



Jeremiah 1.4-10: ‘Lost and Found’ in Translation and a New Interpretation*

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Abstract

Jeremiah 1.4-10 presents the first encounter between God and Jeremiah, an encounter which results in Jeremiah's commission to be a prophet of God. The text is characterized by two literary devices: (1) the use of stereotypical expressions, which have led exegetes to treat vv. 4-10 as 'the call proper' of Jeremiah's commission, and (2) the presence of two guiding themes—namely, verbal skill and physical strength. These themes highlight Jeremiah's qualifications as God's prophet, compel the reader to heed the text's content, and prepare him/her for the next two dialogues, which this article claims constitute Jeremiah's true call to the prophetic mission. The aims of this article are: to present detailed philological and thematic analysis of vv. 4-10; to evaluate the contributions of multiple translations to our understanding of the text and to offer a new translation; and to show that this text does not fulfill the requirements of 'a call proper' to Jeremiah. These insights dispel any remaining confusion about the meaning of Jeremiah's call proper.

Keywords: Word of God, hand of God, verbal skills, physical strength, warrior, prophet.

Jeremiah 1.4-10 presents the first direct encounter between God and Jeremiah, an encounter which resulted in Jeremiah's commission to be a messenger-prophet of God (Jer. 30.3; 36.1-3, 28, 32). The text is

* This study is dedicated to the memory of my teacher Professor Cyrus H. Gordon.

characterized by two literary devices usually found in call narratives: (1) stereotypical expressions, and (2) the presence of two guiding themes.

The stereotypical expressions are: direct divine confrontation with Jeremiah (דבר ה'); Jeremiah's prenatal predestination (יצירה בבטן); Jeremiah's objection (התנגדות); God's commission to Jeremiah and his reassurance (שליחות ועידוד); the symbolic touch of the hand of God on Jeremiah's mouth (יד ה'); the office—a messenger-prophet of God; the mission—a prophet to the nations (נביא לגויים); and the charge—to rebuke and to comfort the nations (להוכיח ולנחם). These elements have led exegetes to treat vv. 4-10 as 'the call proper' of Jeremiah's commission to be a prophet.¹ My claim in this article is that these expressions do not fulfill the requirements of 'a call proper' to be a prophet of God. Rather, in my opinion, these verses serve here as an introduction to Jeremiah's call proper, their purpose being only to authenticate Jeremiah's word and affirm his authority to speak in God's name.²

The two guiding themes present in Jeremiah 1 are verbal skill (דבר) and physical strength (הלך, קדש, שלח). These two guiding themes are

1. John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 3-8; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 89-111; P.C. Craigie, P.H. Kelley and J.F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah* (WBC, 26; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), pp. 1-18; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), pp. 8-24, and *Jeremiah. I. Chapters 1-25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 20-46; Abraham Malamat, 'Jeremiah Chapter 1: About the Problem of Prophetic Dedication and Prophetic Visions', *Iyumin* 21 (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency Publication, 1943), pp. 12-95 (Hebrew); William McKane, *Jeremiah: Introduction and Commentary* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), I, pp. 6-25; Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *Jeremiah* (The New Oxford Annotated Bible; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 961; John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 143-58, and 'The Book of Jeremiah', in *IDB*, V, pp. 798-99. For further details on call narratives, see N.C. Habel, 'The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives', *ZAW* 77 (1965), pp. 297-323, and Malamat, 'Jeremiah Chapter 1', pp. 18-35. By employing a similar language as for the call of Moses, Jeremiah may also claim that he is standing in the prophetic succession of Moses. See Rashi on Jer. 1.5, under the words נביא לגויים. For extended bibliography on the common pattern of commissioning of both prophets, see Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading*, p. 19.

2. An authority that both he and his hearers needed since the prophet is not only God's messenger to the people, but also their mediator before God. They need to believe that his words are divine. See Exod. 3.13; 4.1; 19.9. On the conflict between true and false prophets over the polemical issues of authority, see Jer. 23 and 27-28, and Tsemah Tsimrion, 'How to Differentiate Between True and False Prophets?', *Bet Mikra* 99 (1984), pp. 334-51 (Hebrew).

repeated throughout this encounter between God and Jeremiah. Their prevalence throughout this dialogue demonstrates a clear understanding between God and Jeremiah and highlights the skills required of Jeremiah to qualify as a messenger-prophet of God. This repetition of themes compels the reader to heed fully the text's content and prepares him/her for the next two dialogues (Jer. 1.11-14), dialogues which I claim constitute Jeremiah's true call to the prophetic mission.³

The aims of the present study are:

1. To present detailed philological and thematic analysis of vv. 4-10 as we contrast the biblical text (BT)⁴ with several translations: Targum Jonathan (TJ),⁵ an Arabic translation (AT),⁶ several English translations (ET 1-8),⁷ and a French translation (FT).⁸
2. To evaluate the contributions of these translations to our understanding of the BT and to offer a new translation / interpretation for Jer. 1.4-10.
3. To show that this text does not fulfill the requirements of 'a call proper' to Jeremiah to be a messenger-prophet of God in spite of all the stereotypical expressions found here.

Analysis of Verses 4-10

The dialogue's opening statement in v. 4, **יְהוֹיָכָן דָּבַר הוּא אֵלַי לֵאמֹר**, which is related in first person by Jeremiah, is notable in two ways: first, by its *structure*, in which the last word, **לֵאמֹר**, is added to the first part of the

3. For the analysis of Jeremiah's visions, see E.H. Roshwalb, 'Build-Up and Climax in Jeremiah's Visions and Laments', in M. Lubetski, C. Gottlieb and S. Keller (eds.), *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon* (JSOTSup, 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 111-35.

4. *Jeremiah: Biblical Anthology with 32 Commentaries* (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1951 [Hebrew]), IX, p. 95.

5. *Jeremiah: Biblical Anthology with 32 Commentaries*, IX, p. 95.

6. *The Holy Book: Jeremiah* (Arabic New Van Dyck Bible; The Bible Society of Egypt, 5th edn, 2003 [Arabic]), p. 797.

7. For convenience, the original Biblical Text (BT) and its various translations referred to in this study can be found in the Appendices to this study. Several English translations are referenced in the course of the present discussion (full details of which appear in n. 1): ET 1 = J. Bright; ET 2 = J.A. Thompson; ET 3 = W. McKane; ET 4 = W.L. Holladay (Hermeneia); ET 5 = Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard; ET 6 = *The Interpreter's Bible* (= KJV); ET 7 = R.P. Carroll (= RSV); ET 8 = *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (= NRSV).

8. *Jérémie, La Bible: Edition bilingue, traduction française sous la direction du Grand Rabbin Zadoc Kahn* (Paris: Librairie Colbo, 1967), p. 739.

verse (וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֵלַי), and second, by its *syntax*, wherein the first word וַיְהִי includes a *waw* consecutive and an auxiliary verb הָיָה.

