

Jer. 27-28: Hananiah and The Ambassadors' Yokes
Ch. 27: The Message
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Overview

1. Dennis the Menace: His mother has her tea club over, and as she is passing out the tea to a particularly overweight woman, Dennis suggests to her, "Take two cups. Mama says that drinking tea will stunt your growth." Mama, meanwhile, turns bright red.

We have strong rules of etiquette about not insulting our guests, but what if the message they need comes from the Lord? In this chapter, Jer. brings an uncomfortable word from God to ambassadors who are visiting Zedekiah in Jerusalem.

2. Last time, we noted that 26-29 consists of three interchanges. In each,
 - a) Jer. presents a message of some sort;
 - b) There is hostile reaction to the message;
 - c) The Lord vindicates his prophet. (This emphasis represents a change of tone; up to now, Jer has been on the run.)
3. Here's how these sections appear in 27-28:
 - a) 27, Jer presents a general prophecy to many nations, ordering them to submit to Neb.
 - b) 28:1-11, the prophet Hananiah challenges the truth of Jer's words.
 - c) 28:12-17, God vindicates Jeremiah, both in word and in deed.
4. We'll do ch. 27 this week; the other passages next. Zooming in on ch. 27, there are three prophecies:
 - a) 1-11, Message to Foreign Ambassadors who are meeting with Zedekiah.
 - b) 12-14, Message to Zedekiah himself.
 - c) 15-22, Message to prophets and people re. temple vessels
5. Setting:
 - a) We are in Zedekiah's reign, so we know that Neb. (who appointed Zed.) is already in power over the west. After 597. 28:1 puts us in 594.
 - b) From secular documents, we know that in Dec. of 595 B.C. and Jan. of 594, there was a rebellion against Neb. in Babylon.
 - c) In v.3 we find ambassadors from the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon meeting with Zed.
 - d) From. vv.9,10,14,16, their prophets have told them that they will soon be free of Neb's yoke.
 - e) Reconstruction: The news of the rebellion has spread to the

Western Provinces, where the false prophets use it to speculate that Neb. is about to fall. The western kings have sent their ambassadors to Jerusalem to plan a coalition to throw off Babylonian control.

A. 1-11, Message to the Foreign Ambassadors

Like many messages of the OT prophets, this one is accompanied by a symbolic action.

1. 2-3, The Symbol.

It is a common image in the Bible (see Young's; 1 Kings 12 re. Rehoboam) and the ANE (e.g., ANET 297b) in general that a subject people wears the yoke of the ruler. Shows that they are subject to the king, just as an ox is subject to the farmer whose plow it pulls. Here Jer is to prepare these symbols of subjection, wear them himself, and give them to the ambassadors gathered in Jerusalem to take back to their kings. Certainly, not part of the ceremonies that Zed had planned for his guests! Like Dennis the Menace intruding into the tea party with his rude observation.

Applications:

a) When God gives us a message, we must not let anyone keep us from delivering it. The cultural norms of our society may oppose the delivery, but we must get the message across.

b) By wearing the yoke personally (v.2), Jer takes his place alongside Isaiah (20:2-3, walking naked and barefoot for three years) and Ezekiel (chh. 4-5, a variety of signs, including shaving his head) in his willingness to look strange and be unusual for the sake of communicating God's message. A challenge for us: if we are not willing to be God's "peculiar people," how can we expect them to get the message?

2. 4-11, The Message

Interprets the yokes as emblems of subjection to Neb, whose rule they have been conspiring to throw off!

The message itself has three paragraphs, giving a statement and two conclusions from it. First, it is God who has given all the world to Neb. God's role in this implies (second) that those who submit to Neb will prosper, and (third) those who rebel against him will perish.

The amazing thing is that this kind of talk comes right out of the ancient Babylonian documents, except that there Marduk takes the place of Jehovah. Jer's speech would sound to these people as though he were an agent of the Babylonian king.

a) 5-7: In exercise of my divine right, I have given all the world to Neb. God establishes first the general principle of politics, then the specific application in the case of Neb.

