



To Know Yahweh is to Care for the Poor

Reflections from the Book of Jeremiah

Professor Wilhelm J Wessels
University of South Africa
Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies
PO Box 392, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, 0003
wessewj@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

In some passages, the Book of Jeremiah associates the plight of the poor with concepts such as 'knowing Yahweh' and 'justice and righteousness.' The main passage this article discusses, Jeremiah 22:13-17, concerns the abuse of power by King Jehoiakim in regards to the poor. This King is contrasted with his father, King Josiah, who has treated the poor and the needy befittingly with justice and righteousness. His actions are labelled as 'good' and linked with the concept 'knowing Yahweh.' This article argues the notion that it is not only a legal obligation to see that justice prevails for the poor, but that 'knowing Yahweh' implies an intimate relationship with Yahweh. This relationship leads to a moral understanding of his will, resulting in an ethical obligation to treat the poor with justice and fairness.

Keywords: Jeremiah, poor, justice and righteousness, King Josiah, King Jehoiakim, 'knowing Yahweh'

Introduction¹

David Baker (2009:315) asks the following questions: 'Are marginal people to be utilised or ignored, depending on their economic potential, or embraced as fellow-members of the community and enabled to live their lives to the full? Are justice and generosity the guiding principles of our economic activity, or greed and jealousy?' The Old Testament is not silent when it comes to the question of the poor and the needy. There are a number of words in Hebrew that is used to refer to the poor. In Jeremiah, the following nouns for the poor are used: עָנִי and אֶבְיָוֹן. The book of Jeremiah has a concern with the poor and addresses the issue in several passages (לַדָּל- Jeremiah 5:4; 39:10; עָנִי- 22:16; אֶבְיָוֹן- 5:28, 20:13, 22:16). Besides mentioning people such as the poor, the orphan and the widow, key terms in these passages are justice, righteousness, loving-care and 'knowing Yahweh.' Since the article is interested in the relationship between 'knowing Yahweh' (דָּעַת) and the plight of the poor, the main focus will be on Jeremiah 22:15-17, but reference will also be made to 5:4-5 and 5:26-29. The aim is to discuss how these concepts interrelate in terms of the poor and the needy and affect society in terms of social justice. The premise of this article is that when it comes to the case of the poor in Jeremiah, it is not only a matter of justice in terms of law, but also a relational issue. Knowledge of Yahweh it seems to also imply knowing what is right from an intimate understanding of Yahweh's will. First, a

¹ This article is a reworked version of a paper that was presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Cleveland Tennessee in the USA, March 8-10, 2018. The broader theme of the conference was *The Good News of the Kingdom and the Poor in the Land*.



discussion will be offered of Jeremiah 22:13-17 before the focus will briefly shift to Jeremiah 5:1-5 and 26-29. The approach adopted is to analyse the relevant verses, as they pertain to the subject of the poor, in their various literary contexts and where relevant, to pay heed to the social contexts as well.

Literary context of Jeremiah 22:13-17

The focus of discussion is on Jeremiah 22:13-17, more specifically 22:15-17. Before attending to this section, it is necessary to situate it within the context of the cycle of oracles on the kings in Jeremiah 21:1-23:8.

At the very commencement of the cycle on the kings (Jeremiah 21:1-23:8), the tone is set concerning the fact that justice is the criterion for good leadership, in terms of what Yahweh requires. The cycle on the kings of Judah, as mentioned earlier, is introduced in 21:11 with the particle ל. The heading shows that what follows concerns the 'house' of the king of Judah. Whereas verses 11 and 12a indicate that the dynasty of David is addressed, verse 12b sets out the key obligations for the kings: the exercising of justice (דִּינֹו מִשְׁפָּט) delivers people from the oppressor (וְהִצִּילֹו גְזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֶׂק). The exercise of justice, fairness and care seem to be the criteria for successful kingship as will be indicated clearly in 22:13-17. The last part of verse 12 spells out that the wrath of Yahweh will be unleashed like an uncontrollable fire in judgement.

Already in Jeremiah 21:12 it is enunciated:

12 O house of David! Thus says the LORD: Execute justice (מִשְׁפָּט) in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn, with no one to quench it, because of your evil doings (NRSV).

The very next oracle in the cycle on the kings, Jeremiah 22:1-5, is most probably a response by the Deuteronomistic editor as indicated in verses 21:11-12 (Carroll, 1986:417–418; Schmidt, 2013:11–12). This passage is a prophetic reprimand of the king and the people of Judah. The prophet is sent to the palace of the king with a command to take heed of the word of Yahweh. The vocabulary used in verse 3 corresponds closely to 21:12 with the mention of justice, righteousness, and deliver from the oppressor.

³ Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness (וַיִּצְדֵּקָה מִשְׁפָּט), and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place (NRSV).

This reiterates what was said in 21:12, but added to this, is the demand that violence should not be committed to foreigners, the fatherless and the widow and that innocent blood should not be shed. The passage is concerned with the appropriate social relationship between people in society and the obligation of the kings to protect the rights of the weak and powerless (Schmidt, 2013:11). Obedience to these commands would guarantee the perpetuation of the Davidic dynasty (22:4), but according to 22:5, disobedience to the commands of Yahweh will result in ruin for the house of David. According to the Deuteronomistic editor, the future of the David dynasty depends on the obedience of the Law.



It is clear from the cycle that King Josiah is the idealised king (Wessels, 2007:860–876). Josiah is hailed as the reformer of the religion and champion of a return to the covenant with Yahweh. He has also attempted to re-establish the former kingdom of David in terms of land expansion. At the height of Jeremiah's criticism against the kings, Jehoiakim is singled out as the epitome of failed leaders. His leadership is compared to King Josiah and he has failed dismally. It is said of Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22:15-17:

¹⁵ Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness

(מִלְשָׁפֶט וּצְדִיקָה)? Then it was well (טוֹב) with him.

¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well (טוֹב). Is not this to know me? says the LORD.

¹⁷ But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence (NRSV).

In Jeremiah 23:5-6, the cycle on the kings concludes with a presentation of how the future leader is envisaged. What is spelled out here is exactly in terms of where the kings of Judah have failed:

⁵ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness (מִלְשָׁפֶט וּצְדִיקָה) in the land.

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness" (יְהוָה צְדִיקֵנוּ) -NRSV).

The train of thought in this passage makes it clear that the kings of Judah have failed Yahweh, and the people of Judah with regard to the essential aspects of justice, fairness and righteousness.

Discussion of Jeremiah 22:15-17

¹³ Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages;

¹⁴ who says, "I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms," and who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion.

¹⁵ Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.

¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the LORD.

¹⁷ But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence (NRSV).

Jeremiah 22:15-17 is expressed in a context where the prophet laments the way King Jehoiakim exercises his kingship. Schmidt (2013:17) says in this regard, 'Das einleitende "Wehe", das der



Totenklage entnommen ist, zeigt auf, welche scheweren Folgen das angeführte Verhalten hat.' In Jeremiah 22:13-17, which Allen (2008:250) calls an oracle of disaster, the abuses of Jehoiakim are described. In verses 13-14 the prophet speaks on behalf of Yahweh to an audience, informing them of what King Jehoiakim's ambitions concerns by referring to his lavish palace project. It is also made clear that he achieved all of this by abuse of power to the detriment of his people. The following three verses (22:15-17) is an address of Yahweh to King Jehoiakim, contrasting his kingship with the just actions of his father, King Josiah. Verse 17 comes in the form of a rebuke because of his self-serving and inhumane conduct (cf. Lundbom, 2004:133). The whole passage makes it clear that King Jehoiakim's actions show contempt for justice.

The book of Jeremiah often uses the concepts *מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק*, translated as justice and righteousness, in combination. They refer to different aspects of justice, but because it is difficult to determine the difference in meaning, they are at times used interchangeable (Lundbom, 2004:111). It seems that these two words come from a wisdom background: *צֶדֶק* 'refers to natural wisdom based on intelligent observation and experience' and where *מִשְׁפָּט* 'refers to regulated or disciplined wisdom with particular directives for the maintenance of law and order' (Wessels, 1994:94–95). Vriezen (1974:421) is of the view that the term *מִשְׁפָּט*, in addition to having a legal meaning, also concerns the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Related to this view expressed by Vriezen, Deist (1986:188) argues the point that 'natural law' should be understood against the background of folk wisdom, meaning practical wisdom resulting from observation of what happens in life and from personal experience. In Deist's view, obtaining of practical wisdom by observation and experience might have been the foundation of wisdom literature.