This structure seems redundant since both phrases convey the imparting of God's word to Jeremiah. Moreover, this structure is repeated four times in the opening chapters of the book (1.4, 11, 13; 2.1). The book of Jeremiah contains many other statements in which only the first part of the verse is used (e.g. Jer. 2.4; 3.1, 6, 11; 6.6; 9.16, 22 etc.). Why is this statement repeated four times in this form in a sequential order, and why only here in the opening chapters?

The key to understanding these repeated introductory statements can be established by an accurate analysis of the word וַיְהִי (the *waw* consecutive and the auxiliary verb הָיָה), which conveys successive and persisting events. The auxiliary verb הָיָה (as in the Aramaic הוּא and Arabic كان), can be rendered as: התקיים, 'to exist'; נמצא במצב מסוים, 'to be'; קרה, 'to occur'; נעשה, 'to become'; התרחש, 'comes to pass'.⁹ The *waw* consecutive can be rendered as: 'then', 'when', 'that', 'while', 'so', 'for', depending upon the specific context and according to basic syntax. However, some scholars overlook these alternative meanings of the *waw* consecutive and translate it in general as 'and' (v. 4: 'and the word of the Lord came to me *saying*'). Some scholars even choose to drop the *waw* and the auxiliary verb altogether.¹⁰

In addition to the meaning of the word וַיְהִי in this opening statement,¹¹ the purpose of its emphatic fourfold repetition in the first two chapters of the book is to authenticate Jeremiah's claim to speak in God's name, and to reveal the text's literary unity.¹² Both the repetition and the structure

9. See BDB, pp. 224-27. See also the AT, which renders the first word as فُكِّنْتُ, 'used to' (see J.M. Cowan [ed.], *Arabic-English Dictionary* [The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic; Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1994], p. 809). See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (2 vols.; New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1950), I, p. 338. The conventional translation of every *waw* into English 'and', or the dropping of the word וַיְהִי, results both in redundancy and in the misrepresentation of the meaning of the Hebrew text.

10. For *waw* consecutive, see BDB, pp. 253-54. FT and ET 1-4 omit this word; ET 5 translates 'and'; ET 6 translates 'then'; ET 7-8 have 'now'. TJ translates this word as וְהוּא and AT has فُكِّنْتُ, retaining both the *waw* and the verb הָיָה, which render them the most accurate translations of the opening statement. Note also that in the AT this *waw* is translated to ف, the strongest form of the conjunction. See BDB, p. 254.

11. Usually this statement appears in the Bible as a conventional opening statement to convey the occurrence of successive events. See Gen. 21.1; Est. 1.1.

12. If each use of וַיְהִי is translated according to its specific context, it is possible to maintain the unity of the text while demonstrating the succession and persistence of

are deliberately used here, since they have distinct functions; they disclose that Jeremiah's encounters and conversations with God were continuous experiences throughout his life.¹³ They also indicate that Jeremiah's experience was not merely that of listening to a *voice*. In contrast with the false prophet who receives his revelation in a dream, Jeremiah as a true prophet retains his full power of consciousness;¹⁴ he is able to challenge God rather than suppress his feelings.¹⁵ Heschel asserts that:

In prophetic inspiration...the knowledge and presence of Him who imparts the message is the central, staggering fact of awareness. There is a certainty of having experienced the impingement of a personal Being, of another I; not an idea coming from nowhere or from a nameless source, but always a communication reaching him from the most powerful Subject of all, confronting the prophet, who is responsive and often participates in the act. Structurally, it may be described as a *subject-subject-relationship*.¹⁶

The phrase דבר ה' has several meanings of which one is prophecy or vision: מִשָּׁח, חֲזוֹן (2 Sam. 7.17; Jer. 18.18; Amos 3.8). In TJ it is clearly stated as פִּתְגָּם נְבוּאָה, 'word of prophecy'. The word לִצְוֹר usually has the meaning: 'that is', 'to say', 'to wit', 'namely', 'saying'. It can also mean 'commanding' as in Aramaic לְמִצְוֹר.¹⁷

Since the word of the Lord comes to the prophet unexpectedly¹⁸ and repeatedly, I suggest that the proper English version of the first dialogue's opening statement in v. 4 should read:

*It happened that the word of prophecy came to me from God, commanding.*¹⁹

God's appearances to Jeremiah. Hence the first opening statement in v. 4 should read: '*It happened that the word...commanding*'; the second opening statement in v. 11 should read: '*Then...asking*'; the third statement in v. 13 should read: '*When...came to me, a second time asking*'; and the fourth statement in 2.1 should read: '*But, the word of the Lord came to me also saying*'. See also Roshwalb, 'Build-Up and Climax', p. 116. Some scholars translate each statement as '*and the word...*', resulting in the fragmentation of the text. They then question whether there is any literary or historical connection among these opening statements.

13. Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1957 [Hebrew]), II, Chapter 45, p. 262. See also Jer. 25.3; Isa. 50.4; Amos 7.15.

14. A.J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (2 vols.; New York: Harper Torch Books, 1062), II, pp. 147-205

15. Heschel, *The Prophets*, I, p. 26.

16. Heschel, *The Prophets*, II, p. 169 (emphasis original).

17. Abraham Even Shoshan, *The New Dictionary* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Qiryat Sefer, 1949 [Hebrew]), I, pp. 201, 263; II, p. 577.

18. See Heschel, *The Prophets*, II, pp. 192 and 211. See also Num. 11.23; 23.3-4, and 23.16.

Jeremiah indicates in this opening statement that he immediately perceived that דבר ה' is prophecy (as TJ maintains, פתגם נבואה). He thus prepares the reader to expect in the following verses the typical characteristics of a call to prophecy such as the prenatal predestination of the prophet. Jeremiah consequently continues to report in v. 5 that God suddenly informed him that he was known to God before he was created, that he was singled out by God already before birth, and that he was destined to be an emissary of God to the nations:

בטרם אצרך בבטן ידעתוך ובטרם תצא מרחם הקדשתיך
נביא לגוים נתתיך

This verse is notable for its poetic structure, known as synthetic parallelism (i.e. the second hemistich adds to the first). Recognizing parallelism as a poetic device can aid in understanding or interpreting a passage. Specific words that may be ambiguous or used in unusual ways can be clarified or more narrowly defined by seeing them in the context of a parallel structure. The first two hemistiches in v. 5 each consist of four words with an *athnah*²⁰ at the end of the second hemistich, while the last line has only three words. However, all three hemistiches end with Hebrew verbs that have the same rhyme (ידעתוך, הקדשתיך, נתתיך). In the first hemistich we are told that Jeremiah was predestined to be a prophet before he was even created in the belly²¹ and the second hemistich adds that before he was born he was set apart for the same task. The question is: how do the different verbs enhance each other? Do they really convey two different ideas or only one?

