

The Understanding of Covenant in The Book of Jeremiah: An Exegetical Study of Jeremiah 11:2-5

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Abstract

This study examines the theological, historical, and literary aspects of the covenant concept found in Jeremiah 11:2–5. Using the Mosaic Covenant as the backdrop for Jeremiah 11, the study highlights the covenant's provisions for benefits for obedience and punishments for disobedience, as well as its relationship to the book of Deuteronomy. The passage emphasizes how Judah's idolatry and disobedience caused the covenant to break down, resulting in unavoidable divine judgment. The study employs an exegetical methodology to examine the text's delimitation, literary structure, historical context, and theological implications. The results show that the covenant in Jeremiah 11 is a divine order based on an oath rather than just an agreement, and that disobedience will result in curses like calamity and unanswered prayers. The fact that God is still the covenant's creator and guarantor in spite of human failure emphasizes His power to renew it. According to the study's findings, the covenant establishes and preserves the bond between God and His people, with disobedience resulting in punishment and obedience bringing prosperity.

Keywords: *Covenant, Jeremiah 11, Mosaic Covenant, Exegesis, Blessings and Curses, Divine Punishment, Oath, Idolatry, Disobedience, Theological Implications.*

Introduction

Jeremiah 11 has been connected to the Mosaic Covenant and the book of Deuteronomy.¹ The similarity of wording and thought support this assumption. The covenant is referring to the

¹Some commentators agree that the words of covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 11 refer to Mosaic Covenant and the book of Deuteronomy. See Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah" In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 452-53; Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, UBS handbook series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2003), 293; David M. Gosdeck, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The People's Bible (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 1994), 70; *The Pulpit Commentary: Jeremiah Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 294; Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), Je 11:1–17; Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament, Volume 4: The Prophets* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002), 55.

book of law found by Hilkiah the priest in the temple.² The covenant promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. However, the plot of Jeremiah 11 shows the breakdown of the covenant that leads Judah to the inescapable punishment.

There are some types of the covenant in the bible. In the context of Jeremiah 11, it is a covenant between God and men, particularly between God and Judah's forefathers. Mostly, the picture of the covenant between God and men describes the relationship in which God becomes Israel's God and Israel become God's people. The covenant between God and Israel is established by an oath which has the consequence that is blessings and curses. If the people keep the covenant then they will be blessed, but if they don't they will be cursed. This paper will investigate the issue of the covenant that mentioned in Jeremiah 11:2-5.

Methodology of the Study

This research paper employs an exegetical procedure to reach the better understanding of the text. This study consists of five sections: (1) section one analyses the delimitation of the text; (2) section two presents the historical background of the text; (3) section three conducts the literary analysis of the text which includes grammatical analysis, textual witnesses, and literary context; (4) chapter three gives the theological implication, and finally (5) chapter five presents the summary and conclusion of the paper.

General Section

Jeremiah 11 and 12 shapes a section for there is no severance between them while some include chapter 13 in it.³ The section begins with the covenant which rejected by Judah and results them in Punishment. Besides the calamity that will come upon Judah, God commands Jeremiah not to pray for his people for God will not listen to him. Prophetic message of Jeremiah is rejected by his people of Anathoth and there is a conspiracy to kill him. However, God utters his judgment upon this person of Anathoth that they will be punished by sword and famine.

Chapter 12 shows the complaint of Jeremiah of the prosperity of the wicked. However, God answers that during the terrible transgressions; God promises to restore them in the land of heritage. The outline of Jeremiah 11-12 can be seen below:

- A. The Broken Covenant (1-13)
- B. The Command: Do not pray for Judah (11:14-17).
- C. The Conspiracy of Anathoth against Jeremiah (11:18-23).
- D. The Complaint of the prosperity of the wicked (12:1-4).
- E. Punishment and Promise (12:5-17).
 - 1. The Punishment upon the wicked (12:5-13).
 - 2. The Promise for the repentant nation (12:14-17).

²Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, A. R. Fausset et al., *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997),

³Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah" In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 451.

Unit

Jeremiah 11:1-5 is as part of the broken covenant section which particularly discusses the past covenant between God and Judah's forefathers. It is vivid to see Jeremiah 11:1-5 as one unit for the mark of ס found at the end of 11:5. Moreover, the imperative שְׁמַעוּ "hear" found in 11:22 is in a plural form that refers both to Jeremiah and the People of Judah. In 11:6, however, the word address only to Jeremiah for the word אֲנִי appears in the first person singular. Indeed Jeremiah 11:2-5 is about the covenant in which the people at that time fail to keep.

