I. **Israel’s Unfaithfulness Described, 2:1-4:4:** (This section "forms a composition which links judgment and salvation; here the call to conversion has central significance (3.12, 13, 22; 4.1; cf. v. 4.")¹

A. 2:1-3: “Israel, who in the wilderness period was intimately associated with YHWH (vv. 1-3), is accused in a piece of invective apostasy from YHWH after the settlement (vv. 4-13); Israel's refectory behaviour against YHWH is then developed further from different aspects in a composition stamped by elements from the genres of the disputation saying and the invective (vv. 14-37).”² Israel is portrayed as an unfaithful wife.

B. vv. 1-3: wilderness period of intimate associations with Yhwh—the marriage.
   1. The word comes to the prophet and the command to proclaim it, 1-2a.
   2. God's bride Israel, loved and followed him in the wilderness, 2bcd.
   3. The bride was set part for God alone and any who attacked her were punished, 3abcd.
   4. Prophetic message statement, 3e.

C. vv. 2:4-12: Prophetic message statement relating that after the settlement Israel apostatized, the bride became unfaithful.
   1. Command for the clans of Israel to hear a message and prophetic message statement, 4-5a.
   2. Question of what fault Israel found with God, 5bc.
   3. Followed idols and became worthless, 5de.
   4. Did not seek the Lord, 6.
   5. They defiled the inheritance that God gave them, 7.
   6. The priests did not seek the Lord, the lawyers did not know him, the leaders rebelled, and the prophets prophesied by Baal and idols, 8.


7. For these reasons God brings charges against the nation and its descendants, 9.

8. Charges of unfaithfulness, 10-12.
   a. Nothing like this seen in Kittim and Kedar, 10.
   b. Israel is unique among nations in that it has changed its God, 11.
   c. Heavens called as witnesses, 12ab.
   d. Concluding message statement, 12c.

D. vv. 2:13-37: Continuation of prophetic message statement containing disputations and charges against the bride, many of which are addressed in rhetorical question form.

1. The sins of Israel and punishment, 13-19.
   a. Two sins—forsaking God and the metaphor of the broken cisterns, 13.
   b. Rhetorical question regarding the freedom of Israel, 14.
   c. The punishment and the reactions it produced, 15-16.
   d. Rhetorical questions regarding who is at fault and why does the nation turn to Egypt and Assyria rather than God, 17-18.
   e. The bride Israel's sins will punish her, 19abcdef.
   f. Concluding messenger statement, 19g.

2. The bride Israel's unfaithfulness in serving other gods, 20-25.
   a. Picture of Israel's unfaithfulness as a prostitute, 20-22.
   b. Rebellled against God and fornicated as a prostitute, 20.
   c. Though God had blessed Israel, Israel rejected him, 21.
   d. As a prostitute Israel may try to wash away her guilt, but is unable to do so, 22abc.
e. Concluding message statement, 22d.

f. Though Israel denied her guilt she had behaved as a she-animal in heat, 23-25.

g. Rhetorical question re: Israel's denial of her guilt, 23a.

(1) Israel's behavior describe as a she-camel and a wild donkey, 23b-25.

(2) A she-camel in heat, 23c.

(3) A wild donkey in heat, who is ready for any male to ride her, 24.

(4) At God's command against such behavior, Israel's response was she could not help herself, 25.

3. Israel is disgraced as a caught thief, 26-30.

a. All leaders of Israel are disgraced, 26.

b. These rulers credit the idols with blessing them rather than God, but turn to God when in trouble, 27.

c. Therefore, God says, "Let your gods save you!", 28.

d. Israel flagrantly says, "Why are you charging me?" denial of guilt, 29.

e. God's punishment has been in vain, 30.

f. Further charges, Israel's denials, and prospective punishment, 31-37.

E. **3:1-4:4:** "... the question emerges whether repentance is possible (3:1-5). This is affirmed first of all in respect of the northern kingdom of Israel (3:6-10, 11-13) and then opened up in several stages as a future possibility for all Israel and Judah
(3:14-18, 19-25; 4:1-14 [sic 4:1-4]).