A survey of the various translations shows that the first term ידע is generally rendered as 'I knew you', while the term קדש is given a host of different translations, resulting in much confusion. AT translates the first

19. See also Jer. 1.7. TJ's translation of v. 4 is the most precise: ויהוה פתגם נבואה מן קדם ה' עמי למימר, 'It happened that the word of prophecy from before God came to me commanding'. Note in comparison to the English translation in Robert Hayward, *The Aramaic Bible. XII. The Targum of Jeremiah* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), p. 46: 'And the word of prophecy from before the Lord was with me, saying' (emphasis added, here too the first word ויהי is missing).

20. That is, a distinctive accent in the Hebrew Bible, representing a pause or semicolon.

21. Note that the AT uses the word صورتك, a more sophisticated word for the biblical יצרתוך, 'I created you', which can also mean 'to imagine, to fancy, to conceive, to think', thus intensifying the idea that Jeremiah was predestined to be a prophet even before he was conceived. See Cowan (ed.), *Arabic-English Dictionary*, p. 619.

term as عرف, 'to get to know, to recognize, to perceive, to be aware, to be acquainted', and the second as قدش, 'to hallow, to sanctify'. So too FT, ET 6, 7 and 8 give the same meaning as the Arabic, that is, 'I knew you' and 'I sanctified you' (or 'consecrated you'). ET 2 and 4 render the first term, 'I knew you', and the second, 'I set you aside' (or 'apart'). ET 4 renders the first as 'I knew you' and the second as 'I dedicated you'. ET 1 and 3 render the first term as 'I chose you' or 'singled you out' and the second as 'I set you apart'. The TJ translation does not entirely convey the true meaning of these verbs in the Hebrew text since it renders the first term as 'I established you' (אֶתְקַנְנֶיךָ) and the second term as 'I appointed you' (זִמְנֶיךָ). To complicate matters further, the translators propose in their commentaries that the meaning of the second verb 'I set you apart' (or 'singled you out') refers to a sacred task. However, there is no indication in the entire Hebrew Bible that the prophet himself or his mission are considered to be sacred. Even Moses, the master of all prophets, was but a plain man. So far, the questions posed above remain unanswered.

The key to answering these questions will be found in v. 6, in Jeremiah's reply to God, which shows that Jeremiah fully comprehended God's words to him. Jeremiah's reply demonstrates that there are indeed two distinct reasons, appearing in a parallel order to God's words to him in v. 5, for selecting Jeremiah to be a prophet. As mentioned above, the two different rhyming verbs in the parallel hemistich are יָדַעְתִּיךָ and הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ. With the first verb, יָדַעְתִּיךָ ('I knew you'), which conveys also the meaning 'to know a person thoroughly, to perceive him intellectually, to recognize him' as well as 'to choose him', God indicates that Jeremiah is a suitable man for the task of prophecy, because Jeremiah (like Abraham in Gen. 18.19, where the same verb is used) will faithfully deliver God's words of prophecy. This verb thus refers to Jeremiah's potential rhetorical and poetical skills, the first required attribute for the task.²² With the second verb, הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ ('I set you apart'), which conveys also the meaning 'set you apart' as for war or to be a 'warrior', that is, 'I set you apart for a specific purpose, to be a warrior-prophet'. This verb thus refers to Jeremiah's potential physical ability, which is the second

22. See BDB, p. 394. See 2 Sam. 7.20; 1 Chron. 17.18. See also Jer. 12.3, in which the words יָדַע and קָדַשׁ appear together. For an elaboration of the meaning of the term יָדַע, see Heschel, *The Prophets*, I, pp. 57-60, as well as McKane (*Jeremiah*, p. 6), who renders יָדַעְתִּיךָ as 'single you out', since יָדַע is synonymous with בָּחַר ('choose'), as in Amos 3.2.

characteristic required for the task of prophecy.²³ As we shall see below in v. 6, these two requirements (skill in rhetorical speaking and physical strength) will be confirmed as the two essential characteristics that allow Jeremiah to meet the challenges of ‘a prophet to the nations’. The English translation of v. 5 can now be rendered as:

Before I formed you in the belly *I knew you* (for your verbal skills) and before you were born *I set you apart* (as for war). I appointed you *a prophet to the nations*.

Although TJ’s translations of these two verbs differ from the BT and do not indicate why Jeremiah was predestined to be a prophet before his birth. TJ does add a few words to this verse that may shed some light on the interpretation of the verse:

עד לא בריתך ממעין אתקנתך ועד לא אתיתא לעלמא ומינתך נבי משק בם דלומ
לעממא מניתך

Before I created you from the womb I established you, and before you came into the world I appointed you; *I designated you to be a prophet who will make the nations drink a cup of cursing*.

The additional words ‘I designated you to be a prophet who will make the nations *drink a cup of cursing*’²⁴ show clearly that Jeremiah was appointed to be a rebuking prophet to the nations. The astonished Jeremiah indeed knows that the task of a prophet to deliver God’s word, דבר ה, is dangerous, as is indicated in Jer. 18.18:

ויאמרו לבו ונחשבה על ירמיהו מחשבות כי לא תאבד תורה מכהן ועצה מחכם
ודבר מנביא לבו ונכחו בלשון ואל נקשיבה אל כל דבריו

So they said: ‘Come then, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, since instruction will not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor word from the prophet. Let us smite him with the tongue and not listen to all his words.’

23. BDB, pp. 872-73. Note especially Mic. 3.5, in which the words ‘prophet’ and קדש with the meaning of ‘war’ appear together in the same verse. In the book of Jeremiah, there are several examples of this term referring to preparation for war: 6.4; 22.7 and 51.27-28 (cf. Joel 4.9; Isa. 13.3). Most commentators translate the term הקדשתך as ‘consecrate’, that is, ‘to dedicate solemnly to a sacred commitment’. See also Yechezkel Kaufman, *The History of the Religion of Israel* (8 vols.; Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1952), II, p. 521.

24. See Jer. 8.14; 9.14; 23.15; 25.15-17; Isa. 51.17 (in contrast to ‘the cup of blessing’). See also n. 25.

Jeremiah, therefore, immediately declines the office of a prophet, using a twofold protest as did Moses.²⁵ He speaks, however, not modestly as did his predecessor, but boldly, adding to the word דבר the word נער, confirming the idea of the two themes (verbal skill and physical strength in God's words, as we shall see below on v. 5), saying in v. 6:

ואמר אהה אדני ה' הנה לא ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי

Most translators are aware of the multiple usage and meaning of the word נער in the Bible, though they follow Kimhi in their interpretation of this word and render it as 'a child', 'a boy' or 'a youth', translating this verse as: 'Ah, my Lord Yahweh! Look, I don't know how to speak. I'm only a boy' (ET 1, 2) or 'I do not know how to speak for (or because) I am (only) a youth' (ET 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; FT has *un enfant*; AT has *لاني ولد*, 'for I am a child'). It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that ET 3 not only translates this word as 'a young man' but also reverses Jeremiah's order of speech (in which he first used the verbal theme, דבר, and then the physical one, נער). ET 3 translates v. 6 as: 'I replied, Alas! Lord Yahweh, I am only a young man and have no skill of utterance'.²⁶ In contrast to the above translation, TJ translates the word נער as רבי, '[growing] boy, apprentice'.²⁷ He keeps Jeremiah's order of speech, but adds on to Jeremiah's short and concise answer the following:

ואמרת קבל בעותי ה' אלהים הא לית אנא ידע לאתנבאה ארי רבי אנא ומשרותי
עקא וגלו אנא מתנבי על עמא הדין

But I said: 'Receive my prayers, O Lord God! See, I do not know how to prophesy, because I am a youth (or an apprentice) and from my beginning I have been prophesying trouble and exile upon this people.'