Date

Since the passage of Jeremiah 11 provides no clear evidence and clue of the date, scholars differ to establish it. For Instance, Charles Dyer, Eugene Merrill, Charles R. Swindoll, and Roy B. Zuck agree that the passage of Jeremiah 11 probably spoken after six years of his ministry in 621 B.C.E.⁴ Therefore, it is referred to the reign of King Josiah particularly the "year the temple was being repaired as part of King Josiah's reforms, and a copy of the Law was discovered in the renovation."⁵

Contrast with it, Adam Clarke in *Clarke's Commentary: Jeremiah* says that the passage "is supposed to have been delivered in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah."⁶ Another argument comes from Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House agree that "the passage likely dates to the early years of the reign of Jehoiakim, or about 609-605 B.C.E. when the people ceased obeying the Mosaic covenant."⁷ J. A. Thompson in *The Book of Jeremiah* supports this position for "Jeremiah 11 is subsequent to chapter 7, which can be dated to Jehoiakim's time."⁸ He proposes that the message spoken in Jeremiah 11 is connected to the reign of Jehoiakim rather than Josiah. It is because the people of Judah have returned from God some years after Josiah's reform and the reform has lost its momentum.⁹

Charles L. Feinberg offers the suggestion of the date of Jeremiah 11 in his introduction part that the passage under the reign of Jehoiakim. In his discussion, Feinberg discusses two views of historical setting that refer both to Jehoiakim and Josiah. Many scholars prefer the second view that is the reign of Josiah. The main argument of this position is "the date might

⁴ Charles Dyer, Eugene Merrill, Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, *Nelson's Old Testament Survey : Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Word, 2001), 601.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary: Jeremiah*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Clarke's Commentaries (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999), Je 11:1.

⁷ Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), Je 11:1–17.

⁸ J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 343.

⁹ Ibid

even have been soon after the discovery of the Book of the Law before the reform became widespread.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, this view of interpretation is questioned by others. Due to its context in which the people of Judah have turned away from God, the reign of Jehoiakim is preferable in this paper.

Political Context

In the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.), “the international scene was about to change drastically, after the great Assyrian king Ashurbanipal died in 633 B.C.E.”¹¹ Late in 626 B.C.E, Nabopolassar the father of Nebuchadnezzar has established the Neo-Babylonian Empire.¹² Neo-Babylonian power rises after completely destroying Asshur in 614 and Nineveh in 612 B.C.E.¹³ Assyrian power has been gradually ceased after the fall of Nineveh and established their capital at Haran. In 610 B.C.E., Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt decides to support Assyria after the Babylonian defeats them in Haran. Neco II, therefore, advances through Judah, defeats and kills Josiah in the late spring of 609 B.C.E.¹⁴ Jehoahaz, Josiah’s son becomes the king for three months and then removed by Pharaoh Neco II,¹⁵ and in the same year, Jehoiakim is installed as Egyptian vassal.¹⁶

During the reign of Jehoiakim, the political situation in Judah is not conducive. Judah was remained subservient to the Egyptians until Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egyptian in 605 B.C.E. In 598 B.C.E., however, Nebuchadnezzar punishes Jehoiakim for his

rebellious against Babylonian Empire. “The expected help from Egypt never came, and Jehoiakim died during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem.”¹⁷ During the reign of Jehoiakim, Judah has never believed in God but only trust their hope on foreign nations to help them from enemy attacks.

¹⁰Charles L. Feinberg, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, 451-452.

¹¹Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 1222-1223.

¹² William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *The Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Brill, 2000), 307.

¹³Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 4*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 386.

¹⁴J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 3rd ed., rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 155-156. See also Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1222-1223.

¹⁵David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 678.

¹⁶J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 22-23.

¹⁷Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1222-1223.

Geographical Context

After the death of Salomon, Judah emerges “as the major component of the southern kingdom of Judah.”¹⁸ As mentioned before that political issue in Judah is not conducive. Geographically, Judah is located in the center of two enemies that attacking each other, Egypt and Babylon. After defeating Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar will come to attract Egypt which passing through the territory of Judah. By looking at the situation in which Judah is as Egyptian’s vassal, it is obvious to assume that Judah is the next target of Nebuchadnezzar.

Religious Context

Religious issues during the reign of Jehoiakim depict the insubordination of the people of Judah. Bill T. Arnold in *Encountering the Old Testament* states, “Religious compromise increased as ungodly religious practices began enjoying royal sanction.”¹⁹ As a result, the covenant between God and Israel has broken by this practice of idolatry. This, of course, has led them into the dreadful judgment that the Lord. A list of Judah iniquity has been written in Jeremiah 11 as can be seen below:

1. Do not obey the covenant of the Lord v. 8.
2. Walking in the stubbornness of his evil heart v. 8.
3. A conspiracy among Judah v. 9.
4. Turning back to the iniquity of their ancestors v. 10
5. Refusing God’s words v. 10.
6. Serving other gods v. 10.
7. Breaking God’s covenant v. 10.
8. Burning incense to Baal v. 12, 13, 17
9. Do not listen to Prophecy v. 12
10. Want to kill Jeremiah, God’s prophet v. 12.