There is also an intermingling of prose and poetry sections, in which, for the most part, the prose sections refer to Israel and the poetry sections refer to Judah, exceptions being 3:12-13 and 3:19-4:2.

1. **3:1-5**: Poetic section using the divorce metaphor to raise the hypothetical question of the possibility of repentance.
   
a. Rhetorical question raised, 1.
   
   (1) Would not the land be defiled, should a man divorce his wife, she marry another, and then return to the first husband (a reference to Deut 24:1-4)? 1a.
   
   (2) Yet this is what would happen should God's wife return to him, 1b.
   
   b. Description of the unfaithfulness of God's wife, 2-5.
   
   (1) His wife has been ravished everywhere, from roadside to desert, and defiled the land, 2.
   
   (2) Though God's blessings have been withheld, she refuses to be ashamed.
   
   (3) Her words implied faithfulness, 4-5.

2. **3:6-10**: Prose section which raises the question relative to Israel as an example to Judah.
   
   a. Israel was unfaithful and God divorced her; Judah saw but took no warning, 6-9.
   
   b. Judah's repentance was only outward, not from the heart, 10.

3. **3:11-13**: Poetic section which declares Israel is more righteous than Judah.
   
   a. Israel more faithful than Judah, 11.

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3Ibid.
b. Thus a call to repentance is given to her, 12.

   (1) Heading, 12a.

   (2) Call to return for God's anger is past, 12bc.

   (3) Only requirement is acknowledgment of her guilt of unfaithfulness, 13.

4. **3:14-18**: Prose section which calls for faithless people (Israel?, cf. v. 11) to repent.

   a. God desires their return, for he is their husband, 14.

   b. Blessings if they do so, 15-18.

   c. Have leaders after God's heart and the ark will not be missed, 15-16.

   d. God's throne will be in Jerusalem and all nations will follow the Lord, 17.

   e. Israel and Judah will once again be joined and receive the inheritance of their forefathers, 18.

5. **3:19-25**: Poetic section which describes the wickedness of Israel.

   a. God gave Israel the land and desired that they called him father, 19.

   b. But Israel was an unfaithful wife, 20.

   c. Israel is pictured as repenting, 21-25.

      (1) The cry at the recognition of sin, 21.

      (2) Call to repentance, 22a.

      (3) Response is made, 22b-25.

         (a) Yes we will come, 22b.
(b) Idolatry is deception and God is salvation, 23.
(c) Idolatrous gods devoured her blessings, 24.
(d) Admission of guilt, 25.

6. **4:1-4:** Call for Israel and Judah to repent.

   a. If Israel is to return it should be to the Lord so that he may bless them, 1-2.

   b. If Judah does not repent from the heart God's wrath will break out like fire, 3-4.

7. **Summary:**

   a. The marriage metaphor is used throughout to describe in very explicit ways the Judah's unfaithfulness.

   b. Jeremiah seems here to be expanding on the theme of Hosea and picturing God as not knowing what to do with his bride.

   c. As Israel was married to God (Hosea), so Judah was married to God (Jeremiah).

   d. Further, since Judah's repentance has only been outward (Josiah's reform?) God is faced with two dilemmas:

      (1) How can he take back a wife that is repentant only outwardly?

      (2) How can he take back a wife that has had other husbands after him, a clear violation of Deut 24:1-4?

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II. **EXCURSUS: THE CONDITIONAL SENTENCE IN JEREMIAH.**

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For a complete discussion of the conditional sentence in the prophetic literature see Randall C. Bailey, “Prophetic Use of Omen Motifs: A Preliminary Study,” 195-215, in The Biblical
A. The Conditional Sentence was used by the prophets, and particularly Jeremiah, to lay out the options facing the people.

