poems that affirm the identity of black individuals becomes indispensable.

In Jeremiah 9:20, YHWH encourages the mourning women to teach their daughters the skill of wailing. As expounded in Chapter 4, this command acted as YHWH's undying and continuous love for his people. There needed to be a new generation that will continue healing the trauma experienced by his people. There is an inter-generational aspect of this command, that the concerns transcended the immediate generation but had future generations in mind. Healing in South Africa is also an inter-generational phenomenon that needs this generation and the future generation to pursue.

6.3.4 A forgiving nation

The concept of forgiveness holds profound theological and social significance in South Africa, yet it remains a subject of intense debate. Many scholars and activists in the

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country have expressed reservations regarding the transactional aspects associated with the idea of forgiveness in this particular context. Although the text analysed in this thesis does not directly address forgiveness, it is crucial to introduce the concept into the discourse on healing. In my view, genuine liberation from trauma is unattainable when unresolved feelings of unforgiveness persist. It is imperative to openly discuss and engage in conversations about forgiveness to foster a comprehensive understanding of its role in the healing process.

In his article about forgiveness and how black South Africans and work together towards reaching forgiveness, Tutu (1999:chapter 11) tells us that,

> In forgiving, people are not being asked to forget. On the contrary, it is important to remember, so that we should not let such atrocities happen again. Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what happened seriously and not minimizing it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. It involves trying to understand the perpetrators and so have empathy, to try to stand in their shoes and appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have conditioned them.

Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:178) uses the work by Horowitz (2005), and argues that forgiveness involves significant intrapsychic work, conscious and unconscious working through of one's anger, and putting the offence into the context of an integrated view of the whole person of the offender' (p. 485, italics added). She continues to argue that Horowitz suggests that the underlying process that inspires forgiveness involves reflection and developing a sense of understanding of the other as well as gaining some degree of insight into what motivated the other to engage in the painful and cruel action (Gobodo-Madikizela 2008:178).

Forster (2018:85) argues for the development of an (im)possible politics of forgiveness for South Africa. Forster (2018:85) uses the work by Brian Frost who proposes that connecting politics and forgiveness might appear unconventional to the common perception. For Forster, typically, forgiveness is viewed as

> a profoundly theological concept, while politics is rooted in a more secular understanding of reality. Nevertheless, 'Politics' essentially involves how human beings organise themselves in various groups—be it local, national, or international—to decide and allocate the use of often limited resources, along with managing the institutions they establish for this purpose. 'Forgiveness,' on the other hand, is a term

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> signifying the acknowledgment of a wrongdoing that requires rectification. It also implies both recognizing the wrongdoing and addressing it constructively.

He further argues that, in this context, the connection between politics and forgiveness emerges both in the space we occupy over time. How we navigate our current reality must be considered in light of our past experiences and our aspirations for the future. Forgiveness, thus, takes on a deeply political dimension. It becomes a narrative framework for interpreting the past, and establishing specific expectations for ourselves and others about the future (Forster 2018:85).

Forster (2018:86) thinks that some political figures propose that our country's challenges can be solely resolved through transactions. They argue that if the land is rightfully returned, the economy is restructured to benefit the majority, and we address the social and political aspects to counteract the lingering effects of white privilege, then South Africa will achieve harmony. However, Forster argues that transactions alone are insufficient. True progress toward justice and reconciliation demands a concrete and explicit resolution of these issues. seThere is a distinct political aspect to forgiveness, encompassing expectations and processes for transformation and justice to materialise in South Africa. In this context, forgiveness is political in that it involves tangible structural requirements, societal expectations, and political implications.

I believe achieving forgiveness in South Africa requires both psychological and spiritual dimensions. While the pursuit of social justice is crucial, it is unsustainable for black South Africans to retain their unforgiveness solely contingent upon a political transformation. To foster healing from historical trauma, it is imperative to cultivate a sense of forgiveness for past actions. This form of forgiveness is motivated by a quest for individual well-being and the simultaneous addressing of social issues through personal healing. As this thesis advocates for inter-generational healing, the significance and priority of forgiveness become evident.

We must acknowledge that forgiveness is not a fixed destination but an ongoing journey. Attaining a state of complete forgiveness is an elusive goal. Given that forgiveness is a journey, there are specific elements crucial for progress along this

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path. While the political dimension of forgiveness is significant and achieved at a particular juncture in this journey, a pivotal aspect is forgiving as a process of acceptance.

In the South African context, forgiveness after apartheid is intricately linked to the pursuit of social justice and redress. The idea of land restoration, economic shifts, and improved opportunities for black people is part of a broader effort to address historical injustices and build a more equitable society.

