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ROOTED IN TRUST: A THEOLOGICAL AND EXEGETICAL STUDY OF FAITH, RESILIENCE, AND FRUITFULNESS IN JEREMIAH 17:7–8

Bakri Rasjid; Andrias Kemal
STT Anugrah Indonesia; STT Anugrah Indonesia
Corresponding Author: bakrirasjidberea@gmail.com; andriaskemal@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

Jeremiah 17:7–8, a macarism pronounced over the one who trusts in YHWH and elaborated through an arboreal simile of a tree planted by water that does not fear drought and does not cease bearing fruit, has been extensively preached but exegetically underdeveloped. Existing scholarship has established the passage's sapiential provenance, clarified its redactional placement within Jeremiah 17:1–18, and illuminated its Ancient Near Eastern tree and water symbolism, yet no integrated account connects the lexeme bāṭaḥ (trust), the hydrological imagery (yəʿōr, mayim), and the outcome language (pāraḥ, šāqad) within a single coherent framework. The unresolved tension between the promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought in the prophetic narrative further complicates interpretation. This study employs historical-grammatical exegesis, canonical-intertextual reading, and theological interpretation of Scripture, supplemented by semantic field analysis, to construct the Rooted Trust Framework, a three-dimensional contextual-exegetical model comprising re-rooting (trust as covenantal orientation), endurance (resilience as drought-endurance rather than drought-avoidance), and covenantal productivity (fruitfulness as fidelity rather than prosperity). The framework reframes resilience theologically against psychological and prosperity paradigms. As a text-centered study without human participants, no empirical data are available; the model is presented as a conceptual proposal requiring contextual operationalization and empirical testing in congregational and pastoral settings.

Keywords: Jeremiah 17:7–8; bāṭaḥ; resilience; covenantal fruitfulness; Rooted Trust Framework

INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah 17:7–8 has long functioned as a homiletical anchor for sermons on trust, yet its exegetical density remains underexploited in international scholarship. The oracle pronounces a macarism over the one who trusts in YHWH and develops it through an arboreal simile: a tree planted by water that does not fear when heat comes, whose leaves remain green, and which does not cease bearing fruit. The passage sits within a larger antithetical unit (Jeremiah 17:5–8) that contrasts two root systems and two outcomes, and it resonates canonically with Psalm 1:1–3. Despite this theological richness, the text is frequently read through devotional or therapeutic lenses that flatten its covenantal logic. The interpretive problem this study addresses is the gap between the passage's theological architecture and its reception, particularly the tendency to treat trust as a psychological disposition rather than a covenantal orientation with concrete consequences for endurance and productivity.

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The urgency of this inquiry is heightened by the contemporary migration of resilience discourse into pastoral and theological spaces. Resilience has become a governing concept in psychology, management, and public policy, often framed as an individual capacity to absorb shock and return to equilibrium (Amoroso, 2025; Cloma et al., 2025). When imported uncritically into theology, this framing risks reducing faith to a coping mechanism and fruitfulness to measurable output. Jeremiah 17:7–8 offers a corrective grammar: resilience is not the absence of drought but the presence of roots, and fruitfulness is not prosperity but covenantal fidelity. The text refuses both prosperity hermeneutics, which equates blessing with material abundance, and secular therapeutic reductionism, which detaches endurance from its theological moorings. Retrieving this grammar is urgent for congregations navigating economic precarity, political instability, and personal crisis.

The research gap is identifiable across three scholarly clusters. First, studies of wisdom influence on prophetic literature have established the sapiential provenance of Jeremiah 17:7–8 but have often treated the passage as a redactional insertion rather than a coherent theological unit (Ndishua, 2022). Second, redactional and form-critical analyses have clarified the placement of the passage within Jeremiah 17:1–18 and its macarism structure, yet they have underplayed the hydrological and arboreal imagery's theological weight. Third, studies of tree and water symbolism in Ancient Near Eastern and biblical traditions have illuminated the metaphor's cultural background but have not integrated it with the lexeme of trust and the outcome language of fruitfulness. Sykora (2024) offers a constructive reading of Jeremiah 17:5–10 through Karl Rahner's theology, demonstrating the value of theological interpretation, but does not develop a comprehensive exegetical model. What remains absent is an integrated account that connects bāṭaḥ (trust), the hydrological imagery (yəʿōr, mayim), and the outcome language (pāraḥ, šāqad) within a single coherent framework, while explicitly engaging the tension between the promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought in the prophetic narrative.

