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## NOTES

/1/ See J. Heinemann (1971:104ff.). The references to Baeck and Bloch are found in the bibliography of that essay. Professor Heinemann's untimely death is a great loss and I wish to dedicate this essay to his enduring memory.

/2/ The transliteration of Hebrew in this paper does not pretend to be "scientific" but is more or less phonetic, although not technically so. It is intended to make it possible for one who does not read Hebrew to follow the argument of this paper by reading the words aloud—a most necessary part of the argument.

/3/ This against Heinemann (1971:101) who states that the opening verse is selected "because of some inner link or association with the theme of the pericope."

/4/ Its occurrence in Isa 28:10, 13—a difficult text—is incommensurate with its use here.

/5/ This, according to Ms. Oxford. See B. Mandelbaum (1:202-4).

/6/ This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the passage occurs in a number of other places in quite other contexts. It is the basis of the concept of the Noachide commandments incumbent on all mankind.

/7/ This, indeed, is what Ms. Carmoly does. See Mandelbaum's variant readings op cit. His own text, however, and the reading in *Yalkut Shemoni* do not have the words, "the generation of Moses" but, given the structure of the exposition, it is clear they belong here. The variants, however, are interesting for they seem to turn directly to the audience: "but you were commanded at Sinai concerning 613 commandments." The direct address, it seems to me, would have brought the homily to its conclusion.

/8/ What is particularly strange about this insertion is its place, for the concluding verse of Proverbs to which it is attached is not interpreted as referring to any of the aforementioned but to the congregation present at the moment.

## Chapter 3

## A Homily on Jeremiah and the Fall of Jerusalem (*Pesiqta Rabbati*, *Pisqa* 26)

Joseph Heinemann /1/

This wide-ranging and well-constructed homily on Jeremiah and the fall of Jerusalem is unique in many ways. While all other sections of *Pesiqta Rabbati* (henceforth *PR*) use as a heading the first verse of the day's Torah lection on which the homily is based, this section opens with a few lines of an ancient *piyyut*, which it then expounds: "And it came to pass/ When the sheep rebelled/ And would not obey their masters' words/ For they hated their shepherds/ Who were their good leaders/ And withdrew far from them." There is no example of this anywhere else in midrashic literature. Then, too, throughout the other homilies, the first verse of the day's lection may be repeated over and over again in any one of its various sections—such as at the conclusion of the proem and elsewhere. Here, no quotation of verses from the day's lections in Torah or Prophets appears at all /2/.

It is impossible to even know for sure the occasion for which the homily was composed in the first instance. Its subject, the fall, points to the fact that it was intended for the period between the 17 of Tammuz and Tish'a (the ninth of) B'Av; however, there is no clear indication as to which of the three "Sabbaths of Doom" it belongs (the Sabbaths between the above-mentioned days on which prophetic pronouncements of Israel's doom are read) or whether it was composed for Tish'a B'Av itself. Its position in *PR* shows that the editor of the *Pesiqta* meant it to serve as the *pisqa* for the first sabbath after 17 of Tammuz, on which the prophetic lection is Jeremiah 1 /3/.

Unlike other *pisqas* or chapters in the midrashim, this *pisqa*

shows no evidence of having been compiled of several independent units /4/; it seems to have been originally composed by the author as one integral piece. If, nonetheless, he made use of existing midrashic materials, he reworked and stylized them in such a way that it is almost impossible to isolate the components. In the entire *pisqa*, long as it is, not one homily or saying is cited in the name of its author. The section is not constructed according to any traditional plan or familiar pattern. It is an unusual attempt to create a continuous narrative about Jeremiah from his birth to after the fall, consisting of a medley of verses and verse fragments from the Book of Jeremiah (but not in the order of their appearance), of paraphrases of biblical stories, of freely invented legends that are not anchored in the text at all, and of midrashim that explain and enlarge upon the story in different ways. Its subject is the destiny and personality of Jeremiah, but subsumed under them is the story of the city and the people, their destinies being inextricably intertwined.