So, forgiveness can serve both individual and collective purposes. On an individual level, it can promote healing and well-being. On a societal level, forgiveness can be a crucial element in processes aimed at addressing historical grievances and fostering a more just and inclusive community. However, it's important to recognise that the political and social aspects of forgiveness can be complex, and achieving true reconciliation may require a combination of personal and systemic changes.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, following an in-depth exploration of the context and preliminary discussions, we have now reached the heart of this thesis. Throughout this examination, it is evident that the text under scrutiny is deeply rooted in pain and mourning, with God urging his people to confront and mourn their trauma. This divine encouragement highlights God's unwavering commitment to the healing of his people, emphasising the transformative role of mourning, particularly through the act of weeping. Applying a post-apartheid lens, the text reveals God's encouragement for the South African community, still grappling with the aftermath of apartheid, to collectively mourn their trauma.

The conclusion unfolds in three main parts. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of South Africa, affirming the thesis that our nation remains marked by trauma. Second, attention shifts to healing approaches, centring on the reconstruction or retelling of traumatic stories. Within this section, an examination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission takes place, extracting valuable lessons. Additionally, the role of struggle songs and poems as ongoing

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healing mechanisms are explored, advocating for their continued relevance in expressing and remembering trauma. Third, this section culminates by delving into the pivotal topic of forgiveness, recognising its crucial role in the healing and progression of the nation.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to summarise the research findings derived from a comprehensive study, including the reading and exegesis of the Book of Jeremiah, with a specific focus on verses 8:18-9:22. The overarching thesis sought to draw parallels between the compassionate God depicted in Jeremiah 8:18-9:22, who urges his people to heal, mourn, and speak out, and the persisting racial challenges faced by black communities in post-apartheid South Africa. Through this comparative analysis, the study aims to shed light on the continuity of struggles and the pressing need for healing, justice, and societal transformation in the face of enduring wounds.

7.2 Research process

Within Chapter 2, an exploration unfolded, providing context on the term "trauma" as I delved into the field of trauma studies. A detailed definition was offered for historical, collective, and cultural trauma, elucidating the distinctions between them. Furthermore, the examination extended to the transmission of trauma across generations. Additionally, the chapter underscored the significance of incorporating trauma studies within biblical studies.

The Book of Jeremiah falls within the category of prophetic books, originating from a distinct historical and temporal context that differs from our present circumstances. Chapter 3 provided a comprehensive understanding of the text; a concise exploration of the historical and cultural backdrop was discussed. Within this chapter, I delved into the theological aspects inherent in the Book of Jeremiah.

Chapter 4 involved a thorough exegetical examination, drawing upon insights from various scholars to build and support the arguments presented in this section. This chapter was dedicated to the exegetical study of the text. I used commentaries to discuss the text. These commentaries use different approaches ranging from synchronic to diachronic approaches and through different lenses such as the trauma lens.

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Chapter 5 has the primary objective of providing an in-depth report on the nature and development of Apartheid. This discussion is particularly crucial as it aims to elucidate the historical context that inflicted trauma upon Black South Africans. An understanding of this context is essential for comprehending the interconnections between the Book of Jeremiah and the circumstances prevailing during that time. This chapter has been structured into four distinct sections to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Apartheid Theology.

The initial part delves into the historical trajectory, shedding light on key figures such as Gustav Warneck and Abraham Kuyper who played pivotal roles. Subsequently, the focus is shifted to the influential letter by Prof EP Groenewald, who served as a crucial advocate for apartheid. The third section scrutinises the ascent of apartheid, offering insights into its policies and the consequential implications on South African society. As we culminate this exploration, the chapter concludes by delving into two pivotal events from the apartheid era, carefully examining their significance as focal points for the comparative and analytical study presented in this thesis.

The focal point of my research lies in Chapter 6, where I establish a connection between the text of Jeremiah and its contextual relevance. Observing God's encouragement for people to mourn and his active participation in that mourning signifies a divine intention to heal and instil hope in his people, demonstrated through his tears. This chapter delves into various ways of mourning that can facilitate a transformation for Black South Africans, shifting from a position of silence regarding apartheid to open discussions and discovering healing pathways. This chapter provided conclusions that unfolded in three main parts. First, it provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of South Africa, affirming the thesis that our nation remains marked by trauma.

Second, attention shifts to healing approaches, centring on the reconstruction or retelling of traumatic stories. Within this section, an examination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission takes place, extracting valuable lessons. Additionally, the role of struggle songs and poems as ongoing healing mechanisms are explored, advocating for their continued relevance in expressing and remembering trauma.