Internal evidence show the moral depravity of Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim. Arnold adds that “Although the people professed faith in the LORD they rejected the Law of Moses and worshiped idols.”²⁰

Pericope

This section is dealing with the literary analysis of the text. As mentioned before, this paper will be focusing only on the issue of the covenant in Jeremiah 11:2-5. Therefore, this paper

¹⁸ T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 483.

¹⁹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament (Encountering Biblical Studies): A Christian Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 319.

²⁰ Ibid, 369

will not analyze all the words but only some important words. The passage will be divided into clausal that can be seen below:

Verse 2

שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת First Clause

וְדִבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־אִישׁ יְהוָה Second Clause

וְעַל־יְשָׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם: Third Clause

Verse 3

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם First Clause

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל Second Clause

אָרוּר הָאִישׁ Third Clause

אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמַע אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת: Fourth Clause

Verse 4

אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם First Clause

בַּיּוֹם הוֹצִיאִי־אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם Second Clause

מִכּוּר הַבְּרִזָּל לֵאמֹר Third Clause

שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי Fourth Clause

וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אוֹתָם כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־אָצַנָה אֶתְכֶם Fifth Clause

וְהָיִיתֶם לִי לְעָם Sixth Clause

וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים: Seventh Clause

Verse 5

לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה First Clause

אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם Second Clause

לָתֵת לָהֶם אֶרֶץ Third Clause

וְכַת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה Fourth Clause

נָאֶעַן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן יְהוָה: Fifth Clause

Grammatical Analysis**Analysis of Jeremiah 11:2**

First Clause שְׁמָעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת.

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. This clause begins with the verb שְׁמָעוּ which in this context appears as a Qal imperfect 2nd person masculine plural. It indicates that the command is not addressed only for Jeremiah but either to all the people of Judah. The basic meaning of שְׁמָעוּ is “to hear” or “to listen.” In this clause, שְׁמָעוּ is syntactically a predicate which emphasizes to put attention on the words of “covenant” (הַבְּרִית). The word הַבְּרִית is in noun common feminine singular absolute. The basic meaning of this word is “covenant.” In this context, הַבְּרִית is a complement to the direct object.

הַזֹּאת	הַבְּרִית	אֶת־דְּבָרֵי	שְׁמָעוּ
<u>The this</u>	<u>Of the covenant</u>	<u>In the words</u>	<u>hear</u>
Complement		Direct object	Predicate

Semantic Analysis. The verb שְׁמָעוּ comes from the root שָׁמַע. The root itself is also found in Hebrew outside the OT. For instance, it appears in the Lachish ostraca. The root itself appears in some semantic languages such as Akkadian: “hear,” “learn,” “give a hearing,” “follow,” “obey,” “understand language;” in Babylonian Theodicy: “listen,” “pay attention,” “hear;” in Neo-Assyrian: “hear;” in Ugaritic: “hear,” “obey,” “listen.” In Phoenician and Punic, the root itself is used for the hearing of a prayer. Moreover, in Aramaic the word means “obey,” and in Arabic and Ethiopia mean “hear.”²¹

The conventional meaning of the word שָׁמַע is “hear,” “listen to,” “hear and accept a request,” “obey,” “understand,” “be heard,” “be listened to,” “be attended to,” “summon,” “cause

²¹U. Rutersworden, “*sāma*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, ed.G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 15:254-256.

to hear,” “cause to hear,” “make oneself heard,”²² “heed,” “try,” “examine,” “be granted,” “become obedient,” “proclaim,” “announce,” “be heard loudly.”²³

The word שָׁמַע occurs 91 times in OT and 21 times particularly in the book of Jeremiah.²⁴ In the OT, the primary meaning of שָׁמַע is “hear sound with the ear.”²⁵ Some examples of the general context of שָׁמַע can be seen below:

Gen 37:6	שָׁמַע-נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה
<i>Torah</i>	"Hear this dream...
Judge 9:7	שָׁמַעוּ אֵלַי
<i>Nevi'im</i>	"Listen to me...
Job 13:6	שָׁמַע-נָא תוֹכְחָתִי
<i>Ketuvim</i>	Hear now my argument...

Moreover, the word שָׁמַע denotes the motif of Judgment through a military disaster in the prophetic book, especially in Jeremiah.²⁶ However, Ruttersworden states that the imperative of שָׁמַע in Jeremiah 11 is a special case. The word שָׁמַע “does not introduce a prophetic oracle; instead, Yahweh himself demands that his voice is heard. The imperative appears occasionally along with the messenger formula.”²⁷ In this context, שָׁמַע denotes that God demands Jeremiah and the people of Judah to listen to the words of the covenant between them.