How this piece was originally composed, whether orally or in writing, is difficult to determine. Its length, the comparative scarcity of wordplays and other rhetorical devices, and perhaps also the fact that it has been preserved only in this fairly late work, point to the second possibility. If we have here written literature, its author did not follow the practice of other compilers of homiletic midrashim, because this is not a compilation of various independent units, but has been fashioned into a literary, stylistic, and structural whole. Clearly, this well-integrated piece cannot be attributed to the compiler of *PR*, since he is no more than a collector who does not leave such a mark on the materials of the work as would obscure the style and form that characterize each of his sources. Moreover, there is nothing like this section in the whole book.

Here is an outline of the contents /5/:

1. "When the sheep rebelled," Jeremiah was prophesying to them by the holy spirit.
2. He was one of four humans called "creatures."
3. The moment he came forth into the world he shouted loudly, "My bowels, my bowels, I writhe in pain . . ." (Jer 4:19).

4. He immediately opened his mouth to rebuke his mother saying that her behaviour was that of a *soṭah*, a woman suspected of adultery. (To clarify such a woman's status, Numbers 5 ordains an ordeal by drinking a special potion, administered by a priest.) When she expressed surprise at this, he said to her, "Not to you, mother, am I prophesying, but to Zion."
5. The Holy One, blessed be he, said, "Before I formed you in your mother's belly, I appointed you to prophesy to my people." When Jeremiah refused and said, "I cannot speak for I am a child" (Jer 1:16), he answered him: "I love children, as it is said, 'When Israel was a child, I loved him' (Hos 11:1) . . .; take this cup of wrath and make the nations drink" (after Jer 25:15). He said, "Whom shall I make drink first?" He said, "Make Jerusalem and the cities of Judah drink first." When he heard this he cursed the day he was born (Jer 20:14).
6. He was one of two (Job was the other) who cursed the day of their birth. He said, "Whom do I resemble? A priest, whose duty it is to subject a *soṭah* to the ordeal by drinking." They brought the woman to him; he uncovered her head, dishevelled her hair, /6/ looked at her and saw that she was his mother. . . . He said, "Woe to me because of you, Mother Zion! I thought I was to prophesy good things and consolations to you, and behold, I am prophesying words of doom."
7. He was one of three prophets who prophesied in that generation. He would say to the people, "If you turn back from your evil deeds and listen to my words, the Holy One will exalt you, but if not, he will hand you over to the enemy. . . ."
8. When Nebuchadnezzar came intending to exile them, the Holy One turned compassionate toward them and he made Mattaniah king over them, renaming him Zedekiah. He made him swear not to rebel against him, but even before Nebuchadnezzar returned to his country, Zedekiah rebelled against him.
9. When the Chaldeans came a second time to besiege Jeru-

- salem, the Egyptian army marched against them and they fled to Chaldea. Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah and his princes, "The Egyptian army will depart, and the Chaldeans will capture the city and burn it" (after Jer 37:9ff.).
10. Jeremiah set out for Anathoth to partake of the priestly portion with his fellows (Jer 37:12ff.). Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah (a false prophet whose death Jeremiah prophesied [Jer 28:1ff.]) who was stationed at the gate of Jerusalem, seized Jeremiah and said to him, "You are defecting to the Chaldeans to make peace with them." The princes became enraged with him and put him in prison, in the house of Jonathan the scribe (Jer 37:9ff.).
  11. Zedekiah sent for him and asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" He said, "There is. The king of Babylon will exile you." Jeremiah begged not to be sent back to the house of Jonathan the scribe. The king acceded, and allotted him a loaf of bread a day; so Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guard (Jer 37:17ff.).
  12. The princes heard that he had prophesied, "He who stays in the city shall die by sword, famine, and plague." They took Jeremiah, threw him into the pit, and he sank in the mire (Jer 38:1ff.).
  13. Ebed-Melech the Cushite came to the king and said, "If Jeremiah dies in the pit, the city will fall to the enemy." So the king ordered that Jeremiah be brought up out of the pit, and it was done (Jer 38:8ff.).
  14. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Nebuzaradan commander of the army and ordered him to conquer Jerusalem, but he could not do it, since the decree against it had not yet been sealed.
  15. The famine was severe in the city and the daughters of Zion scoured the marketplaces for food but could find none.
  16. At that time, the Holy One said to Jeremiah, "Get up, go to Anathoth and buy the field from Hanamel your uncle" (after Jer 32:10ff.). As soon as Jeremiah left the city, an angel came down and breached its wall. The enemies then seized the high priest and slaughtered him. . . .