- 1) 5, general: God has created the world, and so may dispose of it however he pleases. The "I" at the beginning of v.5 is emphatic: "It is I, and no other, who has made the earth" God is absolutely sovereign over the affairs of the world.
- 2) 6-7, specific implications in the case of Neb. God has established his rule ... for a time, and in turn will pass that authority on to others, when the time comes (recall ch. 25). NB: The only ruler who will reign over the entire world forever is the Lord Jesus. After every other ruler has had his time at bat and has failed, the Lord Jesus will take the throne and show how it ought to be done.
- 3) The general notion should have been clear to Neb. He left an inscription celebrating one of his expeditions to Syria in Wadi Brisa, a deep gorge that opens into the Beqa valley a few miles north of Hermil in the north of Lebanon. There he writes of the region "from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea ... which Marduk my lord has entrusted to me." (ANET 307) Of course, he's got the wrong god!

But his error went even further. In Dan. 4:30 he takes all the glory for himself, and the Lord humbles him to teach him (cf. Dan. 4:17,25,32) that his rule comes not from himself, nor even from Marduk, but from Jehovah.

- 4) *Application*: Amid all the changes and strife in the world, we need to remember that God rules over all, and does not lose control.
- b) 8-10: Warning to those who reject Neb.
Disaster awaits those who reject my appointed ruler. Therefore, don't give heed to anyone who urges you in that direction.
- 1) Note that *God* will punish those who will not serve *Neb*. God not only has put him on the throne, but backs up his government with divine sanctions. "Sword, famine, pestilence"--compare the judgments of Lev. 26 under which Israel falls for breach of covenant. Holladay: This is the only place that Jer threatens pagan nations with sword and famine--to emphasize that it is Israel's God who brings these sanctions.
 - 2) Because of this danger, don't heed those who say Neb. will not prevail. The list of possible alternative sources of information includes the kinds of religious authorities to whom those in other countries would naturally turn for advice. But they are as wrong as the Judaeen prophets, and if you pay attention to them, the result (consecutive rather than final *lm(n)*, Jouon 169g, Waltke 38n25) will be

your exile and destruction.

- 3) Again, this is familiar ANE royal ideology. ANET 294b-295c (Ashurbanipal, 668-633, Assyrian period): "All the kings whom I had appointed broke the oaths sworn to me, did not keep the agreement sworn by the great gods, forgot that I had treated them mildly and conceived an evil plot. My officers ... arrested these kings and put their hands and feet in iron cuffs and fetters. The consequences of the oaths sworn by Ashur, the king of the gods, befell them. I called to account those who had sinned against the oath sworn by the great gods, and those whom I had treated before with clemency. And [my officers] put to the sword the inhabitants, young and old, of the towns of Sais, Pindidi, Tanis, and of all the other towns which had associated with them to plot. They did not spare anybody among them. They hung their corpses from stakes, flayed their skins and covered with them the wall of the town." Again, though, the human king has his eyes on the wrong god, and takes rather more credit to himself than is due.

- c) 11: Prosperity for those who serve Neb. Specifically, they will remain on their own land.

Once again, strong parallels, this time again from Neb's inscription (ANET 307b): "He who respects ... my royal name, who does not abrogate my statues and not change my decrees, his throne shall be secure, his life last long, his dynasty shall continue. Rain from the sky, flood water from the interior of the earth shall be given to him continually as a present. He himself shall rule peacefully and in abundance." The cosmic references show that Neb is looking to divine backing in this blessing.

3. *Application*: Jer casts his message to the ambassadors in terms that must have been familiar to them from their own treaties with Neb: the yoke of political submission; divine support of the king; divine sanctions and blessings on those who oppose and accept Neb, respectively. Why? Three important lessons for us in the political world of our day.

- a) Throughout the Bible, God uses literary forms with which people were familiar in order to communicate with them. Ultimately, the fact that he speaks in human language is an example of this accommodation.
- b) In this particular case, by adopting a political form, God enforces the "secular" relations into which we come. He sets up political authorities; Rom. 13: There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God, even though they may be sinful and oppressive. This can be a great comfort to us in times of oppression, because we know that God will permit only as much as he knows we can bear, and because we can trust him to even the score in due time.

- c) God is greater than Marduk. Neb thinks that his power comes from his pagan gods; God reminds Judah (and the other nations) that it comes from Jehovah.

No doubt, Jer's intrusion on this diplomatic conference stirred up the attention of the King, and Jer now turns his attention to his monarch.