The root of הִכָּרִית has meanings in semantic languages. For instance, in Akkadian means “between,” “among,” “covenant between X and Y,” “clasp,” “fetter,” “bond.” In Hittite means “bond,” and in Arabic means “bond of faith,” and “contract. Moreover, in Aramaic, the root itself means “enforce an interdict.”²⁸ The conventional meaning of הִכָּרִית are “agreement,”

²²Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Study edition. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), s.v. “שָׁמַע.”

²³William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Kohler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), s.v. “שָׁמַע.”

²⁴Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1983), s.v. “שָׁמַע.”

²⁵Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 4:175.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷U. Ruttersworden, “*sāma*,” *TDOT*, 15:254-256.

²⁸M. Weinfeld, “*b'rith*,” *TDOT*, 2:254-255.

“alliance,” “covenant,”²⁹ “contract,”³⁰ “between men: reach an agreement, make a pact, grant, extend an agreement to someone, into an agreement, admit someone into the agreement, allies, obligation against brothers, keep in mind, break, matrimony,” “between God and men: promise.”³¹ However, the original translation of the word בְּרִית is not “agreement or settlement between two parties, as is commonly argues.” בְּרִית denotes commanded which is synonymous with law and commandment.³² For example:

Deut 4:13	וַיִּגְדֹּל לָכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת
<i>Torah</i>	And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform,
Judge 2:20	אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי
<i>Nevi'im</i>	The covenant that I commanded
Psalms 111:9	צִוָּה־לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ
<i>Ketuvim</i>	he has commanded his covenant forever.

Furthermore, בְּרִית has a strong connection with an oath. “The oath gives the obligation its binding validity” and it denotes a conditional imprecation. Therefore, if someone violates the covenant, he/she violate the oath.³³ Some examples of covenant and oath in the OT can be seen below:

Deut 29:12,14	לְעִבְרְךָ בְּבְרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְאֱלֹתוֹ
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²⁹Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Reprinted from the 1906 ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), s.v. “בְּרִית.”

³⁰Köhler, *HALOT*, s.v. “בְּרִית.”

³¹Holladay, *CHALOT*, s.v. “בְּרִית.”

³²M. Weinfeld, “*b^erith*,” *TDOT*, 2:254-255.

³³M. Weinfeld, “*b^erith*,” *TDOT*, 2:255-256.

Torah so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the
LORD your God

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְכֶם אֲנִי כֹרֵת אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הָאֵלֶּה הַזֹּאת

"I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone,

Ezek 16:59 אֲשֶׁר־בָּזִית אֵלֶּה לְהַפֵּר בְּרִית

Nevi'im you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant

Therefore, due to its context, the proposed translation of this clause is “hear the words of this covenant.”

Second Clause וְדִבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה.

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. the second clause begins with the word וְדִבַּרְתֶּם which in this context is conjunction + verb Piel waw consecutive perfect second person masculine singular + suffix third person masculine plural. As it appears in Piel form, then the verb denotes to speak intensively to the object. The basic meaning of this word is “to speak.” Syntactically, וְדִבַּרְתֶּם plays as a predicate of the sentence.

יְהוּדָה	אֶל־אִישׁ	וְדִבַּרְתֶּם
Of Judah	To the men	And you speak to them intensively
complement	In direct object	predicate

Semantic Analysis. Etymologically, the root דָּבַר does not meet with general approval for some difficulties between “word,” “thing,” or “to speak.” The root itself can be translated as “speak,” “speak together,” “talk,” “speak something,” “speak about,” “command,” “threaten,” “promise,” “be spoken,” “converse with,”³⁴ the inflected word וְדִבַּרְתֶּם occurs only one time in OT particularly in this passage. Therefore, due to its context, the proposed translation of this clause is “and speak to the men of Judah.”

Third Clause וְעַל־יְשָׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

³⁴Holladay, *CHALOT*, s.v. “דָּבַר.”

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. Morphologically, the word **וְעַל-יֹשְׁבֵי**

Is a Conjunction + Preposition + verb Qal participle masculine plural construct. Since it appears in participle and constructs form, then the participle is used “³⁵ independently as a noun indicating the ‘one who’ performs a certain action.” Therefore, in this context, **וְעַל-יֹשְׁבֵי** plays rule as an indirect object while **יְרוּשָׁלַם** is the compliment.³⁶

יְרוּשָׁלַם	וְעַל-יֹשְׁבֵי
<u>Jerusalem</u>	<u>And upon them who are dwelling</u>
Complement	Indirect object

