

The Suffering of God

**Who Is This Old Testament God?**

*St. John in the Wilderness*

# The Suffering of God – Session 3

**God and World, Part 1**

# Opening Prayer

The place where you are curbed\*

**Prayer from: Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*, p. 20  
(copyrighted)**

God and World\*

## Basic Perspectives

\*Titles & Subtitles for all slides are from THE SUFFERING OF GOD

# Basic Perspectives

## ✦ Fretheim rejects 2 ways to talk about the relationship between God and world

- Pantheism – God and the world become identified with one another
- Dualism – God and the world are independent and may oppose each other

## ✦ Most accurate view of the God-World relationship is in between

- Monarchical – “God is a radically transcendent Lord who ‘stands outside’ (apart, above, beyond) and holds the whole world in his hands.” (p. 35)
- Organismic – “a ‘relationship of reciprocity’” (p. 35)

# Basic Perspectives

- ✦ OT viewpoint is mostly organismic
- ✦ "God is sovereign over the world, yet not unqualifiedly so, as considerable power and freedom have been given to the creatures. God is the transcendent Lord; but God is transcendent not in isolation from the world, but in relationship to the world. God knows all there is to know about the world, yet there is a future which does not yet exist to be known even by God. God is Lord of time and history, yet God has chosen to be bound up in the time and history of the world and to be limited thereby. God is unchangeable with respect to the steadfastness of his love and his salvific will for all creatures, yet God does change in the light of what happens in the interaction between God and world." (p. 35)

# A Real Relationship of Integrity

✦ **Relationship is the most prevalent way to speak about God**

- ◆ **King-subject**
- ◆ **Husband-wife**
- ◆ **Parent-child**
- ◆ **Shepherd-sheep**
- ◆ **Redeemer-redeemed**

# A Real Relationship of Integrity

- ✿ Entering into relationship entails certain sacrifices
- ✿ Making a commitment means giving up certain freedoms
- ✿ “God will do what God says God will do; God will be faithful to God’s own promises, and that is a limitation of freedom. God’s freedom is now most supremely a freedom *for* the world, not a freedom *from* the world.” (p. 36)
- ✿ Relationships of integrity accept the autonomy of the other

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**
  - ◆ **Heaven**
  - ◆ **Earth**
- ✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**
- ✦ **God is pictured as traveling between the 2 parts of creation (Gen. 11:5-7)**
- ✦ **God resides within creation and exercises his power from within**

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)

*The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to human beings.*

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**
  - ◆ **Heaven**
  - ◆ **Earth**
- ✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**
- ✦ **God is pictured as traveling between the 2 parts of creation (Gen. 11:5-7)**
- ✦ **God resides within creation and exercises his power from within**

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**

- ◆ **Heaven**
- ◆ **Earth**

✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**

*Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot you ride on the wings of the wind.*

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**
  - ◆ **Heaven**
  - ◆ **Earth**
- ✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**
- ✦ **God is pictured as traveling between the 2 parts of creation (Gen. 11:5-7)**
- ✦ **God resides within creation and exercises his power from within**

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**
  - ◆ Heaven
  - ◆ Earth
- ✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**
- ✦ **God is pictured as traveling between the 2 parts of creation (Gen. 11:5-7)**

*The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."*

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Psalmist portrays the universe as having 2 regions (Ps. 115:16)**
  - ◆ **Heaven**
  - ◆ **Earth**
- ✦ **Heaven is viewed as God's dwelling place, his tent (Ps. 104:1-3)**
- ✦ **God is pictured as traveling between the 2 parts of creation (Gen. 11:5-7)**
- ✦ **God resides within creation and exercises his power from within**

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ◆ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24
- Also means that God is not limited to a specific place on earth, i.e., the temple

### ◆ Ps. 102:25-27

- Presents the idea that God, unlike the earth is not in need of renewal

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ✦ 1 Kings 8:27

*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!*

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ◆ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24
- Also means that God is not limited to a specific place on earth, i.e., the temple