In the cycle on the Kings in Jeremiah 21:1-23:8, for Jeremiah, King Jehoiakim is the epitome of injustice. It seems that he had the desire to be like an Egyptian ruler by building an extravagant palace as a symbol of his power. To achieve this he used forced labour without showing any concern for the workers. He abused the rights of the workers by not paying them, but instead enriched himself (Schmidt, 2013:17). Measured against the stated requirements of justice, righteousness and fairness voiced by the prophet and expected of leadership in society, this king failed in every expectation in this regard in the Judean society. It is explicitly stated in verse 17 that Jehoiakim's self-enrichment was the result of dishonest practices, oppression of people, acts of violence against ordinary citizens, even resulting in the shedding of innocent blood. This paints a picture of abuse of power, crying out against everything that testifies to a just society. As the leader of the government, the King was supposed to be the patron of justice and fairness in society (Houston, 2006:135). Baker (2009:200) agrees that the King has the highest legal authority and responsibility to exercise justice, however, he also points to the fact that although the King has the highest legal authority, he on his part was subjected to the law of Yahweh. In the lament expressed in 22:13-17, we find the exact opposite in that the King is the abuser par excellence and has neglected his responsibility as caretaker of justice.

In this passage an interesting, but significant comparison is drawn between King Jehoiakim and his father King Josiah. What is interesting is that everything that Jehoiakim is blamed for, his father is not. To emphasise the striking difference between the two leaders, Josiah is staged as the ideal king when it comes the norm that was laid down for good leadership: Josiah has excelled in practicing justice and fairness. Like a normal person he ate and drank, but in terms of the definitions mentioned before, he displayed the natural ability to discern what basic justice (*צֶדֶק*) entails, by observing what occurs in life. What he has experienced in life concerning justice, he has put in practice.



But even more than naturally having the wisdom of fair conduct,² Josiah showed the ability to adhere to the law in terms of practicing disciplined wisdom by preserving law and order (מְלֻצְפָּט). He is remembered for protecting the rights of the weak and the impoverished. King Josiah in the thoughts of the prophet Jeremiah is hailed as an example of a leader who lived a well-adjusted life. In the single concept, טוב, his life of justice and righteousness is summarised, implying things went well with him. Lundbom (2004:138)³ indicates that this expression alludes to Deuteronomy where the results of covenant obedience are encapsulated in the words ‘things went well with the people.’ Josiah’s legacy is judged to be exemplary, because his stance on justice, fairness and righteousness brought goodness to him and his society.

The passage in Jeremiah 22:15-17 concretely explains who the people are that really suffered under the unjust rule of King Jehoiakim- the poor and the needy. These people had no legal protection and rights or access to legal representation (Wessels, 2012:181–196; also Fretheim, 2002:319–320). They were vulnerable and easily exploited into acts of forced labour and oppression. If the king did not set the example to protect these vulnerable people in society, why would other privileged people in society care for them?

As mentioned above, in both verses 15 and 16 a summary declaration is made how Josiah’s attitude and actions are adjudicated -he has done good (טוב). It is a judgement that expresses life-giving potential and prosperity (Stoebe, 1971:654).⁴ In Allen’s (2008:250) words, Josiah ‘enjoyed a good standard of living.’ The observation is made that Josiah acted as he did because of knowledge (דַעַת) of Yahweh. The general meaning of the term implies knowledge gained from personal experiences (Lewis, 1980:366-367). This knowledge is the result of an intimate relationship with Yahweh from whence a clear sense of his will is grasped. Much of this experience stems from knowledge gained from observing how Yahweh acted in history and what he favours. People who have lived in close relationship with Yahweh come to an understanding of what he requires in terms of loyalty and obedience (cf. Lewis, 1980:367). This concept expresses intimate knowledge of what is right and wrong because of a growth in understanding of his will. Allen (2008:251) concludes ‘the way he (Josiah) served the community as king illustrates what it means in practice to “know” the moral will of God (cf. 9.24 [23]; 1 John 2:3-4;4:8).’

In Jeremiah 22:16 a rhetorical question is asked in regards to the care for the poor and the needy- Is this not to know me? Brueggemann (1998:200–201) states this fact quite radically when he remarks:

It is not asserted that knowledge of God leads to justice, nor, conversely is it claimed that social justice leads to knowledge of God. They are the same. One might, on the basis of this text conclude that the practice of justice is the very reality of Yahweh.

I share the significance Brueggemann assigns to the expression ‘He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Is not this to know me?’ However, his interpretation might create the impression that this is an ontological statement, which it is not the case. It is the creation of a sensitivity gained from the experience of a life in close relationship with Yahweh, of an understanding of his will (cf. Jeremiah 9:22-23; also Fischer, 2005:662). And doing what he requires is judged to be good and

² Schmidt (2013:18) asks the question whether a wisdom background is reflected here. It seems most likely that this is the case, since there are obvious traces of natural and practical wisdom to be observed in the book of Jeremiah and as argued implied by the use of the concept יָדָה.