Semantic Analysis. the root **יָשַׁב** appears in most Semitic languages. For instance, in Ugaritic, the root means “to sit,” while in Akkadian means “throne.”³⁷ The conventional meaning of **יָשַׁב** is “sit down,” “sit,” “remain sitting,” “wait for,” “dwell,” “be inhabited,” “set up,” “set,” “cause to sit,” “inhabit,” “leave behind,” “set up home,” “marry,”³⁸ “derivatives”³⁹ “sit on throne,” “be enthroned,” “lie down,” “rest,” “stay,” “settle,” “populated,” be established,” “endure,” “sit in worship,” “wait,” “inhabitant.”⁴⁰ The word **וְעַל-יֹשְׁבֵי** occurs two times in OT and both of them appear only in the book of Jeremiah. Therefore, due to its context, the object of the predicate to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.e “to hear” can be referred to the people of Judah and those who are dwelling or sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. The proposed translation of this clause is “and upon them who are dwelling in Jerusalem.”

Analysis of Jeremiah 11:3

First Clause **וְעַל-יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם**

³⁵Gary Davis Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 169.

³⁶G. Gerleman, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT)*, ed., Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), s.v., “יָשַׁב.”

³⁷Harris, *TWOT*, “יָשַׁב.”

³⁸Köhler, *HALOT*, s.v. “יָשַׁב.”

³⁹Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), “יָשַׁב.”

⁴⁰David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield, 1993), s.v. “יָשַׁב.”

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. This clause begins with the verb וְאָמַרְתָּ which appears in Qal waw consecutive perfect second person masculine singular. Since it appears in consecutive perfect, therefore, the meaning denotes imperfect action. The basic meaning of this word is “to say,” or “to proclaim.” Syntactically, וְאָמַרְתָּ is a predicate in which the action performs to the indirect object “to them” אֲלֵיהֶם that refer to the people of Judah and those who are sitting on the throne in Jerusalem.

אֲלֵיהֶם	וְאָמַרְתָּ
<u>To them</u>	<u>And you will say</u>
Indirect object	predicate

Semantic Analysis. the verb וְאָמַרְתָּ comes from the root אָמַר. The root has a different meaning in Semantic languages. For example in Akkadian and Ugaritic: “to see,” while in Aramaic and Arabic: “to command.”⁴¹ The verb וְאָמַרְתָּ occurs 132 times in OT and 29 times in the book of Jeremiah. In the OT, the verb is used to communicate of God’s word to a human being, human beings to others, and human being to God. For example:

Exod 4:22

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה

Torah

Then you shall say to Pharaoh

1 Kings 22:27

וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

Nevi'im

and say, 'Thus says the king

Job 22:13

וְאָמַרְתָּ מִה־יָדַע אֵל

Ketuvim

But you say, 'What does God know?

Therefore, due to its context, the proposed translation of this clause is “and you will say to them.”

Second Clause כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

The second clause begins with the word כֹּה־אָמַר. This word is an Adverb + verb Qal perfect third person masculine singular. The basic meaning of this word is “to say.” In this context, this word acts as the predicate of the sentence in which the subject refers to “YHWH.”

⁴¹Jerome A. Lund, “‘amar,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, eds., Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 1:449.

The expression “thus says the LORD,” introduces the authoritative message of God and sometimes a warning of the coming judgment which delivered often by a prophet to the people.⁴²

Third Clause אָרוּר הָאִישׁ

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. This clause begins with the Hebrew word אָרוּר which appears in Qal passive participle masculine singular absolute. The basic meaning of אָרוּר is “to curse.” In this clause, the word אָרוּר acts as a predicate in which הָאִישׁ “the man” is the subject.

הָאִישׁ	אָרוּר
The man	Cursed is
Subject	predicate

Semantic Analysis. the word הָאִישׁ comes from the root אָרַר which appears commonly in Semitic languages as “to curse.”⁴³ The root אָרַר can be translated as “bind with a curse,” “laid under a curse,” “lay under a curse,” “be under a curse,”⁴⁴ “accursed one,” “bewitch,” “cast spell upon,” “suffer the curse,” “effect curse.”⁴⁵ The verb אָרוּר occurs 31 times in OT and 5 times particularly in the book of Jeremiah.⁴⁶

The fourth Clause

This clause begins with the particle relative אֲשֶׁר “who” which explains the reason of cursing in the previous clause. The reason of cursing is because of the men do not obey the words of the covenant. The verb יִשְׁמַע appears in Qal imperfect which the predicate in this clause. The basic meaning of this verb is “to listen,” or “to obey.” The main issue of cursing is because of disobeying to the words of הַבְּרִית “the covenant.” The noun הַבְּרִית is a complement to the indirect object אֶת-דְּבָרֵי “the words.” Therefore, due to its context, the preferable translation of this clause is “who does not obey the words of this covenant.”

⁴²Jerome A. Lund, “‘amar,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:449.