25. Jeremiah's twofold protest is not unusual; see Exod. 4.10; 1 Kgs 3.7; Judg. 6.15. The prophet's protest seems superfluous, since he is confronted by God whose wish will prevail anyway; see Jer. 20.7; Amos 3.8. The purpose of this argument is, therefore, to give the prophet a chance to discern between dream and reality. Since he is a counselor (Jer. 15.19; 23.18) as well as a messenger, he does not hesitate to challenge God's intention.

26. I wonder why translators take the liberty to excise or transpose the BT. Surely they know the admonition of Deut. 13.1. Moreover, this suggestion is in contrast to the literary construction of the biblical text, as will be shown below.

27. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, II, p. 1442. See *Targum Onqelos* to Gen. 37.2, where the same Aramaic word is used in the description 'Joseph is seventeen years old'. Since Jeremiah belongs to the priestly family, *Onqelos* may be thinking of Samuel the boy-prophet who was also an apprentice in the temple; see 1 Sam. 2.11, 18; 3.1.

TJ's addition expresses again the idea that Jeremiah was destined to be a rebuking prophet especially to his own people, a task that Jeremiah who loved his people so much definitely did not want to fulfill. As will be shown below, the various translations in which the word נער is rendered as 'a child or a boy' and the word כי as 'for' or 'because' fail to convey the full meaning of the biblical text and also do not conform to its literary construction. This translation implies that Jeremiah expresses only one objection—'I do not know how to speak for (or because) I am a child'—whereas Jeremiah actually expresses two objections.

The *athnah* under the word דבר in v. 6 shows that Jeremiah expresses two objections, referring in a parallel fashion to the terms used in God's address to him: the first term concerns his verbal skill (ידעתיך), the second his physical strength (הקדשתיך). Jeremiah uses here two stylistic forms to express his objections. First, Jeremiah senses immediately the intended meaning of the word ידעתיך. He is aware of his lack of experience in speaking publicly, perhaps especially his inability either to rebuke the nations (דברי תוכחה), particularly his own people, or to comfort them (דברי נחמה).²⁸ He therefore adds the word דבר to the verb ידע and states quite factually: לא ידעתי דבר, 'I do not know how to *speak*' ('to prophesy'), that is, 'I am not experienced in either rebuking or comforting the nations'.²⁹

Second, Jeremiah understands the meaning of הקדשתיך as 'set you apart as a warrior' (not 'set you apart for a sacred task'). He therefore doubts his combative capability and is convinced that the task is physically beyond him. Jeremiah knows that a prophet's destiny is potentially dangerous, one that attracts hatred and violence. He is well aware of the task's responsibilities and the fate of other true prophets who preceded

28. The phrase דבר ה', 'prophecy', conveys two meanings, both 'rebuke' and 'comfort'. For the first meaning, see Kimhi on Jer. 1.6, and Rashi on Exod. 7.1, 'and so every word of prophecy implies that a man proclaims rebuking words'. The same idea is expressed negatively in Ezek. 3.26: 'And your tongue I will glue to your palate and you will become mute so you will not be a rebuking man unto them'. See also TJ, v. 6, where Jeremiah says: '...and from my beginning I have been prophesying trouble and exile upon this people'. Actually, the prophet is not only a spokesman to and for the people, but is also known to rebuke God. See Jer. 12.1; Job 23.4. For the second meaning, 'to comfort the people with promises of peace, security and well-being', see Gen. 37.14; Jer. 32.12; Zech. 9.10; Ps. 122.8.

29. Note that the word ידע appears in the Bible also with the meaning 'professional'. See 1 Kgs 3.7; 5.20; 9.27; Amos 5.16. Jeremiah actually says here: 'I am not skilled in prophesying'.

him;³⁰ understandably, he is fearful. His conviction that this task demands a physically strong person, one able to withstand the people's attacks against him, gives credence to an alternative translation for the word נַעַר, namely, 'warrior'.³¹ Also, the word כִּי now has the meaning 'am I?' (אִם־כִּי),³² which puts the phrase into the form of a question. This interpretation suggests that Jeremiah is actually asking rhetorically:

כִּי נַעַר אֲנִי

'Am I a warrior?'

30. See 1 Kgs 19.10; Neh. 9.26; Jer. 26.20-23.

31. See 1 Chron. 12.28, וַצִּדְוֹק נַעַר גִּבּוֹר חָלִל, in which נַעַר is a warrior; see also 2 Sam. 2.14; 2 Kgs 19.6. Rambam says: 'However, they said: "I am a *na'ar*". You know that in Hebrew Joseph was called *na'ar* and he was 30 years old, while Joshua was called *na'ar* and he was about 60'). See Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, II, Chapter 32, p. 241. To my knowledge, commentators are aware of the multiple usage and meanings of the word נַעַר in the Bible (see, e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, pp. 93-94; and Malamat, 'Jeremiah Chapter 1', pp. 26-27), but follow Kimhi in their interpretation that this word means 'a child', 'a boy' or 'a youth'. They also translate the word כִּי, as 'because' or 'for', causing the passage to read: "I don't know how to speak, because (or for) I am only a child (or a youth)". See Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, *Jeremiah*, pp. 7, 10, and others. This meaning implies that Jeremiah refuses the task because of his youth, thus suggesting that the prophet raises only one objection, his inability to express himself publicly on account of his youth. This suggestion may be an appealing one and 'worthy of saga', but according to the text the term's other meanings, for example, 'apprentice' or 'warrior', are more appropriate. Since Jeremiah came from a priestly family, he may have meant that he was only an apprentice in the house of the Lord and did not deserve such honor (see Exod. 33.11; 2 Sam. 3.1; 2 Kgs 9.4; in all three places the meaning of נַעַר is 'apprentice'). Thus the verse might be read as Jeremiah's expressing humbly his inadequacy and sense of himself as a simple man. In contrast, both God's and Jeremiah's words indicate that he is a mature man with an awareness of both the responsibilities and potential dangers of his mission. If Jeremiah meant to express his objection on account of his youth, he would have said נַעַר אֲנִי כִּי קָטָן, as in Amos 7.2, 5, or 1 Kgs 3.7, וְאֲנִי נַעַר קָטָן לֹא אֶדְעֶה צִוְּיֹת וְכֹחַ, Why, one might ask, should God want to choose a child to accept such a trying task? I know of no other biblical example in which a child was appointed to be a messenger-prophet, and one to all the nations. While Zech. 2.8 also refers to the prophet as נַעַר, there is no indication there that he was a child. See also the meaning of נַעַר as 'soldier' or 'servitor' in Ugaritic literature; cf. C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965), p. 445.