### ◆ Ps. 102:25-27

- Presents the idea that God, unlike the earth is not in need of renewal

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ✦ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24

*Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? Says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? Says the LORD.*

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ◆ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24
- Also means that God is not limited to a specific place on earth, i.e., the temple

### ◆ Ps. 102:25-27

- Presents the idea that God, unlike the earth is not in need of renewal

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ◆ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24
- Also means that God is not limited to a specific place on earth, i.e., the temple

### ◆ Ps. 102:25-27

*Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. You change them like clothing, and they pass away; but you are the same, and your years have no end.*

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Texts that may point to a contrary view

### ◆ 1 Kings 8:27

- Fretheim concludes this means that God's realm includes the earth as well as heaven as in Jer. 23:24
- Also means that God is not limited to a specific place on earth, i.e., the temple

### ◆ Ps. 102:25-27

- Presents the idea that God, unlike the earth is not in need of renewal

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Heaven, as God's special realm, is the place where God's will is unquestioned**
- ✦ **Earth is the place where God's will is "contested"**
- ✦ **While people are not free to travel between the realms, their prayers can affect God in his realm**
- ✦ **Israel's understanding of the universe is reflected here, but the importance given to these ideas mean that we need to pay attention to what they say theologically**

# God: Internally Related to World

- ✦ **Fretheim questions traditional view that God's time is different from time in the universe**
- ✦ **Genesis 1 may reflect a view that:**
  - ◆ Time is created
  - ◆ Time is ordered
- ✦ **After creation, the biblical texts suggests that God operates inside the time-space continuum**

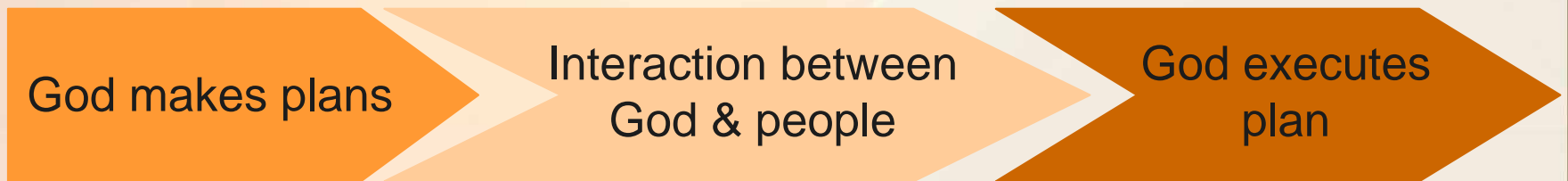
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

◆ Exod. 2:24

◆ Is. 43:25

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

### ✦ Jer. 18:11

*Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.*

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

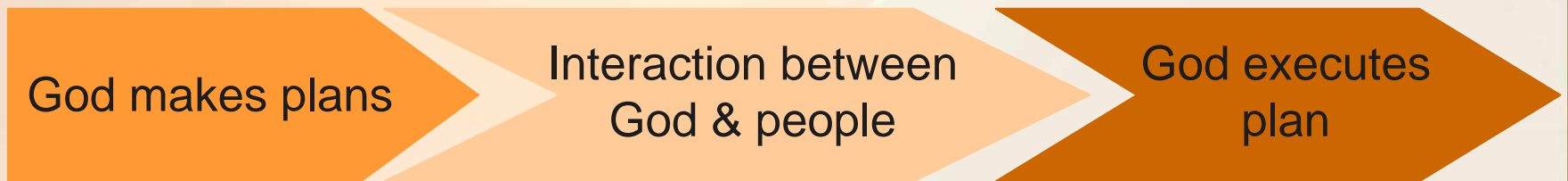
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

- ◆ Jer. 18:11

- ◆ Jer. 29:11

- ◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

- ◆ Exod. 2:24

- ◆ Is. 43:25

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

◆ Jer. 51:12

*Raise a standard against the walls of Babylon; make the watch strong; post sentinels; prepare the ambushes; for the LORD has both planned and done what he spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.*