⁴³C. A. Keller, *TLOT*, s.v. “אָרַר.”

⁴⁴Köhler, *HALOT*, s.v. “אָרַר.”

⁴⁵Clines, *CDCH*, s.v. “אָרַר.”

⁴⁶Abraham Even-Shoshan, *NCOT*, s.v. “אָרוּר.”

הַזֹּאת	הַבְּרִית	אֶת־דְּבָרֵי	יִשְׁמַע	לֹא	אֲשֶׁר
Of the this	Of the covenant	In the words	He obeys	not	who
Complement		Direct object	Predicate		Subject

Analysis of Jeremiah 11:4

First Clause אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם.

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. this clause begins with the particle relative אֲשֶׁר "which" describes the covenant in which the Lord has commanded to their forefathers. The verb צִוִּיתִי appears in Piel perfect that denotes the intensive action of the verb. Syntactically, the verb צִוִּיתִי acts as the predicate of the clause.

אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם	צִוִּיתִי	אֲשֶׁר
To your fathers	I have commanded intensively	that
Direct object	Predicate	Particle Relative

Semantic Analysis. The word צִוִּיתִי comes from the root צָוָה which occurs only in Hebrew. The root itself can be translated as "give an order," "command," "instruct," "order," "send," "be told," "receive an order,"⁴⁷ "lay charge," "give, charge,"⁴⁸ "direct," "appoint," "forbid," "set," "receive a command,"⁴⁹

Second Clause אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם. The expression הַיּוֹם הוֹצִיאֵנִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם "in the days when I brought them out from the land of Egypt," is referred to the period when God has commanded the Covenant to Israel.

מֵאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם	הוֹצִיאֵנִי אֹתָם	בַּיּוֹם
From the land of Egypt	I caused to bring them out	In the days
complement	Object - Predicate	locative

Third Clause מִכּוּר הַבְּרֹזֶל לֵאמֹר. The expression מִכּוּר הַבְּרֹזֶל לֵאמֹר "from the iron furnace, saying," has parallelism with the previous clause that describes the moment when God has made the covenant between Israel and Him.

⁴⁷Köhler, *HALOT*, s.v. "צָוָה."

⁴⁸Brown, *BDB*, s.v. "צָוָה."

⁴⁹Holladay, *CHALOT*, s.v. "צָוָה."

לֵאמֹר	הַבִּרְזֵל	מִכּוּר
saying	The iron	From furnace
Predicate	Complement	

Fourth Clause שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי. In this clause, for the third time, the word שָׁמַע appears in this passage. In this context, it appears in the verb form which is in Qal imperfect. The word שָׁמַע acts as the predicate of the clause which is בְּקוֹלִי "My voice" as the indirect object. The suffix first person common singular in this context refers to God.

בְּקוֹלִי	לֵאמֹר
To my voice	Obey
object	predicate

Fifth Clause וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אוֹתָם כָּל אֲשֶׁר־אָצְנָה אֲתֶכֶם.

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. This clause begins with the verb וַעֲשִׂיתֶם which appears in Qal consecutive perfect. The basic meaning of this word is "to make," "to do." The ו denotes the continuation of the previous clauses that not only listen or obey but do all of the words that God has commanded them. The word וַעֲשִׂיתֶם acts as the predicate of the clause which אוֹתָם "them" is an indirect object that refers to the covenant.

אֲתֶכֶם	אֲשֶׁר־אָצְנָה	כָּל	אוֹתָם	וַעֲשִׂיתֶם
To you	That I command	all	them	And you do
object	predicate	complement	object	predicate

Semantic Analysis. The word וַעֲשִׂיתֶם comes from the root עָשָׂה which has uncertain occurrences in Semantic languages.⁵⁰ Its root can be translated in various ways such as "make," "manufacture," "apply," "effect," "produce," "do," "acquire," "win," "prepare," "take care of," "officiate," "perform," "carry out," "keep," "do work," "act," "step in," "work," "be busy," "do manage," "be done."⁵¹ The word כָּל appears here indicates the covenant should be made "totality," "completely," or "altogether."⁵²

Sixth and Seventh Clause וְהָיִיתֶם לִי לְעָם וְאֶנְכִּי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים. This expression "and you will be my people and I will be your God" denotes the main issue of the covenant which is the relationship between God and his people. The root הָיָה "to be," "become" appears in these clauses both in Qal consecutive perfect and Qal imperfect which denotes the same meaning "will

⁵⁰J. Vollmer, TLOT, s.v. "עָשָׂה."

⁵¹Holladay, CHALOT, s.v. "עָשָׂה".