17. Zedekiah and his sons sought to escape, but Nebuzaradan captured them. Nebuchadnezzar put out his eyes and led him to Babylon, and thus the prophecy of Jeremiah came true, "You shall go to Babylon, but Babylon your eyes will not see" /7/ (after Jer 39:4ff.).
18. At his return, Jeremiah found Jerusalem going up in flames and he cried, "You have enticed me and I was enticed!" (Jer 20:7). He followed the exiles to comfort them. Then he thought, If I go to Babylon with these, who will comfort those that remain? So he left them.
19. Jeremiah said, "When I returned to Jerusalem, I saw a woman dressed in black, with dishevelled hair, calling out, 'Who will comfort me?' She said to me, 'I had seven sons; my husband died and my sons too.' I said to her 'You are no better off than Mother Zion.' She replied, 'I am Mother Zion.' I said, 'Your affliction is like Job's, and just as in due time he comforted Job, so the time will come when he will comfort you.'"

This homily paints a broad canvas of dramatic events, though it does not include all the events that befell the prophet as related in the various parts of the Book of Jeremiah. Almost every scene is a dialogue, with the participants constantly changing. First, there is a controversy between Jeremiah and his mother in paragraph 4, then a confrontation between him and the Holy One, blessed be he, at his commissioning (par. 5). Following these are a variety of conversations between Jeremiah and Mother Zion. Characteristic of most of these scenes is an unexpected turn or a surprise ending that heightens tension. Here are just a few: Jeremiah harshly reproaches his mother—and it turns out that he is really accusing Zion (par. 4). When Jeremiah tries to avoid his mission with the excuse "I am just a child," God replies, "But I love children, as it is written 'For when Israel was a child, I loved him.'" In spite of God's declaration of love for Israel, he nevertheless commands the prophet to give Jerusalem the cup of wrath to drink (par. 5). Jeremiah is like a priest who officiates at the ordeal of a *soṭah* and discovers that she is his mother (par. 6). Just as Jeremiah leaves the city, an angel comes down to breach its walls (par. 16). While the enemies are busy conferring about

their next move, angels descend to set fire to the Temple (par. 16). At his return, Jeremiah sees a mourning woman, who turns out to be Mother Zion herself (par. 19). In almost every scene, there is a turn, and expectations are not fulfilled. Not only are ironic tensions thus formed, lending the homily a certain depth, but these minor reversals prepare the reader for the major one—the fall of Jerusalem, which is the subject of the homily. As for the prophet, individual instances of unfulfilled expectations deepen his disappointment at the realization that he did not succeed in saving the city.

The homilist manages, by and large, to unify the components of the homily through various literary devices, as L. Prijs has shown at length (39, n. 56). Here are just a few: in paragraph 2, four "creatures" are mentioned; in paragraph 6, two men who cursed the day they were born; and in paragraph 7, three prophets. Both at the beginning and the end of the homily (pars. 6, 19), Job is mentioned as an example and an analogue. Before his death, Hananiah commands his sons to find some pretext for doing Jeremiah in (par. 10), and in the course of pleading before the king, Jeremiah says, "We ought to learn from the wicked, who never do anyone in before finding some pretext for it" (par. 11). Twice the *pisqa* has Jonathan the scribe deride Jeremiah (end of par. 10, par. 12); a third time it portrays Jeremiah expecting further derision and on that account not responding to the call of Ebed-Melech the Cushite (par. 13) (Prijs: 58, 59). And finally, the subject "parents and children" in many variations appears in almost all parts of the homily: Jeremiah and his mother, the priest and his mother, the *soṭah*, Hananiah the false prophet and his sons, the daughters of Jerusalem and their offspring, Zedekiah and his sons, Job and his sons, Jeremiah and Mother Zion, Zion as a bereaved mother, and more.