This tension constitutes the study's central research problem. If trust guarantees fruitfulness, how does the text account for the righteous sufferer? If fruitfulness is not guaranteed, what is the function of the promise? The text does not resolve this tension but holds it within a theological structure that redefines both resilience and fruitfulness. Resilience becomes endurance within drought rather than escape from it; fruitfulness becomes covenantal fidelity rather than circumstantial prosperity. This reading challenges both the triumphalism that treats blessing as exemption from suffering and the fatalism that treats suffering as divine abandonment.

The study operates within a tripartite theoretical framework. Historical-grammatical exegesis provides the primary methodological orientation, attending to grammar, syntax, and lexical semantics. Canonical-intertextual reading positions the passage within the broader canonical witness, particularly its relationship to Psalm 1. Theological interpretation of Scripture provides the hermeneutical warrant for moving from exegesis to theological construction without collapsing into eisegesis. This framework is supplemented by semantic field analysis of key lexemes and by

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engagement with Ancient Near Eastern tree and water motifs. The approach is text-centered and does not involve human participants; consequently, no empirical field data are available, and the study's theological proposals require contextual testing. This limitation is stated explicitly rather than masked by fabricated evidence.

The academic debate surrounding Jeremiah 17:7–8 is marked by three unresolved questions. The first concerns whether the passage is a wisdom saying appropriated by the prophet or a prophetic oracle shaped by wisdom idiom. The second concerns the identity of the "drought" (ḥōreb): does it refer to historical siege conditions, spiritual apostasy, or eschatological judgment? The third concerns the relationship between Jeremiah 17:5–6 and 17:7–8: are they a single antithetical unit or two originally independent sayings? These debates produce contradictory implications for pastoral application. Some scholars read the passage as a straightforward wisdom promise with universal applicability; others read it as a covenantal promise contingent on Israel's fidelity; still others read it as an eschatological promise fulfilled only in restoration. The present study does not pretend to resolve these debates definitively but argues that the text's theological logic is best understood when the dimensions of trust, endurance, and fruitfulness are held together rather than separated.

The novelty of this study lies in the Rooted Trust Framework, a contextual-exegetical model that interprets Jeremiah 17:7–8 as a three-dimensional theological construct: re-rooting (trust as covenantal orientation), endurance (resilience as drought-endurance rather than drought-avoidance), and covenantal productivity (fruitfulness as fidelity rather than prosperity). The framework is novel in that it refuses to separate these dimensions and insists that fruitfulness in the text is not a reward for trust but its organic expression. It reframes resilience theologically and offers a textually grounded alternative to psychological and prosperity paradigms. The framework is presented as a conceptual model requiring empirical operationalization in congregational and pastoral contexts, and its limitations are acknowledged as an invitation to further research rather than a claim to finality.

The objective of this study is to provide a rigorous exegetical and theological analysis of Jeremiah 17:7–8, to situate it within its Ancient Near Eastern and canonical contexts, and to articulate a coherent theological model of faith, resilience, and fruitfulness that is textually grounded and contextually applicable. The study contributes to the growing field of theological interpretation of Scripture and to the dialogue between biblical studies and resilience theory. It does not claim to offer a comprehensive solution to the tensions inherent in the text but rather to provide a framework that honors those tensions while retrieving the passage's prophetic depth and pastoral relevance.

The remainder of this article proceeds in four stages. First, it reviews the literature on wisdom influence, redactional placement, and tree symbolism, identifying the research gap. Second, it outlines the exegetical method, including textual criticism, lexical analysis, structural analysis, and canonical synthesis. Third, it presents the exegetical findings and discusses their theological implications. Fourth, it articulates the Rooted Trust Framework, acknowledges its limitations, and