B. 12-14, Message to Zedekiah

This is a very close summary and paraphrase of what Jer has just said to the foreign ambassadors: serve Neb and live, or rebel and die by the triple judgment; and pay no heed to the lying prophets (no magicians this time) of peace.

In telling the King to ignore the other prophets, he will no doubt attract their attention, so he has a message for them (and their broader audience) as well.

C. 15-22, Message to prophets and people re. temple vessels

This section begins once again with a summary of what God told the ambassadors, but then proposes a test to substantiate Jer's claims against the false prophets.

- 1. 16-17, The repeated warning: note the stylistic reordering of the parts. Two things are going on here simultaneously.

- a) Action and result:

- 1) "Serve the king of Babylon, and live."

- 2) "Don't listen to the prophets; why should the city be destroyed?" (Separated)

- b) Negated antonyms: the outer set is a double negative of the inner ("Don't heed the prophets" = "Submit to Neb").

The point is the same as that made to Zed and the ambassadors: your best hope is in doing what Neb. says.

- 2. 18-22, The test.

Background: Deut. 18:9-22, a promise that God will guide his people through prophets, culminating in one great Prophet, the LJC. The test of a prophet's authenticity, vv.21-22 (cf. Deut. 13:1-5), is that his prophecies do not come to pass. So Jer proposes a duel. (In ch. 28, his challenge is actually taken up.) Sort of like Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. NB: No such test was necessary to reject the diviners of the pagan nations, Jer. 27:9, since they are to be rejected out of hand (Deut. 18:9-14).

The background is that Neb has already taken two waves of people captive: one in 606 (when Daniel went), the other in 596 (including Jeconiah). In the latter captivity (2 Kings 24:10-16), he took all the gold vessels from the house of God. Jer here reveals that some vessels were left--the brass ones (like the laver).

Jer points out two easily distinguishable courses of action:

either Neb could be satisfied with what he has, or he could come back for the rest.

- a) 18, So let the prophets of peace pray that nothing more will be taken. This is far less than the peace that they have been prophesying; they need only insure that things not get any worse; no need for a return to blessing and prosperity.
- b) 19-22, On the other hand, Jer prophesies that even the brass vessels that remain will go into Babylon in the final round of captivity. Everything will leave before any of it comes back (but note the persistent promise that they will come back, in the Lord's time).

Summary

1. We should emulate Jer's courage in delivering his message to the ambassadors.
2. We should trust in the Lord's sovereign rule over all nations, even those that think they are under a pagan deity.
3. We should recognize that there are false prophets. Not every one who claims to speak for God, does, and it is our responsibility to discern the spirits and follow only that which comes from the Lord.

Psalm 119, "Oh How I Love Thy Law"

Analysis

27-28. seq p: The Ambassadors' Yokes rejected by Hananiah.

A. 27, Jer's general prophecy: submit to Neb.

1. quote p: Message to the foreign nations in reign of J'qim
 - a) quote f: 27:1 B.:/R")\$IYT MAM:LEKET Y:HOWYFQIM
B.EN-YO)W\$IY.FHW. MELEK: Y:HW.DFH HFYFH HA/D.FBFR HA/Z.EH
)EL-YIR:M:YFH M"/) "T Y:HWFH L"/)MOR
27:2 K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH)"L/AY
 - b) quote: prescriptive sequence p
 - 1) (:A&"H L/:KF MOWS"ROWT W./MO+OWT
 - 2) W./N:TAT./FM (AL-CAW.F)R/EKF
 - 3) 27:3 W:/\$IL.AX:T./FM)EL-MELEK:):EDOWM W:/)EL-MELEK:
MOW)FB W:/)EL-MELEK: B.:N"Y (AM.OWN W:/)EL-MELEK: COR
W:/)EL-MELEK: CIYDOWN B.:/YAD MAL:)FKIYM HA/B.F)IYM
Y:RW.\$FLAIM)EL-CID:QIY.FHW. MELEK: Y:HW.DFH
 - 4) quote p
 - a> quote f: 27:4 W:/CIW.IYTF)OT/FM)EL-):ADON"Y/HEM
L"/)MOR K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L
K.OH TO)M:RW.)EL-):ADON"Y/KEM
 - b> quote: induction p: Neb's divine appointment implies
that the way of survival is in submission to him.
 - 1> text: specification p: In exercise of my divine
right, I have given all the world to Neb.
 - a: general:
 - 1: 27:5)FNOKIY (F&IYTIY)ET-HF/)FREC
)ET-HF/)FDFM W:/)ET-HA/B.:H"MFH):A\$ER