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Third, this section culminates by delving into the pivotal topic of forgiveness, recognising its crucial role in the healing and progression of the nation.

7.3 Main conclusions

The Book of Jeremiah stands as a profound testament to the complex interplay between divine revelation and human agency within the context of ancient Israel. Jeremiah's prophetic discourse unfolds against the backdrop of a nation in turmoil, capturing the poignant struggles and enduring faith of a people grappling with political upheaval, spiritual rebellion, and the impending shadow of exile. Jeremiah, the prophet of weeping, becomes not only a messenger of divine warnings but a witness to the deep scars inflicted upon a nation in crisis. The trauma embedded in this ancient text transcends the political and spiritual upheavals it describes, delving into the collective psyche of a people besieged by forces beyond their control. This comprehension of the book drew connections to the post-apartheid landscape in South Africa. Consequently, this research aimed to explore and examine these parallels. The study drew the following conclusions:

- Trauma can be understood as an individual's emotional response to an overwhelming event that shatters pre-existing notions of self and societal norms. This overwhelming experience, often externally triggered and terrifying, can profoundly alter an individual's perspective of themselves and the world. Trauma is a transformative force that can give rise to a new understanding of identity and one's place in the broader social context. Trauma significantly influences the behaviour and memory of individuals or groups but does so in indirect ways. By characterising trauma as overwhelming and haunting, trauma has a pervasive influence on shaping responses and memories, illuminating the intricate interplay between traumatic experiences and the subsequent psychological and behavioural repercussions.

- Cultural trauma, collective trauma and historical trauma are related concepts, often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different nuances in their meanings. While collective trauma is a broader concept that refers to the shared psychological effects of trauma on a group, cultural trauma specifically looks at how a traumatic

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event impacts a culture's identity, values, and historical narrative. The two concepts are related because a traumatic event can cause both collective and cultural responses, but cultural trauma highlights the distinctive impact on a culture's sense of self and history. Within the field of trauma studies, the concepts of collective, cultural, and historical trauma, while marked by nuanced differences, share a fundamental interconnectedness. They each encompass the profound implications of traumatic experiences on communities or groups of people. In essence, historical trauma deals with the psychological and emotional impact of specific historical events, often rooted in systemic oppression, while cultural trauma encompasses the broader effects on a group's identity, norms, and symbols in the wake of these events. While there is overlap between these concepts, they provide different perspectives on how trauma is experienced and transmitted across generations within a community. This section will focus on defining and expounding these trauma concepts as well as highlighting the differences.

- The role of trauma studies is pivotal in comprehending and interpreting challenging texts filled with traumatic experiences and narratives. This lens aids Biblical scholars in uncovering a deeper layer beyond the text, one that requires understanding within its historical context of trauma. While employing this lens offers benefits in enhancing our understanding of the text, it is imperative to recognise that a thorough grasp of the lens itself is crucial. Careful examination and proper understanding of the trauma studies lens are necessary for its effective application in the interpretation of these texts.

- The book of Jeremiah is very complex, and it cannot be fully understood without investigating its history. The timeline discussed in this thesis gives us a chance to see Jeremiah and his prophecy through a different lens. The historical context offers us the ability to understand his message and his relationship with God. Judging Jeremiah's prophetic career without one understanding of obedience will lead to a flawed interpretation of his prophetic career. One would think that he was called to speak to the nation of YHWH to return to him and stop worshipping other gods and that people did not listen to him. What will also be considered is that Jerusalem, the temple of God also eventually fell. Jeremiah was threatened,

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physically abused and mocked by his people. However, understanding obedience will convince us to understand Jeremiah's call. His call was to do what YHWH had told him to do and that is exactly what he did. His call was a test of obedience to the voice of YHWH. Jeremiah was not responsible for how people responded to his message. This chapter also discussed several themes that are found in the book. These themes can be understood to be the theology and message of the message of the book.

- Jeremiah should be understood as a divine spokesperson and it is impossible to separate him from YHWH. Jeremiah represents YHWH in words and deep emotion. Jeremiah was no mere messenger boy, carrying a communication in which he had no interest. The message had become part of the prophet. To receive and speak it was like a woman in the ancient agony of childbirth, bringing forth what had grown within her. In the prophet the knowledge of God, derived from tradition and belief, had become an immediate apprehension through the possession of his whole being by God's word.

- The history of apartheid in South Africa is a painful and traumatic chapter in the nation's history. Apartheid was a deeply entrenched system of racial segregation and discrimination that had profound social, political, and economic consequences for the people of South Africa. The church played a significant role in both supporting and challenging apartheid, with theologians like Abraham Kuyper and policies like Gustav Warneck's contributing to the development of apartheid theology. The development of apartheid theology provided a distorted justification for the oppressive policies of racial segregation. It misappropriated religious scripture to legitimise racial discrimination and separation. This theological framework was used to justify the systematic oppression of black South Africans, leading to widespread suffering and injustice.