Especially noteworthy are two motifs that provide highly significant connecting threads for the elements of the homily and serve to give it form. At the beginning, the figure of the *soṭah* is central: Jeremiah accuses his mother (Zion) of behaving like a *soṭah* (par. 4). When he is commanded to give Jerusalem the cup of wrath to drink, an echo of the draught given the *soṭah* is audi-

ble (par. 5). Prijs rightly notes (36ff. and n. 49) that in order to conjure up that echo, the homilist omitted the word "wine" from the verse that reads "Take this cup of the wine of fury at my hand" (Jer 25:15). Immediately afterward, Jeremiah compares himself to the priest who officiates at the ordeal of the *soṭah* and finds that she is his mother (par. 6). An echo of this motif recurs in the closing paragraph (par. 19): Jeremiah meets a woman after the fall, who is "dressed in black and her hair dishevelled," and of the *soṭah* it is said that the priest "clothes her in black" (Mishna *Soṭa*, 1.6) and that he also "lays hold of her clothes . . . and dishevels her hair" (ibid. 1.5). But in our case there is a difference: these are not signs of a *soṭah* but signs of mourning, and this change in the meaning of the symbols reflects the radical change in Jeremiah's attitude to Mother Zion. At first he took her for a *soṭah* and was filled with rage; now he sees her as a bereaved woman stricken by fate. He is filled with pity, and seeks to comfort her. Another expression of his equivocal attitude toward Zion is this: at the beginning of his mission, the prophet compares himself to Job and curses the day he was born, because he was obliged "to humiliate" his mother (par. 6). In the concluding passage, the analogy to Job recurs, but this time Jeremiah realizes that it is Zion's fate that is comparable to Job's (and indeed, the description of the death of her sons is drawn from Job 1:19) and that it is his duty to comfort her (par. 19) (Prijs: 75).

A device that pervades this homily, and of which it can be said that style amounts to substance, is the interpretation of names. Jeremiah's admonition, "If you repent of your wicked ways and listen to my words, the Holy One will exalt (*yeromem*) you above all the kingdoms" (par. 7), is a play on the name Jeremiah, as Prijs has correctly noted (43). And as the name of the prophet of doom heralds consolation, so too does the name of the last king. At least Zedekiah himself thinks so, for when Nebuchadnezzar gives him this name (*Sidqiyyahu*) (or when he himself takes this name /8/), he takes it as a sign that just men (*ṣaddiqim*) will descend from him. He did not realize that in his lifetime the Holy One would mete out strict justice (*masdiq 'et haddin*) to the Temple and condemn it to the flames (par. 8). The

portentousness of names comes out again in Jeremiah's plea to Zedekiah that he not kill him, "What is more, you are called Zedekiah because you are a just man" (par. 11) (Prijs: 56).

These three clear allusions to the fateful significance of names make it likely that the homilist's use of the many theophoric names of that generation—names that herald redemption, as it were—is a deliberate stylistic device for creating an ironic gap and thus strengthening the feeling of unfulfilled expectations referred to above. He mentions such names frequently, sometimes even when there is no need for it /9/. We hear time and again about Jeconiah, Irijah, Shelemiah, Hananiah, Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Malchiah and others, so as to drive home how deceptive were all these heralds of good tidings—the names of the princes who persecuted Jeremiah and of the false prophets and their helpers who were really to blame for the fall of Jerusalem. In order to leave no room for doubt that he had a purpose in parading before us these resonant names so charged with vain hopes, the homilist offers an interpretation of a name apparently pejorative, but for once of a man deserving praise, Ebed-Melech the Cushite (Nubian): "Why was he called the Cushite? For, just as the Cushite is remarkable for his skin, so was he remarkable for his good deeds" (par. 13).