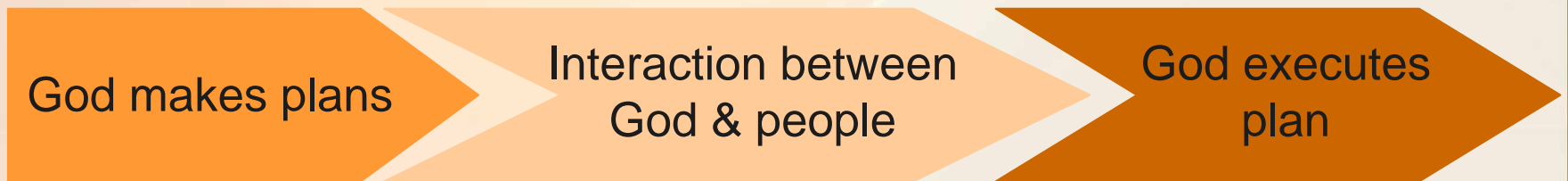
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

- ◆ Jer. 18:11

- ◆ Jer. 29:11

- ◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

- ◆ Exod. 2:24

- ◆ Is. 43:25

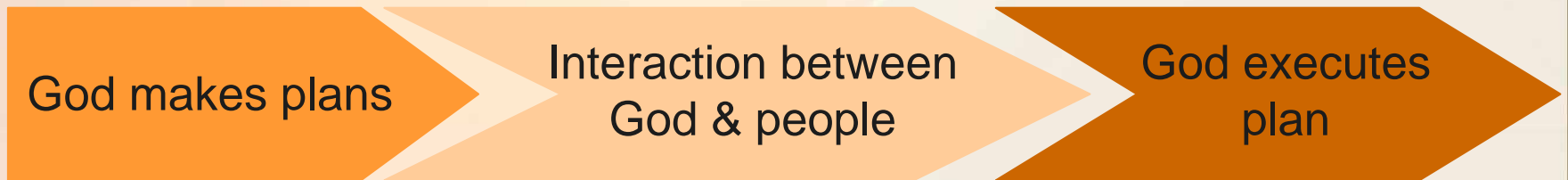
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

◆ Exod. 2:24

*God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

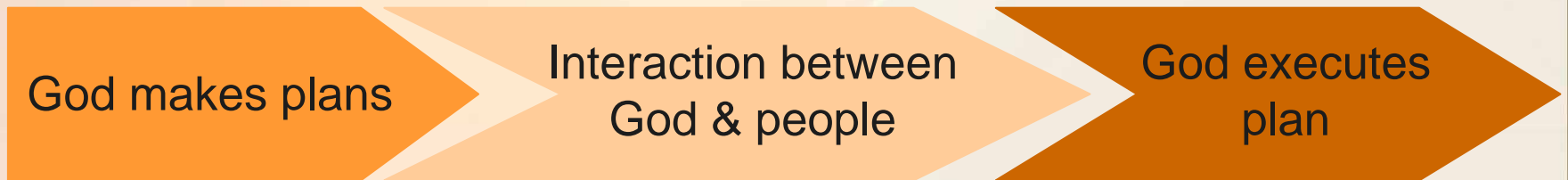
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

◆ Exod. 2:24

◆ Is. 43:25

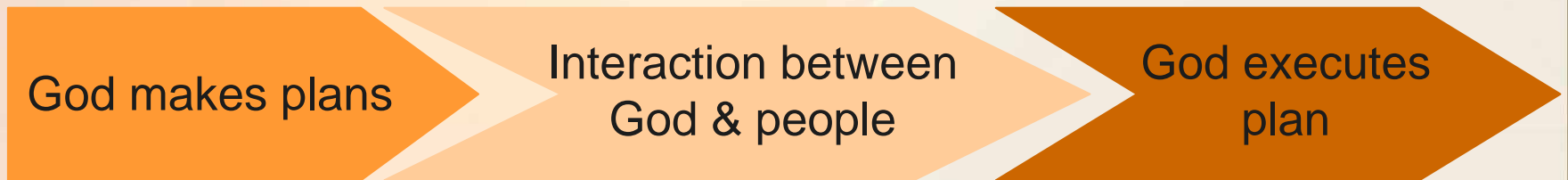
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