⁵²Ibid., s.v. "כָּל."

be.” The word הָיָה appears in explicit relation to YHWH in the context of covenant. S. Amsler in *TLOT* states,

Both covenant partners are obligated thereby to a particular behavior toward one another. . . . Here *hyh* indicates the mutual behavior of the covenant partners in the present and in the future in its active and dynamic character; what they are for one another owing to the covenant is renewed by each act of one toward the other so that they become ever more and ever better what they already are. Thus the characteristic exhortation of Deut paraenesis to Israel is to become the people it already is by “walking (*hlk*) and “obeying” (*smr*).⁵³

Therefore, the completeness of the covenant will depend on the partners. Breaking down the covenant will be caused breaking down the relationship between the partners.

Analysis of Jeremiah 11:5

First and Second Clause לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם

Morphological and Syntactical Analysis. The expression לְמַעַן הָקִים אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם “in order to fulfill the oath that I have sworn to your forefathers” is as a part of God’s covenant with Israel. If they do all the covenant, Israel not only becomes God’s people but God will bless them abundantly. In this clause, the verb הָקִים appears in Hiphil infinitive. “Hebrew grammars traditionally represent the *hiphil* stem as the causative of the *Qal* stem.” Therefore, the expression אֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה הָקִים “to fulfill the oath” is an event caused by the previous *Qal* verbs. In this context, it refers to the previous *Qal* expression which is “and you will be my people and I will be your God.” Furthermore, the

expression אֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה “the oath” is the direct object by which the word הָקִים is the predicate of the sentence.

לְמַעַן	הָקִים	אֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה	אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי	לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם
In order to	To confirm	The Oath	That I have sworn	To your forefathers
complement	predicate	Direct object	predicate	Indirect object

Semantic Analysis. In the other hand, the word הָקִים comes from the root קוּם which is well attested in Akkadian “raise oneself up,” and in Arabic and Ugaritic.⁵⁴ In Hebrew, the root itself has plenty of meaning such as “rise,” “get up,” “stand up,” “come up to fruition,” “endure,” “belong to someone,” “stay fixed,” “put up,” “erect,” “take out,” “keep,” “fulfill,” “raise,” “help

⁵³J. Vollmer, *TLOT*, s.v. “הָיָה.”

⁵⁴Willem VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE*, 1:449.

up,” “raise someone,” “nominate,” “obtain,” “to be set up,” “to be carried out,” “to be placed”⁵⁵ “get up,” “stand upright,” “come about,” “last,” “continue,” “be valid,” “belong,” “cost,” “recover,” “make (a word) come true,” “confirm,” “impose,” “institute,” “direct,” “support,” “strengthen,” “carry out,” “perform,” “keep one’s word,” “command someone to stand,” “appoint,” “install,” “entrust,” “establish,” “provide,” “rebel.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the word שָׁבַע or שְׁבוּעָה has some meanings such as “oath,” “curse,”⁵⁷ “sworn oath,” “swearing truth.”⁵⁸ It can be translated as oath or curse. In the OT, “oaths consist of a promise that is strengthened by the addition of a curse, with an appeal to a deity. . . . who could stand as the power behind the curse.”⁵⁹ Since the oaths consist both a promise and a curse, it seems that the oaths are conditional for it relates to the partners. However, the promise is not conditional but the curse it is.⁶⁰

Third and fourth Clause זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶרֶץ פְּלוֹת לָהֶם חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ. “to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as this day” is referred to the blessing of the covenant. The verb זָבַת which comes from the word זָבַח can be translated as “abundant.” Furthermore, the expression “a land flows with milk and honey” according to Olivier in *NIDOTTE* says that it “does not only refer to the wealth and natural fertility of the Promised land, but may reflect the different modes of existence prevalent in ancient Israel.” It also “emphasizes God’s constant involvement in the daily concerns of his people.”⁶¹

Textual Witnesses

There is no significant issue of textual witnesses of LXX and Targum concerning this passage. Both LXX and Targum manuscripts begin the passage with an imperative verb. However, Targum manuscript prefers to use the expression “heed”⁶² while LXX using the same expression with MT “hear.”⁶³ These expressions of “heed” in Targum as well as “hear” in MT and LXX, occur three times in the same passage. Both Targum and LXX support the idea of MT which God speaks to his people concerning the covenant that he has sworn with Judah’s forefathers but unfortunately was broken by them.

⁵⁵Köhler, *HALOT*, s.v. “קום.”

⁵⁶Holladay, *CHALOT*, s.v. “קום.”

⁵⁷Brown, *BDB*, s.v. “מָן.”

⁵⁸Holladay, *CHALOT*, s.v. “יָצָא.”

⁵⁹Cartledge, *NIDOTTE*, s.v., “שָׁבַע”

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Olivier, *NIDOTTE*, חֶלֶב

⁶²*The Targum of Jeremiah* (Michael Glazier, 1987), 120.

⁶³Both MT and LXX use the same expression “hear.”