- While apartheid is part of South Africa's past, its legacy still lingers in many aspects of society. Acknowledging this legacy, promoting healing, and continuing the pursuit of social justice and equality remain essential for the nation's ongoing progress. The lessons learned from the history of apartheid should serve as a

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beacon of hope and a commitment to building a more just and inclusive future for all South Africans.

- It is important to learn that retelling our stories especially traumatic stories contributes to our journey to healing. Part of the recovery process from trauma is important for one to remember the traumatic experience. Delving into the details and emotions surrounding the experience. This act of reconstruction is transformative, allowing the traumatic memory to be woven into the fabric of the survivor's life story. Regular memory is the "act of telling a story", a process that contrasts sharply with the wordless and static nature of traumatic memory.

- By providing a platform for truth-telling, the TRC allowed victims and perpetrators to share their stories, contributing to a deeper understanding of the human rights abuses during the apartheid era. The commission aimed at national healing, acknowledging the pain of victims and initiating reconciliation initiatives, fostering empathy and unity. Though the commission had shortcomings, it is important to acknowledge the role it played and how the few it helped, started their journey to healing. This proposition essentially calls for a revival of the TRC concept, not confined to singular space but multiplied across various settings to accommodate the diverse needs of the population.

- Additionally, struggle songs and poetry often contain messages of resistance, resilience, and hope. They inspire individuals to persevere in the face of adversity and provide a sense of purpose and determination in the ongoing fight for justice and equality. Moreover, these forms of expression serve as tools of education and awareness. They carry important historical and political messages, educating younger generations about the struggles of the past and ensuring that the lessons of apartheid are not forgotten. They also raise awareness about continuing racial injustices, motivating individuals to advocate for change.

- The significance of utilising struggle songs and BC poetry lies in their capacity to instil hope and provide comfort within black communities. Beyond serving as reminders of the origins of our fight for freedom and the courageous leaders who

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risked their lives for this cause, these songs also embody hope in the context of a still-divided South Africa. BC poems maintain relevance today by acting as poignant reminders to black individuals of their identity and inherent value. These verses convey the message that black people are not mere objects of exploitation. In a nation where white dominance persists, the presence of poems that affirm the identity of black individuals becomes indispensable.

- Though there are complexities to forgiveness, forgiveness can serve both individual and collective purposes. On an individual level, it can promote healing and well-being. On a societal level, forgiveness can be a crucial element in processes aimed at addressing historical grievances and fostering a more just and inclusive community. However, it's important to recognise that the political and social aspects of forgiveness can be complex, and achieving true reconciliation may require a combination of personal and systemic changes.

In conclusion, this thesis undertook a comprehensive exploration of trauma and trauma studies, delving into the nuanced dimensions of cultural, historical, and collective trauma. Jeremiah 8:18-9:22, reveals a compassionate God encouraging his people to mourn and embark on a healing journey. The thesis then shifted focus to the apartheid context, scrutinising its development and its profound impact on the black nation.

Though officially dismantled, continues to manifest through persistent racial structures. Presenting a snapshot of the current state of South Africa, this chapter highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by black communities. Significantly, Chapter 6 explored the enduring relevance of struggle songs and liberation poems as mourning rites, emphasising their contemporary significance in expressing and commemorating the traumatic legacy of apartheid. This chapter served as a pivotal point in the thesis, presenting the argument that apartheid, despite its formal termination, persists in systemic racial inequalities.

Jeremiah 8:18-9:22 portrays a compassionate God urging the nation to collectively mourn their trauma, providing a glimmer of hope amidst the devastation. The depicted weeping in this text serves as a poignant mourning rite, offering empowerment for

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healing and restoration following a series of traumatic events. Drawing parallels to the impact of Apartheid, which has left many black individuals traumatised without sufficient support for their healing, this biblical text serves as a guiding framework for mourning rites capable of facilitating healing and the restoration of the lost identity of black communities.

Moreover, it is argued that forgiveness holds a pivotal role in the healing process and should not be overlooked in discussions about recovery. By embracing the lessons from Jeremiah's narrative, we find not only a divine call to mourn but also a pathway towards forgiveness as an integral component of the broader journey to healing. This serves as a pertinent and timeless message, resonating across different contexts, including those marked by historical traumas such as Apartheid. Ultimately, the exploration of these themes emphasises the enduring relevance of ancient wisdom in guiding contemporary discussions on collective healing and restoration.

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