◆ Jer. 18:11

◆ Jer. 29:11

◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

◆ Exod. 2:24

◆ Is. 43:25

*I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

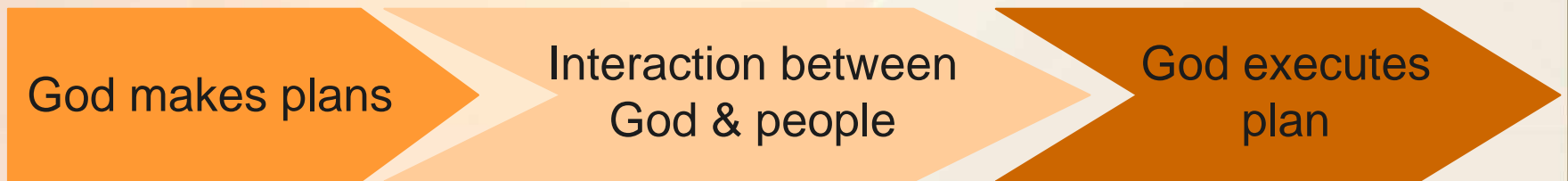
# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ God makes plans

- ◆ Jer. 18:11

- ◆ Jer. 29:11

- ◆ Jer. 51:12



## ✦ God remembers the past, or not

- ◆ Exod. 2:24

- ◆ Is. 43:25

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **God's anger takes place within time, i.e., God is "slow to anger"**

- ◆ Ps. 103:9

- ◆ Is. 54:7-8

✦ **Suggests a time-line for God's anger**



✦ **God should be angry when he knows sin will occur**

- ◆ That God's anger takes place at a specific point in time says something about God & future

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **God's anger takes place within time, i.e., God is "slow to anger"**

● **Ps. 103:9**

*He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.*

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **God's anger takes place within time, i.e., God is "slow to anger"**

✦ **Ps. 103:9**

✦ **Is. 54:7-8**

*For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.*

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **God's anger takes place within time, i.e., God is "slow to anger"**

- ◆ Ps. 103:9

- ◆ Is. 54:7-8

✦ **Suggests a time-line for God's anger**



✦ **God should be angry when he knows sin will occur**

- ◆ That God's anger takes place at a specific point in time says something about God & future

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

- ◆ Is. 49:8

- ◆ Ps. 119:126

✦ **Ps. 90:4**

- ◆ Not an equivalence (1000 God years = 1 Human day)

- ◆ Are comparative in time and quality

✦ **"God's experience in time is *as God*." (p. 43)**

✦ **While God acts within time since creation, there has never been a time when God was not**

# God: Internally Related to World

## ✦ Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts

### ● Is. 49:8

*Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages.*

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

- ◆ Is. 49:8

- ◆ Ps. 119:126

✦ **Ps. 90:4**

- ◆ Not an equivalence (1000 God years = 1 Human day)

- ◆ Are comparative in time and quality

✦ **"God's experience in time is *as God*." (p. 43)**

✦ **While God acts within time since creation, there has never been a time when God was not**

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

◆ **Is. 49:8**

◆ **Ps. 119:126**

*It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken.*

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

- ◆ Is. 49:8

- ◆ Ps. 119:126

✦ **Ps. 90:4**

- ◆ Not an equivalence (1000 God years = 1 Human day)