(AL-P.:N"Y HF/)FREC B.:/KOX/IY HA/G.FDOWL
W./BI/Z:ROW(/IY HA/N.:+W.YFH
2: W./N:TAT.IY/HF LA/):A\$ER YF\$AR B.:/("YNFY
b: specific: result p
1: text:

A. 27:6 W:/(AT.FH)FNOKIY NFTAT.IY
)ET-K.FL-HF/):ARFCOWT HF/)"L.EH B.:/YAD
N:BW.KAD:NE)C.AR MELEK:-B.FBEL (AB:D./IY
B. W:/GAM)ET-XAY.AT HA/&.FDEH NFTAT.IY L/OW
L:/(FB:D/OW

2: result:

A. 27:7 W:/(FB:DW.)OT/OW K.FL-HA/G.OWYIM
W:/)ET-B.:N/OW W:/)ET-B.EN-B.:N/OW (AD
B.O)-("T)AR:C/OW G.AM-HW.)
B. W:/(FB:DW. B/OW G.OWYIM RAB.IYM W./M:LFKIYM
G.:DOLIYM

2> conclusion: contrast p: Those who submit to Neb will
survive; those who do not will perish.

a: thesis: induction p

1: evidence: ident p: Disaster for those who
reject Neb.

A. ident: 27:8 W:/HFYFH HA/G.OWY
W:/HA/M.AM:LKFKH):A\$ER LO)-YA(AB:DW.)OT/OW
)ET-N:BW.KAD:NE)C.AR MELEK:-B.FBEL W:/)"T
MELEK: B.FBEL

B. text: B.A/XEREB W./BF/RF(FB W./BA/D.EBER
)EP:QOD (AL-HA/G.OWY HA/HW.) N:)UM-Y:HWFH
(AD-T.UM./IY)OT/FM B.:/YFD/OW

2: conclusion: reason p: Ignore your prophets, for
they lie.

A. text: 27:9 W:/)AT.EM)AL-T.I\$:M:(W.
)EL-N:BIY)"Y/KEM W:/)EL-QOS:M"Y/KEM W:/)EL
X:ALOMOT"Y/KEM W:/)EL-(ON:N"Y/KEM
W:/)EL-K.A\$.FP"Y/KEM):A\$ER-H"M)OM:RIYM
B.FBEL

B. reason: purpose p

1. text: 27:10 K.IY \$EQER H"M NIB.:)IYM
L/FKEM

2. reason: L:MA(AN

a) HAR:XIIYQ)ET/:KEM M"/(AL)AD:MAT/:KEM

b) W:/HID.AX:T.IY)ET/:KEM

c) WA/):ABAD:T.EM

b: antithesis: ident p: Prosperity for those who
serve Neb.

1: ident: 27:11 W:/HA/G.OWY):A\$ER YFBIY)
)ET-CAW.F)R/OW B.:/(OL MELEK:-B.FBEL
WA/(:ABFD/OW

2: text: W:/HIN.AX:T.IY/W (AL-)AD:MFT/OW
N:)UM-Y:HWFH WA/(:ABFD/FH. W:/YF\$AB B./FH.

2. quote p: Message to Zedekiah: Submit to Neb.

a) quote f: 27:12 W:/)EL-CID:QIY.FH MELEK:-Y:HW.DFH D.IB.AR:T.IY

K.:/KFL-HA/D.:BFRIYM HF/) "L.EH L"/)MOR

b) quote:

- 1) HFBIYW.)ET-CAW.:)R"Y/KEM B.:/(OL MELEK:-B.FBEL
- 2) W:/(IB:DW.)OT/OW W:/(AM./OW
- 3) WI/X:YW.
- 4) 27:13 LFM.FH TFMW.TW.)AT.FH W:/(AM./EKF B.A/XEREB
B.F/RF(FB W./BA/D.FBER K.A/):AŞER D.IB.ER Y:HWFH
)EL-HA/G.OWY):AŞER LO)-YA(:ABOD)ET-MELEK: B.FBEL
- 5) reason p
 - a> text: 27:14 W:/)AL-T.IŞ:M:(W.)EL-D.IB:R"Y HA/N.:BI)IYM
HF/)OM:RIYM):AL"Y/KEM L"/)MOR LO) TA(AB:DW.)ET-MELEK:
B.FBEL
 - b> reason:
 - 1> K.IY ŞEQER H"M NIB.:)IYM L/FKEM
 - 2> 27:15 K.IY LO) Ş:LAX:T.IY/M N:)UM-Y:HWFH
 - 3> purpose p
 - a: text: W:/H"M NIB.:)IYM B.I/Ş:M/IY LA/Ş.FQER
 - b: purpose: L:MA(AN
 - 1: HAD.IYXIY)ET/:KEM
 - 2: WA/):ABAD:T./EM)AT.EM W:/HA/N.:BI)IYM
HA/N.IB.:)IYM L/FKEM

3. quote p: Message to the prophets and the people re. temple vessels

a) quote f: 27:16 W:/)EL-HA/K.OH:ANIYM W:/)EL-K.FL-HF/(FM
HA/Z.EH D.IB.AR:T.IY L"/)MOR K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH

b) quote:

- 1) negated antonym p via chiastic result p: Serve Neb and live. Why listen to lying prophets and die?
 - a> text-1: chiastic reason p
 - 1> text-1:)AL-T.IŞ:M:(W.)EL-D.IB:R"Y N:BIY)"Y/KEM
HA/N.IB.:)IYM L/FKEM L"/)MOR HIN."H K:L"Y B"YT-Y:HWFH
MW.ŞFBIYM MI/B.FBEL/FH (AT.FH M:H"RFH
 - 2> reason: K.IY ŞEQER H"M.FH NIB.:)IYM L/FKEM
 - 3> text-2: 27:17)AL-T.IŞ:M:(W.):AL"Y/HEM
 - b> text-2: (IB:DW.)ET-MELEK:-B.FBEL
 - c> result-2: WI/X:YW.
 - d> result-1: LFM.FH TIH:YEH HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T XFR:B.FH
- 2) condition: If the prophets are true, let them bring the temple vessels back.
 - a> if:
 - 1> 27:18 W:/)IM-N:BI)IYM H"M
 - 2> W:/)IM-Y"Ş D.:BAR-Y:HWFH)IT./FM
 - b> then: quote p
 - 1> quote f: YIP:G.:(W.-NF) B.A/YHWFH C:BF)OWT
 - 2> quote: L:/BIL:T.IY-BO)W. HA/K."LIYM HA/N.OWTFRIYM
B.:/B"YT-Y:HWFH W./B"YT MELEK: Y:HW.DFH
W./BI/YRW.ŞFLAIM B.FBEL/FH P
- 3) quote p: In fact, even more vessels will go to Babylon.
 - a> quote f: chiastic comment p
 - 1> text-1: 27:19 K.IY KOH)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT
)EL-HF/(AM.UDIYM W:/(AL-HA/Y.FM W:/(AL-HA/M.:KONOWT
W:/(AL YETER HA/K."LIYM HA/N.OWTFRIYM B.F/(IYR
HA/Z.O)T

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2> comment <HAK"LIYM> 27:20 ):A$ER LO)-L:/QFXFM
N:BW.KAD:NE)C.AR MELEK: B.FBEL B.A/G:LOWT/OW
)ET-{Y:KFVN:YFH} [Y:KFN:YFH] BEN-Y:HOWYFQIYM
MELEK:-Y:HW.DFH MI/YRW.$FLAIM B.FBEL/FH W:/) "T
K.FL-XOR"Y Y:HW.DFH WI/YRW.$FLFIM S
3> text-2: 27:21 K.IY KOH )FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT
):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L (AL-HA/K."LIYM HA/N.OWTFRIYM B."YT
Y:HWFH W./B"YT MELEK:-Y:HW.DFH WI/YRW.$FLFIM
b> quote:
1> 27:22 B.FBEL/FH YW.BF)W.
2> W:/$FM.FH YIH:YW. (AD YOWM P.FQ:DIY )OT/FM
N:)UM-Y:HWFH
3> W:/HA(:ALIYTIY/M
4> WA/H:A$IYBOTIY/M )EL-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH P

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B. 28:1-11, Hananiah's challenge.
See next study.

C. 28:12-17, God vindicates Jeremiah
See next study.