Literary Context

Genre

In general, the book of Jeremiah is composed of prose and poetic genre. Concerning this particular passage, some scholars agree that this passage belongs to prose sermon.⁶⁴ This passage was introduced with the words of the covenant in which Jeremiah was hearing and to declare the covenant in which given by God to their forefathers in the day when he brought them out of Egypt. Those who do not “listen” or “obey” the covenant will be under the curse of God.

Literary Style

The passage begins with the imperative “hear” that is the commandment to listen to the covenant. The literary style of this passage depicts the result of obeying or disobeying the covenant. In this context, the covenant is not a new covenant but it refers to the covenant that already made in the past, particularly to their forefathers. However, the result of obeying and disobeying the covenant appears in the imperfect form. If they disobey, they will be cursed but if they obey, they will be God’s people. It denotes that God still demands their obedience to the covenant. The outline of Jeremiah 11:2-5 can be seen below:

V2. Hear and speak the word of this covenant

V3. The curse is the man who does not obey the word of this covenant.

V4. Obey to my voice and you will be my people and I will be your God

V5. I may fulfill the oath to give them a land flowing with milk and honey.

Intertextuality

The passage of Jeremiah 11:2-5 that is the covenant has some connection to the internal text of the bible. The covenant is made by the Lord himself with Israel’s forefathers (Jer 34:13). The aim of the covenant is to make Israel as God’s people and to establish his kingdom on earth (Exod 19:5). If Israel obeys the commandment they will be received blessings and opportunities as God’s treasured people. But if they disobey, they will be cursed (Deut 27:26).

The expression of “obey my voice and I will be your God and you shall be my people” is repeated three times in the book of Jeremiah (7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38). This repetition is significant for it denotes the relationship between God and his people. The same expression also is found in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27).

⁶⁴Louis Stulman, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Jeremiah* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011), 133.

Nevertheless, this expression occurs for the first time when God utters his promises of Deliverance to Israel when was settled in Mount of Sinai (Exod 6:7).

Most of them occur when God reminds this covenant with Israel. The expression also relates to God's desire of his people to not worship in idolatry and cleanse themselves for they are holy. God demands to establish his kingdom through Israel in which all the nations will know the Lord and worship him. This would be fulfilled if Israel hears and walk in all the way that God has commanded to them.

Theological Implication

Covenant

The preceding discussion has shown that God is the initiator of the covenant. The covenant that found in Jeremiah 11 "that I commanded your fathers the I brought them out of the land of Egypt," may refer to Exodus 19:5 when God gives the promise of deliverance through Moses to the people Israel in Mount of Sinai, "Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." Throughout the human history, God has never failed in term of fulfilling the covenant. However, the covenant is broken by human disobedience to the law and commandment.

Punishment

The concept of relationship in verse 4 "I will be your God and you will be my people" is contrasted to the statement in verse 3 "cursed by the man who does not hear the words of this covenant." The curse of verse 3 later explained in verse 11 "therefore, thus says the Lord, behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them." The punishment is a result of the disobedience to the covenant that has established between God and Judah's ancestors. There are two main results of the punishment. First, God will punish them through the disaster, in this context they will be destroyed by the kingdom of the north that is Babylon and God will not listen to their prayer.

Conclusion

The concept of Covenant appears in the context of Jeremiah 11:2-5 from which the covenant between God Judah's forefathers is mentioned. The background of study depicts the situation under the king of Jehoiakim who is evil and trust only to the neighbor kingdoms. With the practice of idolatry, the people of Judah are breaking down the covenant that has already established. Therefore, it leads them to the punishment that they will not able to escape. Although the conventional meaning of בְּרִית is "covenant," basically, the original translation of the word בְּרִית is not referred to the agreement but synonymous with law and commandment. The covenant has a strong connection to the oath between to partners. Oath consists of both a promise

and a curse. Therefore, if someone is breaking down the covenant then the oath is broken also. However, the promise is not conditional but the curse it is.

The main purpose of the covenant is to keep the relationship “I will be your God and you will be my people” in order to establish God’s kingdom on the earth. The obedience of the covenant results in prosperity and protection, however, the disobedience results in the punishment that is disaster and unanswered prayer. Covenant is given to Israel as the mark of the relationship between God and his people In order to establish his kingdom on the earth. The covenant, in this case, is not an agreement between God and his people but it is a command. God demands his people to listen and to walk according to the covenant. It means the people must obey the covenant in applying it in their lives. The covenant is established by the oath. It means, breaking down the covenant-breaking down the oath. The disobedience of the covenant results in blessings but disobedience results in a curse. Although the covenant is broken by Judah, God himself has initiated to guarantee the covenant between him and his people. He is the founder and the initiator has an authority to renew the covenant in which has broken by human disobedience.

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