- ◆ Are comparative in time and quality

✦ **"God's experience in time is *as God*." (p. 43)**

✦ **While God acts within time since creation, there has never been a time when God was not**

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

◆ **Is. 49:8**

◆ **Ps. 119:126**

✦ **Ps. 90:4**

*For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.*

# God: Internally Related to World

✦ **Biblical texts speak of specific times when God acts**

- ◆ Is. 49:8

- ◆ Ps. 119:126

✦ **Ps. 90:4**

- ◆ Not an equivalence (1000 God years = 1 Human day)

- ◆ Are comparative in time and quality

✦ **"God's experience in time is *as God*." (p. 43)**

✦ **While God acts within time since creation, there has never been a time when God was not**

## God: Internally Related to World

**“There is indeed a divine *self*-limitation to the order of creation. Yet, it needs to be realized that to insist that God is not so limited is to limit God in other ways. God would not be able to make free, spontaneous decisions in the light of the spontaneities of human action....God thereby would become an already programmed computer. The truly personal dimension of the divine life would be sharply diminished. This self-limitation, of course, affects God’s knowledge of the future.” (p. 44)**



God and World

**Foreknowledge**

# The Divine Perhaps

- ✦ 'ûlay, the Hebrew for “perhaps” is used by humans to express a hopeful uncertainty about future events
- ✦ 'ûlay used by God to speak of God’s desire for the people of Israel to repent and return to him
  - ◆ Ezek. 12:1-3
  - ◆ Jer. 26:2-3
    - *Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. It may be [‘ûlay] that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings.*

# The Divine Perhaps

- ✦ 'ûlay, the Hebrew for “perhaps” is used by humans to express a hopeful uncertainty about future events
- ✦ 'ûlay used by God to speak of God’s desire for the people of Israel to repent and return to him

- ◆ Ezek. 12:1-3

*The word of the LORD came to me: Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, mortal, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps [‘ûlay] they will understand, though they are a rebellious house.*

# The Divine Perhaps

- ✦ 'ûlay, the Hebrew for “perhaps” is used by humans to express a hopeful uncertainty about future events
- ✦ 'ûlay used by God to speak of God’s desire for the people of Israel to repent and return to him
  - ◆ Ezek. 12:1-3
  - ◆ Jer. 26:2-3
    - *Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. It may be [‘ûlay] that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings.*

# The Divine Perhaps

## ✦ What can we conclude?

- ◆ God knows Israel's probable response
- ◆ Israel's sin is great and deserves punishment
- ◆ God still hopes for the improbable response of repentance

## ✦ God's uncertainty about Israel's response is real

- ◆ Jer. 3:7

- *And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me'; but she did not return.*

- ◆ Jer. 3:19

# The Divine Perhaps

## ✦ What can we conclude?

- ◆ God knows Israel's probable response
- ◆ Israel's sin is great and deserves punishment
- ◆ God still hopes for the improbable response of repentance

## ✦ God's uncertainty about Israel's response is real

*I thought how I would set you among my children, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me.*

- ◆ **Jer. 3:19**

# The Divine Perhaps

## ✦ What can we conclude?

- ◆ God knows Israel's probable response
- ◆ Israel's sin is great and deserves punishment
- ◆ God still hopes for the improbable response of repentance

## ✦ God's uncertainty about Israel's response is real

### ◆ Jer. 3:7

- *And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me'; but she did not return.*

### ◆ Jer. 3:19

# The Divine Perhaps

- ✦ **Fretheim's conclusions about the God-prophet interaction**
  - ◆ A God of integrity would not call a prophet for a task that has no possibility of success
  - ◆ God's call on the people to repent must mean what God says
  - ◆ Israel's future with God is best thought of as "probabilities or possibilities"
  - ◆ Israel and God together shape the future of Israel