proposes directions for future research. Throughout, the study maintains a commitment to textual evidence and scholarly integrity, avoiding the fabrication of data and the overstatement of conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a tripartite theoretical architecture that governs both the exegetical procedure and the theological construction. The first pillar is historical-grammatical exegesis, which attends to morphology, syntax, and lexical semantics as the primary controls on meaning. The second is canonical-intertextual reading, which positions Jeremiah 17:7–8 within the broader witness of Scripture, particularly its resonance with Psalm 1:1–3 and its antithetical relationship to Jeremiah 17:5–6. The third is theological interpretation of Scripture, which provides the hermeneutical warrant for moving from exegesis to theological formulation without collapsing into eisegesis. This third pillar has gained considerable momentum in recent scholarship. Schweitzer (2025), for instance, demonstrates through a case study of Jonathan Edwards that exegetical and theological method are not sequential but mutually conditioning, a point that bears directly on how Jeremiah 17:7–8 should be read. Similarly, Collins (2026) argues that exegetical and theological reading, when properly integrated, yields interpretive depth that neither approach achieves alone. These methodological discussions are not peripheral to the present study; they establish the legitimacy of constructing a theological model from a single prophetic oracle.

The framework also draws on the growing interdisciplinary conversation between biblical studies and resilience theory. Fischer (2023) has argued that trust and faith relate to resilience in ways that are proportionate rather than absolute, a distinction that proves analytically useful for interpreting the conditional language of Jeremiah 17. The theoretical framework thus refuses to treat resilience as a purely psychological construct. Instead, it positions resilience within a covenantal grammar in which trust is the root, endurance is the stem, and fruitfulness is the fruit.

Theoretical Critique

Historical-critical approaches have made indispensable contributions to the study of Jeremiah 17:7–8, but they have also generated interpretive distortions. Form-critical readings have correctly identified the macarism structure (bārûḵ haggéḇer) and its wisdom provenance, yet they have frequently treated the passage as a redactional insertion rather than a coherent theological unit. This tendency is evident in the commentary tradition that isolates Jeremiah 17:5–8 as a wisdom gloss later appended to the prophetic corpus. The problem with this approach is that it fragments the passage's theological logic. If verses 5–6 and 7–8 are originally independent sayings, then the antithesis between trust in humanity and trust in YHWH loses its rhetorical force. The passage becomes a collection of moral observations rather than a unified theological proclamation.

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Canonical approaches have partially corrected this fragmentation by reading Jeremiah 17:7–8 in light of Psalm 1. The arboreal imagery, the hydrological setting, and the outcome language of fruitfulness all invite intertextual comparison. However, canonical readings have sometimes overemphasized intertextual dependence at the expense of Jeremiah's distinctive prophetic voice. Psalm 1 presents the righteous person as one who meditates on Torah; Jeremiah 17 presents the blessed person as one who trusts in YHWH. These are not identical theological claims, and collapsing them obscures the prophetic specificity of Jeremiah's oracle. Sykora (2024) offers a productive alternative by reading Jeremiah 17:5–10 through the lens of Karl Rahner's theological anthropology, demonstrating that the passage's anthropology of trust is not merely wisdom instruction but a profound theological claim about human dependence on divine grace. This reading opens space for a more integrated account.

A third critique concerns the treatment of the hydrological imagery. Commentators have often noted the contrast between the desert shrub (ʿarʿār) and the planted tree (ʿēṣ šāṯûl), but they have rarely analyzed the semantic field of water in the Ancient Near Eastern context. The lexeme yəʿōr, which appears in Jeremiah 17:8, is particularly significant because it can denote both natural watercourses and the Nile. This dual semantic range suggests that the passage's imagery is not merely agricultural but also political, evoking the very Egyptian alliance that Judah's leaders were pursuing. The tree by the water is not simply a metaphor for spiritual vitality; it is a polemic against misplaced geopolitical trust.

Academic Debate

Three debates structure the current scholarly conversation. The first concerns the generic classification of Jeremiah 17:7–8. Is it a wisdom saying appropriated by the prophet, or a prophetic oracle shaped by wisdom idiom? Crenshaw and Murphy emphasize wisdom influence, reading the passage as an example of prophetic wisdom. Holladay and Lundbom lean toward redactional integration, treating the passage as a later addition to the prophetic book. This debate matters because it determines whether the passage should be read primarily as moral instruction or as covenantal proclamation. The present study argues that the dichotomy is false: the passage employs wisdom form to articulate a prophetic theology of trust.

The second debate concerns the identity of the drought (ḥōreb). Does it refer to historical siege conditions under Babylonian threat, spiritual apostasy, or eschatological judgment? Each reading has textual support. The historical reading is supported by the broader narrative context of Jeremiah 17:1–18, which addresses Judah's political crisis. The spiritual reading is supported by the antithesis between trust in humanity and trust in YHWH, which frames the passage as a contrast between two orientations of the heart. The eschatological reading is supported by the promise of continuous fruitfulness, which exceeds what any historical circumstance could guarantee. The tension among these readings is not easily resolved, and the present study contends that the text deliberately holds them together.