The inner quality of the homily is seen in the correspondence between the opening and closing sections. We have already noted, for example, the double treatment of the suffering of Job in the beginning (par. 6) and at the end (par. 19). More important is the personification of Zion (symbolizing, as in Lamentations, both the city and the people) which is clearly expressed in paragraphs 4, 6, and again in the concluding paragraph. This personification is a means of representing the personal involvement of the prophet with the fate of the city and people. The confrontation between Jeremiah and the people takes place in the conversations between him and Mother Zion. His attitude toward Zion is revealed, in all its complexity, in the changing uses of the figure of the *soṭah* and in the analogy with the sufferings of Job. These passages play a decisive role in the structure of the homily which is emphasized by a unique stylistic device. In only two passages does Jeremiah speak in the first person (preceded by the words "Jeremiah said"):

in paragraph 6, in the parable of the priest who officiates at the ordeal of the *soṭah* and finds that she is his mother, and in the concluding paragraph, when he meets the mourning woman (Zion). Moreover, in both passages, and in these alone, what Jeremiah says is the invention of the homilist and not quotations from Scripture. On the other hand, even though they are formally monologues—and herein lies their stylistic peculiarity—Jeremiah quotes an exchange between him and Mother Zion, a dialogue full of dramatic tension.

The main concern of the author of this *pisqa* is undoubtedly Jeremiah's many-faceted personality. He comes to grips with the essential contradictions in the prophet's personality which emerge from Scripture itself. The prophet who before birth was charged with a mission, refuses to accept it; however, after the charge of being the prophet of doom was thrust upon him, he fulfills it in an exemplary way and with dedication. In spite of this, we find in his book (especially in chap. 20) complaints about his bitter fate in which he reproaches God and curses the day of his birth—words of unmatched harshness in the prophets. Even so, he continues to fulfill faithfully his role as "the prophet of wrath" to the end, to the very fall; then, he straightway becomes the prophet of comfort! It goes without saying that our homilist does not raise these issues in an analytic or abstract manner; he is not concerned with criticism of the scriptural story or with adjusting the discrepancies in it. In the manner of the aggadists he arrives at a solution by way of creative philology and historiography. To the extent that he has portrayed an integrated and persuasive picture of the prophet, he has done so by rewriting his story using scriptural material selectively, disregarding details that do not fit his plan, and inventing episodes that have no basis whatsoever in Scripture. According to the homilist, Jeremiah was meant from birth to be the prophet of divine wrath; this is expressed concretely by having him reproach Mother Zion immediately after being born /10/. Nevertheless, at his commissioning, he tries to evade the tragic role of one who is called upon to "humiliate" his mother, to prophesy doom to her instead of the "good things and consolations" that he would have liked. Yet he accepts the mission of prophet of doom and carries it out faithfully in spite of all the

suffering and personal hardships that it entails. Only after the fall does his poignant protest burst forth ("You have enticed me and I was enticed"); from then on he laments over the fate of Zion and comforts her.

The homilist presents Jeremiah, then, as torn by conflicting emotions from the very beginning. At times anger prevails; at times, love and pity. For the homilist, the key to understanding this complicated figure is a supposition he clearly implies though nowhere states in so many words: Jeremiah agrees in spite of everything to play the role of prophet of doom, only because he is convinced that in this way he will succeed in saving Zion from destruction! He prophesies unceasingly of the coming disasters, but he perceives his prophecy as a last-gasp measure of averting them. The most trenchant expression of this singular conception of the homilist is an invented episode, not merely without basis in Scripture, but even in contradiction to it. On the very eve of the fall, God sends Jeremiah to Anathoth to purchase a field from his uncle Hanamel. In the scriptural version, a purchase takes place, but in Jerusalem, when Hanamel comes to the court of the guard (Jer 32:6ff.). It is impossible to mistake the meaning of the biblical text, for it says repeatedly that Jeremiah was imprisoned in the court of the guard and did not leave it until the fall (ibid. 38:13, 28; 39:11-14) /11/. This striking deviation from Scripture is highly significant; in the homily's sequence of events, immediately upon Jeremiah's leaving Jerusalem, the angel descends to breach the wall and the city falls. The implication is that the fall could not occur so long as Jeremiah was in the city; the prophet's very presence protected it. The homilist, indeed, does not say this outright, but he hints at it when he has the angel say, "Let the enemies come and enter the house, whose master is no longer within . . . let them enter the vineyard, whose watchman has gone away and left it, and cut down its vines!" The image of the watchman who has forsaken the vineyard must refer to Jeremiah—though, to be sure, it is formulated ambiguously (it would seem on purpose), and can be interpreted (albeit with strain) as a reference to God, paralleling the image of the house "whose master is no longer within" (which signifies that the fall could not occur until the Divine Presence left Zion). The matter is settled