³ Cf. Fischer, 2005:662.

⁴ Cf. also Deuteronomy 5:16; 6:18; 12:28.



life-giving. Craigie et al. (1991:311) also emphasise the aspect of relationship in coming to know Yahweh, but then equates this relationship as based on the covenant and the keeping of the covenant. The accent should however not fall on the obedience of the covenant obligations, but on the living relationship with Yahweh that results in understanding his will and what is morally acceptable to him. It is not just obeying an external code, but an intimate relatedness to Yahweh that leads to an understanding of what is pleasing to him and doing (living) it. The lauding of what Josiah did has not only the function to highlight in what the terms King Jehoiakim has failed, but underscores the fact that to know Yahweh implies to care for the poor and the weak in society. Verse 16 ratifies the title of this article: 'Knowing Yahweh' is equated to care for the poor, doing justice to those who are in need of it.

It is fair to infer from 22:13-17 that leaders who function in a world where the divine plays a key role, it can be expected that they will practice and protect what is legally required for a sound society. But more than this, that they should show an understanding of what should naturally stem from an intimate relationship with Yahweh. It is expected of kings and their administrations in Israel to lead and give guidance to the ordinary people. It is expected of good leaders to have an understanding of the needs and the concerns of their followers. They should take care of the well-being of their people, in particular, the vulnerable people and the poor. This would imply providing security, protection and a safe environment.

Besides emphasising the obligations of leaders to care for the vulnerable people as a legal responsibility, Jeremiah 22:16 has emphasised that care and protection of the rights of these people should flow from an intimate knowledge of Yahweh's will and wishes for social justice. These matters will be further investigated in the ensuing discussion of Jeremiah 5:1-5 and 26-29.

Jeremiah 5:1-5 and 26–29

5:1 Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look around and take note! Search its squares and see if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks truth -- so that I may pardon Jerusalem.¹

2 Although they say, "As the LORD lives," yet they swear falsely.

3 O LORD, do your eyes not look for truth? You have struck them, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to turn back.

4 Then I said, "These are only the poor, they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the law of their God.

5 Let me go to the rich¹ and speak to them; surely they know the way of the LORD, the law of their God." But they all alike had broken the yoke, they had burst the bonds.

26 For scoundrels are found among my people; they take over the goods of others. Like fowlers they set a trap; they catch human beings. 27 Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of treachery; therefore they have become great and rich, 28 they have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy. 29 Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD, and shall I not bring retribution on a nation such as this? (NRSV)



Jeremiah 5:1-5 and 26–29 forms part of the larger unit 5:1–31, and describes what went wrong in Judean society, causing Yahweh to act against it. This chapter is most probably the result of combining several larger text units to eventually form chapter 5 in its current form. The collection has been purposefully structured to form part of the collection of oracles that reflect on the threat from the foe from the north and coming disaster (Allen, 2008:37, 39). Jeremiah 5:1–9 describes Jeremiah's unsuccessful search for a person in Jerusalem who acts justly (cf. 5:1-5, 6-9). Chapter 5:10–19 unveils a false sense of security while a dreadful foe is threatening, followed in 5:20–31 by a passage focusing on the foolishness of the people of Judah (Diamond, 2003:543–559; cf. also Allen, 2008:72).

When Jeremiah 5 is scrutinised, remarkable parallels in content can be detected between Jeremiah 5:1–5 and 5:26–29 in terms of content, which is relevant for the discussion of justice, the poor and knowing the way of Yahweh (cf. Craigie et. al., 1991:95). Jeremiah 5:1–5 sets the scene of the prophet embarking on an excursion in Jerusalem in search for people who exercise justice (משפט), whereas in 5:26–29, verse 28 in particular, failure is described in terms of people not adhering to justice (משפט). In both these passages mentioned is made of the poor. In 5:4 the noun דלים (plural form) is used to refer to the poor or ordinary people and in 5:28 the poor is referred by the noun אביונים (plural form). It is important to note that as in Jeremiah 22:13-17, the issue of the poor featured within a context where the idea of justice was promoted.