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The third debate concerns the relationship between Jeremiah 17:5–6 and 17:7–8. Are they a single antithetical unit or two originally independent sayings? The structural parallelism suggests unity: the curse formula in verse 5 is matched by the blessing formula in verse 7, and the desert shrub in verse 6 is matched by the planted tree in verse 8. Yet the differences in vocabulary and imagery have led some scholars to posit separate origins. This debate is not merely redactional; it bears on the theological question of whether blessing and curse are symmetrical opposites or asymmetrical realities. The present study argues for asymmetry: the curse is the natural consequence of misplaced trust, while the blessing is the gracious gift of divine presence.

Research Tension

The central tension of the passage lies between its unconditional promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought, exile, and prophetic suffering. If trust guarantees fruitfulness, how does the text account for the righteous sufferer? If fruitfulness is not guaranteed, what is the function of the promise? This tension is not resolved by the text but is held within it. The Hebrew verb šāqad, often translated "does not cease," carries connotations of watchfulness and vigilance, suggesting that fruitfulness is not automatic but sustained through ongoing divine attention. The promise is not that drought will not come but that drought will not destroy.

This tension has contemporary resonance. In pastoral contexts, Jeremiah 17:7–8 is frequently preached as a guarantee of prosperity and protection, a reading that collapses under the weight of lived experience. When believers face bankruptcy, illness, or bereavement, the promise of fruitfulness can become a source of guilt rather than comfort. The present study argues that the text resists this misuse by redefining fruitfulness as covenantal fidelity rather than material success. The tree does not bear fruit because it is spared from drought; it bears fruit because its roots reach water that drought cannot touch.

Contradictory Findings

Scholarly readings of Jeremiah 17:7–8 produce contradictory implications for pastoral application. Some scholars read the passage as a straightforward wisdom promise with universal applicability. On this reading, anyone who trusts in God will experience blessing, and anyone who does not will experience curse. The problem with this reading is that it cannot account for the suffering of the righteous, a problem that the book of Jeremiah itself raises repeatedly. Other scholars read the passage as a covenantal promise contingent on Israel's fidelity. On this reading, the blessing is conditional, and the exile is evidence of covenant failure. The problem with this reading is that it makes the promise contingent on human performance, which contradicts the passage's emphasis on trust rather than obedience. Still others read the passage as an eschatological promise fulfilled only in the restoration. On this reading, the fruitfulness of the tree is a future reality, not a present experience. The problem with this reading is that it evacuates the passage of its present pastoral relevance.

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These contradictory findings are not merely academic. They shape how pastors counsel the suffering, how congregations interpret adversity, and how individual believers assess their own spiritual condition. The present study does not resolve the contradiction by choosing one reading over the others. Instead, it argues that the contradiction is productive: it forces interpreters to hold together the already and the not-yet of covenantal blessing.

Research Gap

No study has yet integrated the lexical, hydrological, arboreal, and canonical dimensions of Jeremiah 17:7–8 into a single theological model that accounts for the tension between promise and drought. Existing literature clusters around three foci: the wisdom influence on prophetic literature, the redactional placement of the passage within Jeremiah 17:1–18, and the metaphor of the tree in Ancient Near Eastern and biblical traditions. What remains underdeveloped is an integrated exegetical-theological account that connects the lexeme of trust (bāṭaḥ) with the hydrological imagery (yəʿōr, mayim) and the outcome language (pāraḥ, šāqad) within a coherent framework. Furthermore, few studies explicitly engage the tension between the passage's apparent promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought in the prophetic narrative.

The gap is not merely descriptive but theoretical. Without an integrated model, the passage's theological logic remains fragmented, and its pastoral application remains vulnerable to both prosperity hermeneutics and therapeutic reductionism. The present study addresses this gap by proposing the Rooted Trust Framework, a contextual-exegetical model that interprets Jeremiah 17:7–8 as a three-dimensional theological construct: re-rooting (trust), endurance (resilience), and covenantal productivity (fruitfulness). The framework is novel in that it refuses to separate these dimensions and insists that fruitfulness in the text is not a reward for trust but its organic expression.