1. Laying out options allowed God/Jeremiah to explain the consequences of whatever actions were taken.

2. The following should illustrate:

B. Jer 4:1-2: (1) "If you return, O Israel, says the Lord, to me you shall return. If you remove your abominations from my presence, and do not waver, (2) and [if] you swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

1. This text employs an expanded protasis in which three conditions are set forth while the apodosis contains only one result.

2. Israel's returning, removing abominations and not wavering, and swearing "as Yhwh lives" (protasis, 1-2a), would allow the nations to bless themselves and glory in God (apodosis, 2b).

3. Note however, that "if" of 2a has to be supplied contextually or the phrase has to be interpreted as an expansion of the preceding prodosis.

4. The only other alternative is to interpret the phrase as the first part of the apodosis, which hardly makes sense.

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C. **Jer 12:16-17:** (16) And it will be if they diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear, "as Yhwh lives," even as they taught my people to swear to Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. (17) But if they will not obey, then I will utterly pluck up that nation and destroy it, says the Lord. (AR)

1. This text is thematically similar to 4:1-2 except the omen-wisdom structure describes only Israel; it does not contemplate other nations.

2. The structure is expanded in that two options are listed (16 and 17).

3. Verse 16 says Israel's learning the ways of the people and swearing Yhwh's oath (protasis) would bring stability among the people (apodosis, 16), while disobedience (protasis) would bring destruction (apodosis, 17).

4. Israel is given two options along with the stated consequences.

D. **Jer 15:19:** Therefore, thus says Yhwh:

"If you will return, [and/then] I restore you, [and/then] you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, not worthless, [then] you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you and you will not turn to them. (AR)

1. This text can be translated two ways, neither of which significantly affect the meaning though the nuance of the conditional sentence is changed.

2. The first translation balances the protasis and apodosis in the first conditional statement, with a slightly different structure in the second:

   "If you will return, then I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, not worthless, [then] you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you and you will not turn to them.

a. This translation provides a description of the two options and their stated consequences.
b. Returning (protasis) would bring restoration and stability before God (apodosis), while speaking precious things, not worthless words (protasis), would bring God's mouth and turning of some sort (apodosis).

c. Note here also that the "then" signaling the apodosis must be supplied contextually.

3. The second translation balances both conditional sentences although "then" needs to be supplied in more cases:

"If you will return, and I restore you, 
[then] you shall stand before me. 
If you utter what is precious, not worthless,  
[then] you shall be as my mouth.  
They shall turn to you and you will not turn to them.

a. This rendition provides for options with a different nuance relative to the conditional sentence.

b. Returning and restoration (protasis) would bring stability before God (apodosis), while speaking precious things, not worthless words (protasis), would bring God's mouth and turning of some sort (apodosis).

E. Jer 17:24-25: (24) and if you will indeed obey me, says Yhwh, and bring no burden by the gates of this city, and keep the sabbath day, doing no work on it, (25) then there shall enter by the gates of this city, kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding on chariots and horses, they and their princes, the men of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and this city will be inhabited for ever. (AR)

1. Comparison to the Sittenkanon:

a. Sittenkanon: If he considers himself evil,  
then he will win his case (99:28; cf. 103:32).

\[\text{\footnotesize For a discussion of this problem and its various options see William L. Holladay, Jeremiah 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 447, 461-64.}\]
If he hates mistakes,
then his (protector)god will always go with him (99:31).

If he proclaims praise to God,
then he will be well. (97:2; cf. 89:3; 91:17-18; 103:25.)

b. *Jer 17:24-25* contains expansions in both protasis and apodosis. Obedience, bringing no burdens, and keeping the Sabbath by doing no work (protasis) would bring kings to the city gates, and an inhabited Jerusalem (apodosis). The blessings were contingent on Israel's decision to obey.

c. Structurally these passages are more detailed than the *Sittenkanon*, but they contain the same thematic elements. Further, the biblical passages focus more on specific actions while the *Sittenkanon* deals with proverbial type themes.

