

Figurative language

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Prophets and Figurative Language Jeremiah was a prophet called upon by God at a very young age to do His work. Jeremiah spoke against those who disobeyed God and spoke on the consequences of sin. He had a very hard job of trying to get the people of God to obey Him once again and to get them to stop sinning against Him. Jeremiah used figurative language to tell stories and to explain to the people what was going to happen if they continued to sin.

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The natural imagery that Jeremiah uses can be seen as useful in getting his point across to the disobedient people because he used it to paint a scary picture of how God would devour the people, but he was also able to paint a peaceful picture of how he was like a lamb; all while using things that were relevant and ordinary to them so that it made sense to them.

In Jeremiah 5: 14 we see nature being used figuratively as a force of destruction, “ Because they have spoken this word, I am now making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them. ” God is very explicit here and you have no doubt in what he wants to do to the people. He uses very simple forces of nature that are relevant and known to the people. You know that God is upset because he uses the word “ devour,” where as He could have used “ burn,” but the word itself shows the force He is willing to strike with. Fire” and “ wood” are elements that are known and when put together we know what happens, so it was useful to put these together so that the people can see how great God is. The “ fire” is not even God’s own actions, but His words put into Jeremiah’s mouth, so it

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leaves you to imagine and wonder what would happen if it was coming straight from God, without an intermediate. The book of Jeremiah is filled with terrifying figurative language of destruction and death so it is hard to find a positive example of natural imagery.

In Jeremiah 11: 19, Jeremiah compares himself to a lamb and a tree with fruit, which is a very nice choice for natural imagery, but what is said to be done against the lamb is terrifying, “ But I was a gentle lamb led to the slaughter, And I did not know it was against me that the devised schemes, saying, ‘ Let us destroy the tree with fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered! ’” The choice of the lamb is positive because lambs are little, cute, and pure, and do no harm. Lambs are led by shepherds, but as we know, they are also killed for food or for sacrifice. In this case the lamb is led to be slaughtered, but just with the purpose of evil. Jeremiah is to be seen as obedient, pure, and holy since he obeys and follows God in every way possible, but the people are tired of him so they plan to kill him. He is also compared to a tree with fruit because he has a lot to offer to the people, such as life.

The imagery usage of “ with fruit” is important because it shows the tree serves with purpose, just like Jeremiah. It also shows that that tree is alive and in good soil, and instead of its fruit being eaten, the people will cut it off. Jeremiah’s job was already difficult as it was and it was necessary for him to use figurative language as a prophetic tool to get his message across to the people. I see it as effective because some people need to hear and see things in a different perspective that includes images of things that are relevant to them.

The people would have listened less if Jeremiah would have spoken in prophetic language. The usage of nature is also very effective because it was a part of everyday life for them – fire, wind, trees, lambs, etc. There could be possible dangers involving imagery, such as someone not understand the concept because they were thrown off by the comparison or being distracted by it as well, but Jeremiah used it well.