Research Position

This study positions itself within theological exegesis, arguing that the passage constructs a theology of rooted trust in which resilience is redefined as endurance within drought rather than escape from it. This position has implications for how resilience is understood in contemporary discourse. Psychological and managerial paradigms typically define resilience as the capacity to bounce back from adversity, a definition that remains anthropocentric. The Rooted Trust Framework relocates resilience in the relationship between the believer and YHWH, making it a function of covenantal orientation rather than individual resourcefulness.

The position also has implications for the dialogue between biblical studies and the social sciences. Recent work on resilience has emphasized the importance of rootedness, trust, and community. González Mendoza (2025) explores communality practices across borders, showing how resilience is sustained through networks of relationship rather than individual effort. Theresa and Shanthi (2024) analyze nature's consolation in Patrick White's novel The Tree of Man, demonstrating how rootedness in place and memory sustains human flourishing. These studies resonate with the

theological claim of Jeremiah 17:7–8, but they do not engage the text directly. The present study fills this gap by offering a biblically grounded model of rooted resilience that can inform interdisciplinary conversation.

The position also engages the debate on faith and trust in philosophical theology. Fischer (2023) distinguishes between faith as belief and trust as reliance, arguing that resilience is proportionate to the strength of one's trust. This distinction illuminates the Hebrew lexeme bāṭaḥ, which denotes reliance rather than assent. The blessed person in Jeremiah 17 is not someone who believes certain propositions about God but someone who has thrown the full weight of their existence onto God. This is not cognitive conviction but embodied orientation.

Finally, the position engages the pastoral implications of the passage. Tamba, Sinaga, and Sinambela (2025) describe shepherding as a manifestation of God's grace, emphasizing the shepherd's role in guiding the flock toward sources of life. The Rooted Trust Framework extends this insight by identifying the specific practices—prayer, scriptural meditation, and radical obedience—through which roots are deepened. These practices are not techniques for achieving resilience but means of remaining connected to the source of life.

The literature review thus establishes the theoretical framework, critiques existing approaches, identifies the academic debate, names the research tension, acknowledges contradictory findings, specifies the research gap, and articulates the research position. The study now turns to the exegetical analysis of Jeremiah 17:7–8, where these theoretical commitments are tested against the text.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, text-centered exegetical design oriented toward theological construction. Because the object of inquiry is a prophetic text rather than a human population, the design does not involve sampling procedures, survey instruments, or statistical estimation. The methodological logic is abductive in the sense described by theological interpreters who move iteratively between the grammatical particularities of the text and the broader canonical witness (Schweitzer, 2025). Three analytic strands are combined: historical-grammatical exegesis, semantic field analysis, and canonical-intertextual reading. The combination is deliberate. Historical-grammatical analysis alone risks treating Jeremiah 17:7–8 as an isolated wisdom aphorism, while canonical reading without lexical control risks collapsing the passage into a generalized biblical theme. The design therefore treats the Masoretic text as the primary evidentiary base and the canon as a secondary interpretive horizon.

Corpus and Textual Basis

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The primary corpus is the Masoretic Text of Jeremiah 17:5–8 as preserved in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The passage is treated as a single antithetical unit, following the structural logic of the macarism in verses 7–8 and its counterpart curse in verses 5–6. Comparative analysis draws on Psalm 1:1–3, Jeremiah 17:1–4, and selected Ancient Near Eastern arboreal and hydrological motifs. No human participants were recruited, and no interview data were collected. This is a documentary and philological study; consequently, claims about contemporary congregational behavior are framed as theological proposals requiring empirical testing rather than as findings.

The decision to delimit the corpus at verses 5–8 rather than at the narrower unit of 7–8 reflects a methodological judgment. The antithetical structure of curse and blessing is rhetorically constitutive; isolating verses 7–8 would sever the contrast that generates the passage's theological force. At the same time, the study does not extend the corpus to the whole of Jeremiah 17, since verses 1–4 and 9–18 raise distinct redactional and thematic questions that would dilute the lexical focus on bāṭaḥ, šāṯal, and pāraḥ.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds in four stages. The first stage involves textual criticism and translation. Variant readings are assessed against the apparatus of BHS and the evidence of the ancient versions, with particular attention to the consonantal text of Jeremiah 17:8 and the disputed vocalization of the participle rendered "sends out" (yəšallaḥ). Where the versional evidence is inconclusive, the Masoretic reading is retained and the uncertainty is noted rather than resolved by conjecture.