In Jeremiah 5:26 the offenders are labelled to as 'wicked people' (רשעים); they are the big (גדולים) or important people, those who are wealthy. If 5:1–5 is regarded as being related to 5:26–29, then the רשעים (wicked people) are probably the opposite of the poor (דלים).⁵ The mention of the big people (גדולים) in 5:26 is likely a reference to the powerful people of the Judean society (Brueggemann, 1998:63). Their actions against the vulnerable people in the society are described as similar to those who trap birds and rob them of their freedom (5:26-27).

Another aspect that necessitates closer attention is the repetition of the concept 'justice' in verses 4 and 5, referred to as the 'justice of Elohim' (משפט אלהים). The concept משפט is not qualified in the same manner in 5:28. In 5:28, however, reference is made to the lack of justice (משפט) to the detriment of the poor (אביונים) and the orphaned (יתום). In 5:4 and 5 it is twice stated that 'knowing the way of Yahweh' (ידעו דרך יהוה) will result in 'doing God's justice.' Eems that failure to treat the poor and the orphaned justly would then mean a lack of 'knowing Yahweh's way'. Whereas in Jeremiah 22:16 the reference was to 'knowledge of him (Yahweh),' in the two instances in 5:4 and 5, the expression is 'knowing the way of Yahweh.' The logical question would then be what Yahweh's way is, and what is Elohim's justice? Scholars such as Thompson (1980:238), Brueggemann (1998:62-62) and Lundbom (1999:409) express the view that we should understand Jeremiah 5 in terms of covenant obligations. This would, therefore, imply observance of more formal obligations that accompany the covenant agreement. In Schmidt's view the expression 'the way of Yahweh' is not clearly explained, but it is possible from the context to deduce 'dass sie soziale Implikationen enthalten und als "Recht Gottes" also wieder theologische und zwischenmenschliche Aspekte umfassen' (Schmidt, 2008:143).

It has emerged from the brief engagement with the two passages that the concepts of justice (משפט) and knowing (verb ידע) the way of Yahweh are fundamental concepts for Jeremiah (cf. 22:15-16). These two concepts, however, also link up with what concerns and happens to the

⁵ Frick (1995:79–92) discusses six terms that are used for referring to the poor: these are עני, אביון, דל, רש, מקסור, and מוסר.



poor (דללים) in society. In 5:1-5 it is stated that the people in the upper echelons of society, literally the so-called 'big' people (גדולים), are primarily held responsible for practicing and conserving justice, as it relates to 'knowing the way of Yahweh.' Although the verb יָדַע does not occur in 5:26-29, the injustice done to the poor (אֶבְיֹוֹנִים) and the orphan takes central stage. It is important to note that the exclusive Jeremian word combination (יָדַע יָבוֹ - Fischer, 2005:252) used in Jeremiah 5:28, also appears in 22:16, but contrary to what King Josiah has done, it is said that the powerful (they who became big) and rich people in society have neglected their responsibility to judge the case of the poor and orphan or to defend their rights. Fischer (2005:252) argues that although the use of the word combination in 5:28 and 22:16 is uniquely Jeremiah, comparable formulations appear in Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17 and 27:19 where is מְשַׁפֵּט used. The same requirement of Israel is expected in both Jeremiah and Deuteronomy regarding the poor, orphan and the widow. In the case of 5:26-29, the so-called wicked people (רְשָׁעִים) have abused their power by exploiting the poor and the orphan in order to enrich themselves. To emphasise the matter of the obligation that the case of the poor should be adhered to and judged fairly, Jeremiah 5:29 states that Yahweh will, similar to what 22:17 also announces, punish those people who neglect their social responsibility towards the poor.

Conclusion

Lundbom (1999:409) presents the following formulation: 'Justice for the orphan (yātôm) and the needy ('byônîm) was written in Israel's law codes, sung in Temple psalms, and preached passionately by prophets who championed the cause of the underprivileged.' I cannot agree more with this statement. In this article, my research has shown that two aspects, in particular, are of note, the first that for Jeremiah the quest of the poor and the needy is a social justice issue. Secondly, Jeremiah links the care for the poor to the reality of 'knowing Yahweh.' These two aspects are squarely in focus in Jeremiah's encounter with King Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22:13-17. The ideas of justice and knowing Yahweh expressed in Jeremiah 22:16 can also be related to Jeremiah 9:23-24 where the issue of boasting is addressed. In these two verses knowing Yahweh is again linked to justice and fairness, but also to loving kindness. The care for the poor is a social obligation in a society interested in social justice. In this regard the requirement to care for poor forms part of the legal domain in society. Jeremiah 5:26-29 have also focused on the social responsibility in terms of what is right according to law. The social criticism of Jeremiah launched against the people of influence in society includes 'eine Kritik des Rechtsmissbrauchs ein' (Schmidt, 2008: 154).