by the cry (the occasion for which cannot be fixed by scriptural data) "You have enticed me and I was enticed" that the homilist puts in Jeremiah's mouth precisely when, after his return from Anathoth, he finds Jerusalem in flames. Retrospectively, Jeremiah interprets the command to go to Anathoth as a deception on the part of God; God tricked him by sending him out of the city, so that he could destroy it—just as God tricked him at his commissioning by giving him the false impression that his prophecy would be one of consolation, since God indeed loves Israel! Thus did the Holy One, blessed be he, set at naught all of Jeremiah's unflagging efforts of many years, in which "he prophesied words of doom"—only in order to save Jerusalem from destruction.

That indeed the author ascribed protective virtue to Jeremiah's presence in the city is corroborated elsewhere in the homily. We recall once again Jeremiah's words at the start of his mission; "If you repent of your evil deeds and obey my words, the Holy One will exalt you above the kingdom . . ." (par. 7). While this is not ground enough to assert that the mere presence of Jeremiah in the city could save it from punishment, Ebed-Melech's statement to Zedekiah (which has no basis in Scripture) is: "Know that if Jeremiah dies in the pit, the city will be handed over to the enemy" (par. 13).

This is how the homilist resolves all the discrepancies in Jeremiah's behavior. In spite of the pain and suffering attaching to his duty to prophesy doom, he undertakes it, for he is sure that his actions can save Zion. The prophet clings to this hope until the very last. When he is commanded to go to Anathoth, "Jeremiah thought in his heart and said, 'Perhaps he is giving the place to its owners' " /12/ (following the Parma ms.) (par. 16). At his return, when he sees smoke rising from the Temple, "he said to himself, 'Perhaps Israel is offering sacrifices in repentance, for there is the smoke of incense ascending' " /13/. Hence his bitter disappointment and burning anger—toward God!—when he realizes that the city has been destroyed while he, the "watchman," "had gone away and left it," trustingly obedient to the divine command to purchase the field in Anathoth—an act in which he saw an indication of salvation.

But there is another side to the coin. With the fall, the prophet

is freed from the cruel task of being a prophet of doom. After the failure of his long and persistent effort to defend Zion against destruction, he can now do what he longed to do from the first—to honor “his mother” instead of “humiliating” her and to prophesy to her “good things and consolations.” That this is his purpose after the fall we must make out by reading between the lines, inasmuch as it is difficult to make sense out of the statement of the prophet at the end of paragraph 18: “Jeremiah said to himself, ‘If I accompany the exiles to Babylon, who will comfort the exiles that remain?’” Why should he prefer “the exiles that remain” to the exiles that were deported to Babylon; and why should those be more in need of comfort? It is no explanation to say that the Babylonian exiles do not need him since they already have a prophet of their own, Ezekiel. Ezekiel is not mentioned at all in the homily, whereas, in Erez Israel (according to our homilist), two other prophets were active alongside Jeremiah—Zephaniah and Hulda (par. 7).