32. אִם־כִּי (= כִּי?) usually appears at the beginning of a rhetorical question when the expected answer is negative. See Isa. 36.19. The word כִּי, according to Resh-Lakish, has four principal meanings, one of which is אִם־כִּי with an interrogative meaning: 'am I?', 'whether' or 'is it?'. The book of Jeremiah abounds in rhetorical questions, including: 2.11, 24, 31, 32; 3.1; 5.22, 29; 7.19; 8.4; 12.5; 13.23; 14.22 and 15.12. It is, therefore, possible that he used this style here too. See also Job 5.12, in which a rhetorical question begins with the word אִם.

By rendering the word נער as ‘warrior’ and posing a rhetorical question, Jeremiah emphasizes now his physical weakness, in addition to his lack of rhetorical skill.³³ Jeremiah’s twofold protest demonstrates not only his understanding of the prophet’s responsibilities, but also his ability to challenge authority. Thus the English translation of v. 6 should read as follows:

But, I said: ‘Alas, Lord God, behold! I do not know how to *speak* (to prophesy). *Am I a warrior?*’

God’s answer to Jeremiah in v. 7, וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי אֵל תֹּאמַר נֶעַר אֲנִי, is rendered according to all the translations as follows: ‘But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth [or “a boy” or a “child”]...”’ (see the Appendix). Accordingly, God is repeating Jeremiah’s word as if stating factually his inability to talk on account of his young age. On the contrary, in my opinion, God also employs in his answer to Jeremiah in v. 7 a rhetorical question and uses the same words scornfully. If we construe the word תֹּאמַר in v. 7 as ‘ask’,³⁴ the translation of this verse now reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי אֵל תֹּאמַר נֶעַר אֲנִי

But God said to me: ‘Do not *ask* “Am I a warrior?”’

The repetition of Jeremiah’s rhetorical question by God further emphasizes that Jeremiah fully understood God’s intention and that God recognized Jeremiah’s physical inadequacy. Nonetheless, God’s message is to be transmitted through Jeremiah.³⁵ However, now in v. 7, God reverses the order of speech. He first addresses Jeremiah’s second concern, that of his physical strength. Then God addresses Jeremiah’s first concern, that

33. The idea of poetical skills and combative strength is not strange to the Bible. King David was not only a warrior, but also a poet, a musician and a dancer. See C.H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), p. 299.

34. See Gen. 16.13; 18.17; 21.7; 43.27, 29; 46.33; Exod. 3.13; Deut. 20.8; Isa. 49.21; Jer. 1.11, 13; Ps. 79.10; Job 7.4; 9.12; Est. 6.6; to cite some biblical examples in which the word תֹּאמַר suggests the meaning ‘ask’. Note that all the English translations render this word as ‘say’ only—‘Do not say...’—which is tedious and monotonous. Note also that God’s answer to Moses’ objection is also a rhetorical question (Exod. 4.11). See also Judg. 6.11, in which the commission is formulated as a direct imperative command and a rhetorical question in the perfect tense.

35. Of course, Jeremiah is not strong, but is it not God’s *modus operandi* throughout the Bible to deliver his strength through a relatively weak servant?

of his lack of verbal skill. God not only denies Jeremiah the right to decline becoming a prophet, but also commands him to *go* to wherever he will send him and to *speak* whatever God commands him. Providing that this כִּי in v. 7 is emphatic,³⁶ the translation reads:

כִּי עַל עַל אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁלַּח תֵּלֵךְ וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֲצַוְךָ תִּדְבֹּר

Indeed, to wherever I shall send you, you shall go and whatever I shall command you, you shall speak.

God not only rejects Jeremiah's complaints of physical and verbal inadequacy, in reverse order, to emphasize the equal importance and necessity of both themes to the subject matter, but also compels Jeremiah to accept his prophetic assignment. However, understanding Jeremiah's fears, God reassures him accordingly, in a parallel structure of the new order: first (physical theme), God promises to protect and to rescue him:

אַל תִּירָא מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי אֲתָךְ אֲנִי לְהַצִּלְךָ נָא ה'

Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

These words of encouragement to Jeremiah, along with God's reassurance in Jer. 1.17-19, clearly express that the more appropriate meaning of the word נָעַר here is 'warrior'. Both Rashi and Kimhi associate the girding of the loins in v. 17, תִּאָּזֵר מִתַּנָּךְ, with speedy and decisive action; Rashi reads: 'like a soldier on the eve of battle' (לְשׁוֹן זֶרֶוּן כְּאִישׁ חֵיל). Having no choice, Jeremiah prepares himself for battle. He will, however, fight with words.

Second (verbal theme), God arms Jeremiah with his own words by performing a transformative action. He touches Jeremiah's mouth with his hand, to indicate that it is God's words that are placed in Jeremiah's mouth:

וַיִּשְׁלַח ה' אֶת יָדוֹ וַיַּגֵּעַ עָלַי פִּי וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי הִנֵּה נָתַת דְּבָרִי בְּפִיךָ

Then God stretched out his hand and touched my mouth and God said to me: 'I have put my words (prophecy) in your mouth' (v. 9).

The symbolic touch of God's hand on Jeremiah's mouth has compelled scholars to conclude their analysis of the first dialogue by claiming that it brings 'the call proper' to a thematic climax. Carroll, for instance, speaks of 'the possession and delivery of the divine word at the divine com-

36. See Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, p. 416. Note also that this כִּי appears in the Bible often after a question implying surprise or deprecation: Gen. 20.9; 1 Sam. 17.26; 22.8; Isa. 22.1; Job 7.12; 10.5; 13.25; 15.12.

mand...'³⁷ However, 'The hand of God' does not necessarily play a part in the actual call to prophecy; it is merely a conventional expression whose purpose is to validate the words of the one who claims that God chose him to be a messenger-prophet. Rashi states:

'The hand of God': any expression of 'hand' that is mentioned in this book and in all prophetic language connotes 'force' since the prophecy overpowers him against his will as a person who is frenzied.³⁸

Note also that TJ omits the word 'hand' and renders v. 9 thus:

Then God sent the words of his prophecy and set them in order in my mouth.

God's twofold assurances (physically and verbally in vv. 8-9) completely overrule Jeremiah's objections, implying that Jeremiah now possesses neither human words nor human strength, but divine ones.³⁹ These assurances, which are characteristic of call narratives, essentially repeat the commission's essence. At this point, in v. 10, God defines the mission's goal by adding a specific charge:

The mission: ראה הפקדתך היום הזה על הגוים ועל הממלכות

See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms.