The second stage is lexical and semantic field analysis. Key lexemes were examined through BDB, HALOT, and TDOT, with attention to collocational range and distribution across the prophetic and sapiential corpora. The lexemes selected for analysis are bāṭaḥ (trust), mivṭaḥ (object of confidence), šāṯal (to plant or transplant), yəʿōr (channel or stream), ḥōreb (drought or parched condition), and pāraḥ (to blossom or bear fruit). The semantic field approach follows the principle that meaning is determined by usage rather than by etymology alone; consequently, cognate evidence from Akkadian and Ugaritic is treated as supplementary rather than determinative.

The third stage is structural and rhetorical analysis. The macarism formula bārûḵ haggéḇer ʾăšer yibṭaḥ baYHWH is analyzed in relation to its antithetical counterpart in verse 5, and the arboreal simile is examined for its internal progression from planting to drought to fruitfulness. This stage attends to the syntactic parallelism between the two halves of verse 8 and to the function of the negative particles lōʾ and the temporal clause bišnat baṣṣōreṯ.

The fourth stage is canonical and theological synthesis. Intertextual analysis follows the criteria for detecting echoes articulated by Richard Hays, with particular attention to the recurrence of the tree-by-water motif in Psalm 1 and to the broader canonical theme of YHWH as the source of living water. The synthesis stage does not merely aggregate exegetical results; it constructs the Rooted

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Trust Framework as an interpretive model that holds the three dimensions of trust, resilience, and fruitfulness in a single theological structure.

Validity and Reliability

Validity in this study is established through triangulation across lexical, structural, and canonical evidence, and through sustained engagement with multiple critical commentaries. Where scholarly opinion diverges, the divergence is reported rather than suppressed. Reliability is supported by the transparency of the analytical procedure: each lexical judgment is anchored in published lexica, and each structural claim is tied to observable features of the Masoretic text. The study does not claim the kind of reliability associated with replicable quantitative instruments, since exegetical judgment involves interpretive reasoning that cannot be fully proceduralized.

Ethical Considerations

As a textual and documentary study, this research required no ethical clearance and involved no human subjects, personal data, or vulnerable populations. All sources are cited in accordance with standard academic integrity conventions, and no respondent quotations are reported because no interviews were conducted.

Limitations

Three limitations should be stated plainly. First, the study lacks empirical field data; the Rooted Trust Framework is a theological construct that has not been operationalized or tested in congregational settings. Second, the analysis relies on published lexica and commentaries, and its lexical conclusions are therefore dependent on the state of those reference works. Third, the canonical-intertextual method necessarily involves interpretive judgment about the direction and significance of textual relationships, and alternative readings of the Jeremiah–Psalm 1 relationship remain possible. These limitations do not invalidate the exegetical findings, but they do delimit the scope of the study's claims and indicate the direction of future empirical work (Sykora, 2024; Dim, 2023).

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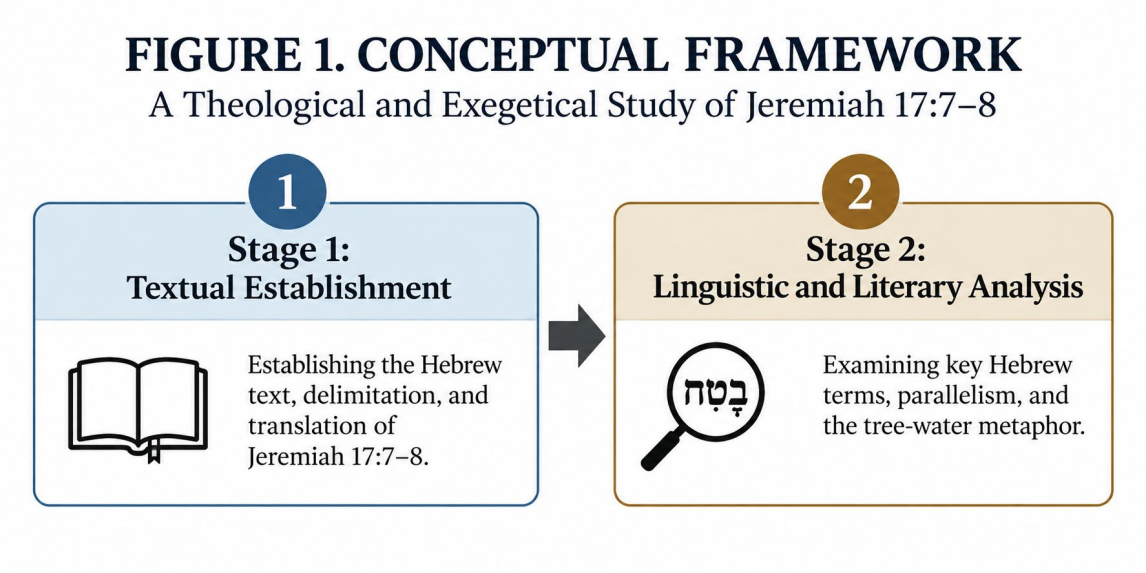