F. *Jer 5:1*: Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search its squares to see if you find a man, if there is one who does justice seeking truth, then I will pardon. (AR)

1. **Sittenkanon:** If he allows good,
then good will regularly direct him (99:32)

If he regularly demonstrates good,
then good is demonstrated toward him (99:36; cf. 89:3; 97:2; 103:25, 32)

2. *Jer 5:1* contains an introductory command which precedes the expanded omen-wisdom structure of the protasis.

a. Here the decision is not left to Israel.
b. Jeremiah, like Diogenes, is to search the city for an "honest" man.
c. Should he find one who does justice and seek truth (protasis) God would pardon (apodosis).
d. Whether or not God pardons is contingent on Jeremiah's findings. This passage like the Sittenkanon quoted focuses on good deeds.

G. \textit{Jer 7:5-7:} (5) For if you truly mend your ways and your deeds, if you truly do justice between a man and his cohort, (6) an alien, the fatherless, or the widow you do not oppress, or shed innocent blood in this place, and after other gods you do not go to your hurt, (7) then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land, which I gave to your fathers for ever. (AR)

1. Sittenkanon: If he is a deliverer, then gods [...] will always be his guide (95:57; cf. 95:45; 97:12; 99:36).

2. \textit{Jer 7:5-7} begins "for," connecting it with the beginning of Jeremiah's Temple Sermon (vs. 3-4).

   a. Those verses convey essentially the same message, though in the form of a command rather than as a conditional sentence.

   b. The conditional clause itself contains an expanded protasis.

   c. Mending ways and deeds, doing justice between neighbors, etc., not oppressing the widow or shedding innocent blood, or going after other gods (protasis) would bring God's decision to allow them to remain in the land (apodosis).

   d. Two decisions are called for. Israel's decision (protasis) determines God's decision (apodosis).

   e. The \textit{Sittenkanon} expresses the same idea more philosophically—being a deliverer means God will be the deliverer's guide.

3. Other similar passages all contain either identical, or near identical concepts to those just discussed (obedience-disobedience, paying attention to God and his law, etc.)

4. They are listed below though not discussed since their similarities to those discussed should be apparent.
Jer 22:4-9: (4) For if you will surely do this thing, then kings, who sit on David's throne will enter the gates of this house, riding horses and chariots, they and his servants and people. (5) But if you will not obey these words, I swear, says Yhwh, this house will become a desolation. (6) For thus says Yhwh concerning the house of the king of Judah:

You are to me as Gilead, the summit of Lebanon,
If not [surely] make you a wilderness,
and uninhabited city.

(7) Then I will set destroyers for you,
each with his weapons;
and they shall cut down you choicest cedars,
and cast them into the fire.

(8) Then many nations will pass by this city, and each man will say to his neighbor, "Why has Yhwh done this to this great city?" (9) and they will answer because they forsook Yhwh and served other gods. (AR)

b. Jer 26:4-6: (4) and you will say to them, "Thus says Yhwh, If you will not listen to me, following my law which I gave to you, (5) to listen concerning the words of my servants the prophets which I urgently sent to you, though you did not heed, (6) Then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city like the nations of the earth. (AR)

c. Ezek 2:5-7: (5) and if they hear or if they refuse to hear (because they are a rebellious house), then they will know that there has been a prophet among them. (6) And you son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit upon scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. (7)

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And you shall speak my words unto them, if they hear, or if they refuse, they are a rebellious house. (AR)

d. **Zech 3:7:** Thus says the Lord of hosts, If you walk in my ways and if you keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing. (AR)

e. **Mal 2:2:** If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; indeed I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.

H. A summary of the major characteristics of this genre of texts indicates that the conditional statements as employed by the prophets have both similarities and dissimilarities to the *Sittenkanon*.

1. The entries in the *Sittenkanon* are usually short and philosophic, resembling proverbs.

2. They do not demand a decision, rather they describe conditions, or characteristics, which are perceived as preventing certain results or consequences.

3. In comparison, the conditional statements of the prophets are expanded giving various details as to the kind of activity, conduct, or consequences contemplated in both protasis and apodosis.

4. Further, they demand a decision of the people, as if the prophet were explaining the options to them.