# The Divine If

## ✦ *'Im*, Hebrew for if

- ◆ Jer. 7:5-7

- ◆ Jer. 22:4-5

- *For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.*

## ✦ 2 "if" texts bracket an oracle of judgment in Jer. 7:13-8:3

# The Divine If

## ✿ *'Im*, Hebrew for if

### ◆ Jer. 7:5-7

*For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in the place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.*

# The Divine If

## ✧ 'Im, Hebrew for if

- ◆ Jer. 7:5-7

- ◆ Jer. 22:4-5

- *For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.*

## ✧ 2 "if" texts bracket an oracle of judgment in Jer. 7:13-8:3

# The Divine If

## ✦ Fretheim asks

- ✦ Why would God extend this hope to the people if God knows in advance that it has no possibility to be realized?
- ✦ God's knowledge of the future differs from that of humans in terms of complete understanding of all the possibilities
- ✦ God also knows the probabilities of each possible outcome

# The Divine Consultation

## ☀ **God's consultation with people best exemplified by consultation with the prophets**

- ◆ **Gen. 18:7-22 – God speaks with Abraham about the future of Sodom & Gomorrah**
- ◆ **Exod. 32:7-14 – God speaks with Moses about the future of the recently rescued Israelites**
- ◆ **1 Sam. 15 – God announces future of King Saul**
- ◆ **Amos 7:1,4 – God reveals his judgment on Israel to Amos in visions**
- ◆ **Jer. 7:16 – God instructs Jeremiah not to intercede on behalf of the people**

# The Divine Consultation

## ✦ Abraham

- ◆ God's words, "*Shall I hide from Abraham?*" suggest that consultation is part of the relationship
- ◆ Abraham raises the issue of justice
- ◆ Justice was God's concern before deciding to consult with Abraham
- ◆ Both conclude that the judgment is just

## ✦ Moses

- ◆ God tells Moses not to intercede for the people precisely because Moses' words have weight with God
- ◆ Moses argues the case with God
  - What kind of God saves a people & then obliterates them?
  - What will God's wrath do to God's reputation with the Egyptians?
  - What meaning do God's promises to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob hold?

# The Divine Consultation

## ✦ Samuel

- ◆ God's announcement to Samuel invites a discussion period
- ◆ Samuel's failure in changing God's mind about King Saul doesn't detract from the integrity of the conversation

## ✦ Amos

- ◆ Amos' intercession in response to God's revelation of judgment is successful twice before the judgment is executed
- ◆ Amos 3:7
- ◆ *"God reveals his secret to the prophets precisely in order to draw them into the sphere of decision making with respect to the future of the people."* (p. 52)

# The Divine Consultation

## ✦ Samuel

- ◆ God's announcement to Samuel invites a discussion period
- ◆ Samuel's failure in changing God's mind about King Saul doesn't detract from the integrity of the conversation

## ✦ Amos

- ◆ Amos' intercession in response to God's revelation of judgment is successful twice before the judgment is executed
- ◆ Amos 3:7

*Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.*

# The Divine Consultation

## ✦ Samuel

- ◆ God's announcement to Samuel invites a discussion period
- ◆ Samuel's failure in changing God's mind about King Saul doesn't detract from the integrity of the conversation

## ✦ Amos

- ◆ Amos' intercession in response to God's revelation of judgment is successful twice before the judgment is executed
- ◆ Amos 3:7
- ◆ *"God reveals his secret to the prophets precisely in order to draw them into the sphere of decision making with respect to the future of the people."* (p. 52)

# The Divine Consultation

## ✿ Jeremiah

- ◆ Case similar to Moses
- ◆ Fretheim suggests the possibility of a *“God/prophet dispute as to whether the divine decision should proceed to action.”* (p. 53)
- ◆ Jeremiah, like Moses & Amos, persists in discussion with God for some time

# The Divine Question

- ✦ **Are God's questions real, or merely rhetorical?**
- ✦ **God's questions are asked in**
  - ◆ **Hos. 6:4**
    - *What shall I do with you , O Ephraim?*
  - ◆ **Jer. 5:7**
    - *How can I pardon you?*
- ✦ **Probably part of the God-prophet dialogue**