The charge: לנתוש ולנתוץ ולהאבד ולהרוס לבנות ולנמוע

To root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

This command, which contains both destructive and constructive terms, conveys a message of doom and salvation, as McKane states:

37. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, p. 101. See also Malamat, 'Jeremiah Chapter 1', pp. 11, 30.

38. Rashi on Ezek. 1.3, and see also 1 Kgs 18.46; 2 Kgs 3.15; Isa. 8.11. For the word יד ('hand') being but a symbol, see also *Nedarim* 1. Other expressions, such as 'eating the scroll', in Ezek. 3.2, suggests the same idea. The image's action does not take place, in fact, but simply lends validity to the prophecy. In the case of Ezek. 3.2, Abravanel says he means that he heard and received and learned it well. See also Num. 11.25. The spirit which envelopes him does not make him a prophet; see Kaufman, *The History of the Religion of Israel*, II, pp. 522-24, and Heschel, *The Prophets*, I, p. 114, and Maimonides, *Guide*, II, Chapter 45, p. 263.

39. Finally, verbal skill and physical strength, as the necessary credentials that qualify a true prophet to speak in God's name, are also attested to in Isa. 49.4; Jer. 23.21; Ezek. 2.8-9; 3.1-3, 7-9, 25-26; Dan. 10.16-19; Job 37.23, and especially, in the conflict between Micah and the false prophets. In that narrative, Micah says: וְאֵלֶּם אֲנִי מִלֵּאדִי כֹחַ אֶת רוּחַ ה' וּמִשְׁפָּט וּגְבוּרָה לְהַגִּיד לְעֵקֶב פֶּשְׁעוֹ וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל חַטָּאתוֹ ('But I, truly, am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin', Mic. 3.8). With the words מִשְׁפָּט וּגְבוּרָה, Micah means that it is God-given strength which enables him openly to rebuke his people.

The true prophet will never secure release from a tension between warning and promise, demolition and construction. It is a balance which he will have to maintain, a tug of war which he will have to endure.⁴⁰

The table appearing overleaf demonstrates the literary construction of the two themes in God's first address to Jeremiah.

The skillfully constructed dialogue reveals a mutual understanding and close relationship between God and Jeremiah (Jer. 12.3) and fully supports God's selection of Jeremiah to the appointed office of prophecy. Jeremiah's twofold objection, *לֹא יָדַעְתִּי דְבַר כִּי נֶעַר אֲנִי* ('I do not know how to speak [prophecy]. Am I a warrior?'), replies directly to the same two themes (A = verbally, *יָדַעְתִּי*, and B = physically, *הַקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ*) of God's address to him in v. 7. God overrules Jeremiah's protest, expressing in the same words and the identical themes, but in a chiastic order for poetic effect (emphasis and variations), that is, God answers the last objection (B = physically) first, and the first one (A = verbally) last. God's response consists of two parts: (1) God commands Jeremiah to obey his mission (B1), and to speak (A1), and (2) God encourages Jeremiah by words (B2) and by a deed (A2) in a parallel arrangement of the new order. God's response ends with a description of the office (C), which includes the mission (C1), in parallel to B1 and B2, indicating the physical strength needed to confront the nations, and adds the charge (C2), in parallel to A1 and A2, indicating the verbal skill needed to proclaim God's words to the nations.⁴¹

In conclusion, I would claim that vv. 4-10 function only as an introduction to Jeremiah's actual call to office because this text has so far described merely a public declaration of Jeremiah's authority to follow in the footsteps of Israel's other classical messenger-prophets.⁴²

40. McKane, *Jeremiah*, p. 11.

41. For my new, full translation/interpretation of the biblical text, see Appendix 4.

42. This general declaration of a commission, therefore, anticipates the next, climactic step; in which the prophet experiences a theophany and is commanded to go speak for a specific cause. A similar observation is found also in Carroll's commentary (*Jeremiah*, p. 101): '[T]he story is better read as an account of his commissioning to a specific task: being a prophet to the nations. This interpretation fits the pattern of the *commissioning* narratives and it is more appropriate to describe such accounts as commissions to perform certain tasks... Being a prophet may be a by-product of obeying such commissions or a perspective introduced into the stories by the editors, but a "call" does not make a prophet. What makes a prophet is the possession and delivery of the divine word at the divine command... The distinction between a commission and a "call" may be regarded as rather subtle, but a commission is a very specific task whereas a "call" is an abstraction.' It is obvious from the above that there is confusion among most commentators as to the exact meaning of the terms 'commission' and 'call'.

Table 1. *The Literary Construction of the Two Scenes in God's First Address to Jeremiah*

<i>God to Jeremiah</i> A = Verbally v. 5	<i>Jeremiah to God</i> A = Verbally v. 6	<i>God to Jeremiah</i> B = Physically v. 5	<i>Jeremiah to God</i> B = Physically v. 6
ידעתיך 'I know you (mainly for your ability to speak, to prophesy)'	לא ידעתי דבר 'I do not know how to speak' ('I am not experienced in prophesying, that is, neither to rebuke [דבר] הוֹכַחָה nor to comfort [דבר] נִחַמָּה)	הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ 'I set you apart (as a warrior-prophet)'	כִּי עַמִּי מִלְחָמָה 'Am I a warrior?'
<i>God to Jeremiah</i> B1 = Physically v. 7	<i>God to Jeremiah</i> B2 = Physically v. 8	<i>God to Jeremiah</i> A1 = Verbally v. 7	<i>God to Jeremiah</i> A2 = Verbally v. 9
אֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַתָּה מִלְחָמָה כִּי אֵל כָּל מִלְחָמָה "Do not ask: "Am I a warrior?" Indeed, to wherever I send you, you will go'	אֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַתָּה מִלְחָמָה כִּי אֵל כָּל מִלְחָמָה 'Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord'	וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶמְצָא הַדָּבָר 'And whatever I will command you, you will speak'	הִנֵּה נִתְּנָה דְּבַר בְּפִי 'See, I have put my words in your mouth'

C = The Office v. 5 נבא לנאיים נהדך 'I appointed you a prophet to the nations'		C1 = The Mission v. 10 ראה הפקדוןך היום הזה על הנאיים ועל הממלכות 'See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms' C2 = The Charge v. 10 לנתש ולנתון ולהאבד ולהרוס לבנות ולנטות 'to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant'
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1. (G to J) A = Verbally (J to G) A = Verbally

2. (G to J) B = Physically (J to G) B = Physically

3. (G to J) B1 = Physically (G to J) B2 = Physically

4. (G to J) A1 = Verbally (G to J) A2 = Verbally

A legitimate prophet is endowed with the divine gifts of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. As Heschel states: 'Prophetic inspiration involved participation not merely receptivity of communication'.⁴³ However, thus far there is no indication that Jeremiah's words are derived solely from the revelation that he has received.⁴⁴ Moreover, the nature of his mission and the decree (v. 10) are quite obscure:

1. They include all nations, a rather general term;
2. They express contradictory messages: 'to destroy and to build', doom and comfort;⁴⁵
3. They delineate a long-term goal of the prophet's commission and not the immediate, specific one that he expected to hear.⁴⁶

Yet Jeremiah, who is compelled to deliver a veiled message, remains silent. The text does not record whether he again protests or whether he accepts the task. One wonders how it is that such a questioning man has nothing further to say.⁴⁷ Jeremiah's silence speaks for itself.⁴⁸ One senses not only his doubts that he may be dreaming, or that the people will not believe his mission, but also his fears that the task is overwhelming, extremely dangerous and demanding. Jeremiah needs to be reassured:

1. That he is the suitable man, graced with divine skills for the task;
2. That his prophecies will be fulfilled in his lifetime;⁴⁹
3. That the Caller will identify himself by revealing his name and uttering an explicit decree.⁵⁰

43. Heschel, *The Prophets*, II, p. 214.

44. Jeremiah admits several times that he stood in the council of God and heard his words; see Jer. 23.9, 18 and 22.

45. See Jer. 18.7 and 9 where the same terms are clearly used in a separate mission—either the one or the other.

46. The general message 'to build and to destroy', including all nations, is parallel to Moses' in Exod. 3.7-12. Both are intended for ultimate fulfillment, rather than connoting immediate commission. The prophets always addressed their message to a contemporary situation. Several scholars also point out that some elements are missing in this narrative, such as the temporal background for Jeremiah's call; in particular, no specific case and decree are pronounced. See Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, *Jeremiah*, p. 8, and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, p. 101.

47. See, e.g., 1 Sam. 3.10-11; Isa. 6.8 (where both prophets clearly accepted their task).

48. This is in keeping with the biblical artistry, of letting 'the Divine voice echo instead of the human voice'. See A. Steinman, 'The Story of the Binding of Isaac', in G. Alkoshiy (ed.), *Biblical Anthology* (Tel-Aviv: Devir Publication, 1954), pp. 48-52 (Hebrew).

49. Otherwise he would be considered a false prophet; Exod. 4.1, 5, 8, 9; 19.9; Num. 14.11; Deut. 18.22; Ezek. 13.6-7.

Although filled with doubt, Jeremiah is prepared to receive divine revelation through which he will become a prophet. God will reveal to him a symbol, together with its interpretation, will identify himself by name and will utter an explicit decree.⁵¹ At this point, Jeremiah recounts the experiences of the two visions which came to him in order to ease his doubts and to reassure both himself and the reader of the Caller's identity. I propose that these two visions, vv. 11-14, followed by the pronouncement of the will of God, vv. 15-19; 2.1-3, are 'the call proper' of Jeremiah to be a messenger-prophet of God.⁵² They illuminate Jeremiah's theophanic experiences gradually, since:

Man must gradually train his intellectual power to achieve the perception of the Divine, its light increasing as the dawn shines forth.⁵³

50. As in the identical experience found in call narratives of the canonical prophets: Exod. 3.14-22; Isa. 1.9; Ezek. 2.3.

51. See also Amos 7.1-9 and 8.1-3. The symbol is the background to the prophecy, for the essence of prophecy is not a vision, but a revealed interpretation by God himself, not what the prophet sees but what he hears. See Kaufman, *The History of the Religion of Israel*, II, pp. 510 and 521.

52. For the analysis of Jeremiah's visions, see Roshwalb, 'Build-Up and Climax', pp. 116-29.

53. Rabbi Bahya Ben Asher, *Commentary on the Torah* (ed. H.D. Shevel; 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1937 [Hebrew]), II, pp. 21-22. This is his commentary on Moses' first revelation, Exod. 3.1.

Appendix 1. *A Synopsis of the Biblical Text, Targum Jonathan, and an Arabic and a French Translation*

<i>French Translation</i> (FT)	<i>Arabic Translation</i> (AT)	<i>Targum Jonathan</i> (TY)	<i>Biblical Text</i> (BT)
4 La parole de l'Eternel me fut adressée en ces termes :	4 فَكَانَتْ كَلِمَةُ الرَّبِّ إِلَيَّ قَائِلًا:	ד יהוה פתחם נבואה מן קדם ה' עמי למימרי:	ד יהוה דבר ה' אלי לאמר:
5 « Avant que je t'eusse formé dans le sein de ta mère, je te connaissais; avant que tu fusses sorti de ses entrailles, je t'avais consacré, je t'avais désigné comme prophète des nations. »	5 "قَبْلَمَا صَوَّرْتُكَ فِي الْبَطْنِ عَرَفْتُكَ، وَقَبْلَمَا خَرَجْتَ مَتِ الرَّحْمِ قَدَسْتُكَ. جَعَلْتُكَ نَبِيًّا لِلشُّعُوبِ".	ה עד לא ברייך ממעין אסתקנתך ועד לא אידעא לעלמא זמנתך נבי משקן במ בלעז לעממיא מנתך:	ה במרם אצורך (אצורך ק) בכמן ידעתך ובמרם הוצא מרחם המדשדשך נביא לגרים נמתך:
6 Et je m'écriais : « Eh quoi Eternel, Dieu, je ne sais pas parler, car je suis un enfant. »	6 اَعْرَفُ أَنْ أَتَكَلَّمَ لِأَنِّي وَلَدٌ. أَتِي لَا	ו ואמרית קביל בענתך ה' אלהים הא לית אית דע לאתכמת ארי רבי אנא ומשרתך עקא וגלגל איתא מנהיב על עמא דרין:	ו ואמר: איהא אדני ה' הנה לא ידעת דבר כד נער אנכי:
7 Et l'Eternel me répondait : « Ne dis pas : je suis un enfant. Mais tous ceux où je t'enverrai, tu iras les trouver, et tout ce que je t'ordonnerai, tu le diras. »	7 فَقَالَ الرَّبُّ لِي: "لَا تَقُلْ أَنِّي وَلَدٌ، لِأَنَّكَ إِلَى كُلِّ مَنْ أَرْسَلْتُ إِلَيْهِ تَذْهَبُ وَتَتَكَلَّمُ كُلَّمَا بَكَلَ مَا أَمَرَكَ بِهِ".	ז ואמר ה' לי לא תומר רבי אנא ארי כל אדיר באשלחנך מנהי וית כל ובאפקינתך תמנהי:	ז ואמר ה' אלי: אל תאמר נער אנכי כי על כל אשר אשלחך תלבד ואת כל אשר אצויר תדבר:

8 Ne les crains point, car je serai avec toi pour te protéger, dit l'Eternel, »	8 لا تخف من وجوههم ، لأنني أنا معك لأتقنك ، يقول الرب .	ח לא תחל מן קדמוהו ארי בסערך מומרי לשיובוך אמר ה' :	ח אל תורא מפניהם כי אתך אני להציל האם ה' :
9 Alors l'Eternel étendit la main et en effleura ma bouche : puis l'Eternel me dit : « Voici, je mets mes paroles dans ta bouche.	9 ومد الرب يده ولمس فمي ، وقال الرب لي : " ها قد جعلت كلامي في فمك .	ט ושלח ח ית פהגמ נבואיה וסדר בפומי ואמר ח לי ה' שוידי פהגמי נבואי בפומך :	ט ושלח ח את ידו ויגע על פי ואמר ח אלי הנה נהני דברי בפך :
10 Vois que je te donne mission en ce jour auprès des peuples et des royaumes, pour arracher et pour démolir, pour détruire et pour renverser, pour bâtir et pour planter. »	10 أنظر ! قد وكلتك هذا اليوم على الشعوب وعلى الممالك ، لتقلع وتهدم وتهلك وتقتض وتبني وتغرس .	י חי נמיתך יומא הדין על עממא ועל מלכוהא למערך ולרענא ולאברא ולפגרא ולמבני ולקבא :	י ראה הפקדונך היום הזה על הגוים ועל הממלכות למחש ולחזון ולהאבד ולחרס לבנות ולנטות :

Appendix 2. A Synopsis of Four English Translations

<i>ET 1 = J. Bright</i>	<i>ET 2 = J.A. Thompson</i>	<i>ET 3 = W. McKane</i>	<i>ET 4 = W.L. Holladay</i>
4 The word of Yahweh come to me, thus :	4 The word of Yahweh came to me thus :	4 The word of Yahweh came to me:	4 The word of Yahweh came to me as follows :
5 'Before I had formed you in the womb I chose you ; Before you were born I set you apart , And appointed you prophet to the nations'.	5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you intimately ; Before you were born I set you apart , And appointed you a prophet to the nations.'	5 'Before I formed you in the womb, I singled you out , and before you came out of the womb, I set you apart ; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.	5 Before I summoned you, in the belly I knew you , and before you came forth, from the womb I dedicated you , a prophet to the nations I made you.
6 Then I said, 'Ah, my Lord Yahweh! Look! I don't know how to speak. I'm only a boy! '	6 Than I answered, 'Ah, my Lord Yahweh! Look! I don't know how to speak; I am only a boy! '	6 I replied, Alas! Lord Yahweh, I am only a young man and have no skill of utterance.	6 But I said, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh, look, I do not know how to speak, for I am (only) a youth. '
7 But Yahweh answered, 'Never say, " I am only a boy "; For you'll go on what errands I send you, And you'll say what I tell you to say. '	7 But Yahweh answered me, 'Don't say, " I only am a boy "; For you will go to everyone to whom I send you And you will tell them everything I command you to say. '	7 Do not say ' I am only a young man ' said Yahweh to me; you are to go on whatever mission I send you and to speak whatever I command you.	7 But Yahweh said to me, Do not say, ' I am (only) a youth '; but to everyone to whom I send you you shall go, and everything I command you you shall speak;

8 Don't be afraid of them! <i>For I'm with you to come to your rescue</i> —Yahweh's word!	8 Don't be afraid of them! <i>For I am with you to rescue you</i> —Yahweh's word.'	8 Do not be afraid because of them, <i>for I shall be with you to keep you safe.</i> You have my word.	8 do not be afraid of them, <i>for I am with you to rescue you</i> , oracle of Yahweh.
9 Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth. And Yahweh said to me: 'There! <i>I have put my words in your mouth.</i>	9 Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me: 'Look, <i>I have put my word in your mouth.</i>	9 Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, <i>I have now put my words in your mouth.</i>	9 And Yahweh extended his hand and touched my mouth; and Yahweh said to me, Look, <i>I have put my words in your mouth;</i>
10 See! I have made you an over-seer this day Over nations and kingdoms, To uproot and tear down, To destroy and to raze, To build and to plant.'	10 See! I have given you authority this day Over nations and kingdoms To uproot and to pull down, To destroy and to demolish, To build and to plant.'	10 As from now I have made you responsible for nations and kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.	10 see, I have appointed you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot and to demolish [and to destroy and to overthrow.] to build and to plant.

Appendix 3. *A Synopsis of Four Further English Translations*

<i>ET 5 = Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard</i>	<i>ET 6 = The Interpreter's Bible (= KJV)</i>	<i>ET 7 = R.P. Carroll (= RSV)</i>	<i>ET 8 = The New Oxford Annotated Bible (= NRSV)</i>
4 And the LORD's word came to me:	4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying :	4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying ,	4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying ,
5 'Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you ; before you came forth from the womb, I set you aside . I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.'	5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee , and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.	5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you , and before you were born I consecrated you ; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'	5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you , and before you were born I consecrated you ; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'
6 But I said, 'Oh master, LORD! Look, I don't know how to speak, because I'm only a youth .'	6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child .	6 Then I said, 'Ah Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth .'	6 Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy .'
7 But the LORD said to me, 'Don't say " I'm only a youth ", because wherever I send you, you will go, and whatever I command you, you will speak.	7 But the LORD said onto me, Say not, I am a child ; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak .	7 But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, " I am only a youth "; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak,	7 But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, " I am only a boy "; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you,

8 Don't be afraid of them, <i>because I am with you to look after you</i> . It is the LORD's word!'	8 Be not afraid of their faces; <i>for I am with thee to deliver thee</i> , saith the LORD.	8 Be not afraid of them, <i>for I am with you to deliver you</i> , says the LORD.'	8 Do not be afraid of them, <i>for I am with you to deliver you</i> , says the LORD.'
9 And the LORD stretched out his hand and touched my mouth. Then the LORD said to me, ' <i>Look, I have put my words in your mouth.</i> '	9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, <i>I have put my words in thy mouth.</i>	9 Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, 'behold <i>I have put my words in your mouth.</i> '	9 Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now <i>I have put my words in your mouth.</i> "
10 See! This very day, I have given you authority over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck out and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.'	10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.	10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'	10 See, today I appoint you over the nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'

Appendix 4. *A New Translation/Interpretation*

- 4 *It happened that the word of prophecy came to me from God, commanding:*
5 *'Before I formed you in the belly I knew you (for your verbal skills) and before*
you were born I set you apart (as for war). I appointed you a prophet to the
nations.'
6 *But I said: 'Alas, Lord God, behold! I do not know how to speak (to prophesy).*
Am I a warrior?'
7 *But God said to me: 'Do not ask: "Am I a warrior?"' Indeed, to wherever I shall*
send you, you shall go and whatever I shall command you, you shall speak.
8 *Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.'*
9 *Then God stretched out his hand and touched my mouth and God said to me: 'I*
have put my words (prophecy) in your mouth.
10 *See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to*
root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'