The real meaning emerges from the concluding paragraph which describes the poignant meeting between Jeremiah and Mother Zion, in which he does indeed begin to speak words of comfort to her. It is not the “exiles that remain” then, whom the prophet has in mind, and not them that he wishes to comfort, but Mother Zion. A complete shift of perspective occurs. The fictional character of Mother Zion takes the place of the Temple and the city which she was supposed to symbolize; she becomes a reality, as it were. The reality of the symbol is so strong in the concluding paragraph, that a certain opposition between it and what it is supposed to represent develops. The quasi-poetic passage concentrates in the figure of Mother Zion what the city and the people are to Jeremiah and thus forms an impressive conclusion.

In this homily, Jeremiah is conceived of as an eminently patriotic figure, something not necessarily equivalent to what Scripture itself tells about him /14/. It is an image fitting for the homilist to conceive because he seeks to give encouragement and comfort to his audience, who have suffered yet another fall and upon whom lies the cruel yoke of a hated foreign power. The scorn shown the enemy throughout the homily serves the same purpose. It is not the might of the enemy that brought about the destruction of

Jerusalem: “Do not say in praise of yourselves that you conquered it—a conquered city you have conquered, a dead people you have killed” (par. 16). This appears again in the picture of angels who descend and set fire to the Temple, while the enemies are conferring on how to do it! They manage to overcome the high priest and his unfortunate daughter and slaughter them, but we do not hear that they attack the soldiers with equal heroism. On the contrary—Nebuchadnezzar “is afraid” that his may be the fate of Sennacherib and so turns over command of the army to Nebuzardan (par. 14). Indeed, “they could not conquer Jerusalem because its fate had not yet been sealed” (par. 14). When the Egyptians approached, the Chaldeans “fled”—a term that is not found in Scripture in this context and is inconsistent with it (par. 9) /15/. The patriotic interpretation of the homilist finds its most manifest expression in what he omits. When he quotes the scriptural warning of Jeremiah to the people, “He who stays in this city will die by sword, famine and plague” (par. 12), he does not quote its continuation, which sounds like a call to treason, “and he who goes forth to the Chaldeans shall live; he shall have his life as booty and live” (Jer 38:2). Much less does he mention the prophet’s explicit statement to Zedekiah, “If you will go forth to the king of Babylon’s princes, then your soul shall live and this city shall not be burned with fire; and you shall live, you and your house” (Jer 38:17).

The figure of Jeremiah as depicted by the homilist is surely complex and many-sided. The prophet is caught in a difficult conflict which induces his troubled and inconsistent behavior. But under the hand of the homilist, he becomes more understandable. His motives, apparently in conflict with one another in the biblical story, are now harmonious. The figure is no longer an enigma but credible and convincing. It is, paradoxically, the fall of Jerusalem that resolves his conflict, freeing him from his role of prophet of doom, which he hated. The concluding scene, in which he meets the mourning Mother Zion, marks the end of his struggle, for from then on he has a new mission, suggested by the depiction of its first moments: he must now do what he has always yearned to do—prophesy to Mother Zion “good things and consolations” /16/.



## NOTES

/1/ This article was written by Joseph Heinemann shortly before his untimely death. The editors would like to thank Professor Moshe Greenberg, Hebrew University, for his generous and invaluable assistance in overseeing the completion of the English version.

/2/ Compare H. L. Strack (213).

/3/ But see the commentary of M. Friedman there, par. 1, and also L. Prijs (21f.).

/4/ See J. Heinemann (1971a:145ff.).

/5/ For convenience I have adopted the division into paragraphs suggested by Prijs in his above-mentioned book. In his commentary, Prijs has hit the mark in many matters, among them matters of style and composition of the homily. However, he does not comprehend the whole *pisqa* as an integral literary creation, having a unified design and single purpose. The text we have is corrupt. The critical edition in Prijs' book does not improve matters much, since we have at our disposal only one manuscript, Parma, which contains many corruptions. The same applies to the edition of our *pisqa*, also based on ms Parma, published by William G. Braude. Unless stated otherwise, I have followed Prijs. Since in most cases the variant readings are not of decisive importance for our purposes, I have chosen the reading in each case that makes the most sense to me.