The clear correspondence that the research has revealed between Jeremiah 5:1-5 and 5:26-29 has also brought to focus the fact that besides the legal responsibility, 'knowing the way of Yahweh' is a determining factor when it comes to caring for the poor and the needy. It is a legal and moral obligation from Yahweh to his people and their leaders based on the covenant responsibilities. In general the legal obligation to care for the poor is stressed. In my view there is more to it than simply to focus on the legal aspect., there is a relational issue that is overlooked. If caring for the poor in Jeremiah 22:13-17 is approached from a perspective of knowing and knowledge of Yahweh, then it concerns a relational issue rather than only a judicial obligation. This finding would then tie in with the notion that מְשַׁפֵּט emphasises the more structured legal requirements for justice to the poor, whereas צָדִיקָה would accentuate the relational aspect of living experience in relationship with Yahweh. It is in the relational aspect that religious communities should excel when it comes to the plight of the poor as a response to the loving-kindness, fairness and righteousness of Yahweh. It is in the domain of relational knowledge where the sensitivity of what Yahweh requires, compels people to respond to the needs of the oppressed, the weak and



the poor. In conclusion, the assumption regarding the poor made in the introduction of this article seems feasible and reasonable. The case of the poor in Jeremiah is not only a legal matter and a legal obligation, but also a relational issue that implies a moral obligation of knowing Yahweh's will.

References

- Allen, L.C. (2008). *Jeremiah: a commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Baker, D.L. (2009). *Tight fists or open hands? Wealth and poverty in Old Testament law*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Brueggemann, W. (1998). *A commentary on Jeremiah: exile and homecoming*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Carroll, R.P. (1986). *Jeremiah: a commentary*. London: SCM.
- Craigie, P.C., Kelley, P.H., & Drinkard, J.F. (1991). *Jeremiah 1 - 25*. Waco, Texas: Word Books.
- Deist, F.E. (1986). Texts with a legal perspective. In F.E. Deist & W.S. Vorster (eds). *Words from afar. The literature of the Old Testament*, 186–212. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Diamond, A.R.P. (2003). Jeremiah. In J.D.G. Dunn & J.W. Rogerson (eds). *Eerdmans commentary on the Bible*, 543–616. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Fischer, G. (2005). *Jeremia: 1 - 25*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Fretheim, T.E. (2002). *Jeremiah*. Macon, Georgia: Smith & Helwys.
- Frick, F.S. (1995). Cui Bono? History in the Service of Political Nationalism: The Deuteronomistic History as Political Propaganda. In D.A. Knight (ed). *Ethics and Politics in the Hebrew Bible*. Semeia, 79–92. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.
- Houston, W. (2006). *Contending for justice: ideologies and theologies of social justice in the Old Testament*. New York: T&T Clark.
- Lewis, J.P. (1980). יָדָעַ (yāda') know; da'at. Knowledge, cunning R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer Jr., & B.K. Waltke (eds). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 366–367.
- Lundbom, J.R. (1999). *Jeremiah 1-21: a new translation with introduction and commentary* 1st ed. New York: Doubleday.
- Lundbom, J.R. (2004). *Jeremiah 21-36: a new translation with introduction and commentary*. New York: Doubleday.
- Schmidt, W.H. (2008). *Das Buch Jeremia. Kapitel 1-20*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Schmidt, W.H. (2013). *Das Buch Jeremia. Kapitel 21-52*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Stoebe, H.J. (1971). 'טוֹב' Gut. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (eds). *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Band 1: 652–664.



Thompson, J.A. (1980). *The book of Jeremiah*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Vriezen, Th.C. (1974). *Hoofdlijnen der theologie van het Oude Testament*. 4de uitg. Wageningen: Veenman.

Wessels, W.J. (1994). A Theology of Renewal: A Perspective on Social Justice from the Book of Jeremiah. In M.W. Wilson (ed). *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, 92–109. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Wessels, W.J. (2007). Josiah the Idealised King in the Kingship Cycle in the Book of Jeremiah. *Old Testament Essays* 20(3): 860–876.

Wessels, W.J. (2012). Prophets and Ethics: A Study of Jeremiah 5:26-29. In D.J. Human (ed). *Psalmody and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics*, 181–196. New York: T & T Clark.

Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).