# The Divine Question

## ✦ For what purpose?

### ◆ Repentance

- People are invited to respond
- God reveals himself as vulnerable to the people's response
- God's suffering vulnerability will hopefully bring about repentance

### ◆ People's perception of any judgment that follows must include God's decision process

- *"In sharing such questions, the people can see very clearly the divine agony that has preceded and would accompany any judgment. Thus they could have no uncertainty regarding the highly personal—nonlegal, nonhasty, nonvindictive, and noncapricious—way in which God has deliberated over the matter."* (p. 55)

## ✦ God announces his decision before it is executed

# The Divine Question

- ✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**
  - ◆ Jer. 2:31
  - ◆ Jer. 8:5
  - ◆ Jer. 8:19c
- ✦ **Form a lament on the part of God**
- ✦ **Despite God’s knowledge, the people’s behavior is incomprehensible**

# The Divine Question

✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**

◆ **Jer. 2:31**

*And you, O generation, behold the word of the LORD! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, “We are free, we will come to you no more”?*

# The Divine Question

- ✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**
  - ◆ Jer. 2:31
  - ◆ Jer. 8:5
  - ◆ Jer. 8:19c
- ✦ **Form a lament on the part of God**
- ✦ **Despite God’s knowledge, the people’s behavior is incomprehensible**

# The Divine Question

✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**

◆ **Jer. 2:31**

◆ **Jer. 8:5**

*Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?  
They have held fast to deceit, they have refused to return.*

# The Divine Question

- ✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**
  - ◆ Jer. 2:31
  - ◆ Jer. 8:5
  - ◆ Jer. 8:19c
- ✦ **Form a lament on the part of God**
- ✦ **Despite God’s knowledge, the people’s behavior is incomprehensible**

# The Divine Question

✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**

◆ **Jer. 2:31**

◆ **Jer. 8:5**

◆ **Jer. 8:19c**

*“Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?”*

# The Divine Question

- ✦ **God expresses his sorrow over the behavior of the people with “Why?” questions**
  - ◆ Jer. 2:31
  - ◆ Jer. 8:5
  - ◆ Jer. 8:19c
- ✦ **Form a lament on the part of God**
- ✦ **Despite God’s knowledge, the people’s behavior is incomprehensible**

# The Divine Question

## ✦ Complete foreknowledge of God

- ◆ Ps. 139:1-6

- ◆ Is. 40-55

✦ *“Such passages only claim that God knows what **God** will do in the future, and that God will accomplish God’s purposes.” (p. 57)*

✦ As events occur, God’s knowledge increases and changes

# The Divine Question

## ✦ Complete foreknowledge of God

### ✦ Ps. 139:1-6

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me, You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.*

# The Divine Question

## ✦ Complete foreknowledge of God

- ◆ Ps. 139:1-6

- ◆ Is. 40-55

✦ *“Such passages only claim that God knows what **God** will do in the future, and that God will accomplish God’s purposes.” (p. 57)*

✦ As events occur, God’s knowledge increases and changes

# The Divine Question

✦ *“All that God is and does will be for the sake of the relationship.... This free act of self-limitation, taken entirely at the divine initiative for the sake of the relationship, might be described as a divine **kenosis**, a self-emptying, an act of self-sacrifice. The very act of creation thus might be called the beginning of the passion of God. God has so entered into the world that God cannot but be affected by its life, including its sinful life. Because this condescending God fully relates to sinful creatures with integrity, and with the deepest possible love, God cannot but suffer, and in manifold ways.” (p. 58)*

# Bibliography

- ✦ Brueggemann, Walter(2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.
- ✦ Fretheim, Terence E. (1984). *The Suffering of God*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- ✦ Slide design template. Microsoft Office Online.  
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT011377381033.aspx>  
(18 Sep. 2005)