/6/ See Prijs (40) and variant readings (84).

/7/ There is no verse in the Book of Jeremiah which says, "But Babylon your eyes will not see"; see Prijs (70).

/8/ The readings we have are ambiguous on this point.

/9/ It is surely not necessary to identify Irijah, the gatekeeper, as the grandson of Hananiah the false prophet. Moreover, Hananiah dies only in Zedekiah's fourth year (Jer 28:1, 17). In any case, there was no reason here to tell at length about the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah, about the death of the latter, about the will he made out to his son and his son's will to his son after him, etc.

/10/ This is the import of the expression in the *Pesiqta* "Jeremiah's coming forth into the world." Compare Prijs (29) with M. Friedman.

/11/ Compare Prijs (65ff.). But we cannot be satisfied with his explanation of this striking deviation from the plain sense of Scripture—namely, that the homilist wanted to describe three imaginary journeys of Jeremiah and that his departure from the city symbolizes God's departure, which was the necessary condition of Jerusalem's fall. Compare Targum Sheni of Esther, 1:3 (A. Sperber: 178ff.) where similar if not identical motifs are found, such as that it is impossible to destroy the city as long as Jeremiah is in it, because he prays for it, and only when he leaves for the land of Benjamin can Nebuchadnezzar overcome and destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.

/12/ Neither the reading nor the meaning are completely clear. Compare Prijs (64) and the variant readings; in his opinion, the meaning is that God will give—or will leave—Anathoth in the hands of its inhabitants; similarly, M. Friedman. But Braude, in his English rendition of *PR*, (534),

thinks that the reference is to Jerusalem. In any case, it is clear that Jeremiah sees in this command to go to Anathoth a hint of some kind of salvation.

/13/ The following formula, "Jeremiah thought to himself and said," which recurs many times, is meaningful; its role, apparently, is to emphasize the prophet's thoughts and desires which serve as a key to understanding his behavior.

/14/ Although in Scripture, too, Jeremiah prays on behalf of the people; compare on this the article by Yochanan Muffs. So too, the sages see in Jeremiah a prophet who was concerned for the honor of both the father and the son (=the people of Israel) (*Abot de-Rabbi Nathan*, beginning of chap. 47). But according to the singular conception of the author of our homily, the prophet acts to save the city not by means of prayers—these are not mentioned at all by the homilist—but by means of his rebukes and warnings.

/15/ For the Chaldeans evidently lifted the siege in order to fight Pharaoh's army.

/16/ Attention should be paid to the literary genre of *pishah* 26, which belongs unmistakably to what G. Vermes has called the "re-written Bible"—in itself a clear indication that we are dealing with a rather late literary creation. For while this genre was popular and widespread in late second Temple times, not only in sectarian circles (Jubilees) and in those close to hellenist influence but also even among authors who belong to the pharisaic stream or are close to it (e.g., the author of *Liber Antiquitates Biblicarum*), it disappears utterly from talmudic-midrashic literature (except for occasional brief paraphrases of short biblical passages, e.g., *Tanh, Lekh Lekha* 5)—certainly not just by coincidence. Apparently, the rabbis conceived a danger that the public might take such freely treated accounts of the Bible for authentic reflections of the text itself. Only in the early Middle Ages does the genre reappear (*Pirqa Rabbi Eliezer* in the eighth century)—according to L. Ginzberg (72)—through the influence of the Moslem "stories of the Prophets" until its full development in works such as the *Chronicles of Moses* and the late *Sefer Ha-Yashar*. I have not referred to the surprisingly strong links between this *pisqa* and the pseudo-epigraphic Syrian *Book of Baruk* (which neither Prijs nor Braude note). The matter has been discussed already by L. Ginzberg (19:2, 1556); cf. also L. Gry; but it would have taken us too long in the framework of this paper. Let it be noted, though, that in using material, almost quotations from the *Book of Baruk*, he still uses it freely and reworks it for his own literary purposes.