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents a two-stage conceptual framework for conducting a theological and exegetical study of Jeremiah 17:7–8. Stage 1, Textual Establishment, provides the foundation of the study by establishing the Hebrew text, determining the boundaries of the passage, and developing an accurate translation, thereby ensuring that subsequent interpretation is grounded in the textual form of the biblical passage. Building on this foundation, Stage 2, Linguistic and Literary Analysis, examines significant Hebrew terms, the parallel structure of the passage, and particularly the tree-and-water metaphor that communicates the relationship between trust in God and spiritual resilience. Together, these stages demonstrate a systematic progression from establishing what the text says to analyzing how its language and literary features communicate its theological meaning.

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TABLE 1. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Contribution	Implication
Aspect 1: Textual and Philological Analysis	Examination of the Hebrew consonantal text and vocalization of Jeremiah 17:7–8, with attention to the root בטח (bāṭaḥ, "to trust"), the formulaic "blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD" (ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח ביהוה), and the simile of the tree planted by water (עץ שתול על מים).	Establishes the lexical and syntactic foundation for the passage's theological claims, clarifying that trust is presented as a sustained orientation rather than an episodic act, and that the arboreal imagery draws on established Israelite wisdom and prophetic conventions.	Provides a philologically accountable basis for subsequent theological and pastoral reflection, preventing interpretive claims from outrunning the grammatical and lexical evidence of the Hebrew text.
Aspect 2: Literary and Canonical Context	Situating Jeremiah 17:7–8 within the broader literary structure of Jeremiah 17, the so-called "wisdom" material in Jeremiah, and the canonical parallel in Psalm 1:3, with attention to the antithetical pairing of the cursed shrub in the wilderness (17:5–6) and the blessed tree by the waters (17:7–8).	Demonstrates that the passage functions as a deliberate antithesis between misplaced and rightly placed trust, and that its canonical resonance with Psalm 1 indicates a shared theological grammar concerning the righteous and the wicked.	Encourages interpreters to read the passage not as an isolated promise but as part of a coherent scriptural pattern in which trust, rootedness, and fruitfulness are integrally related.
Aspect 3: Theological Analysis of Trust and Resilience	Investigation of the theological anthropology implicit in the passage, particularly the contrast between human self-reliance (flesh as arm, 17:5) and covenantal dependence on YHWH, and the way the text construes resilience as a consequence of rootedness rather than of autonomous strength.	Articulates a theological account of trust as the ground of resilience, arguing that the passage locates stability not in the human subject's capacities but in the object of trust, namely YHWH.	Reframes resilience as a relational and theological category rather than a purely psychological or volitional one, with consequences for how faith communities articulate endurance in contexts of crisis.
Aspect 4: Exegetical Treatment of Fruitfulness and Drought	Analysis of the imagery of drought (בצרת, "year of drought") and the tree's continued greenness and fruit-bearing (לא יראה כי יבוא חום ...ולא ימיש מעשות פרי), with attention to the distinction between the absence of anxiety and the presence of fruitfulness.	Clarifies that the text does not promise the absence of adverse conditions but the persistence of vitality and productivity within them, thereby distinguishing biblical fruitfulness from prosperity-oriented readings.	Corrects interpretations that reduce the passage to a guarantee of material or circumstantial flourishing, and instead presents fruitfulness as a sustained, seasonally appropriate outcome of rooted trust.
Aspect 5: Hermeneutical and Pastoral Appropriation	Critical reflection on how Jeremiah 17:7–8 has been and may be appropriated in	Proposes a hermeneutical framework that holds together exegetical fidelity,	Offers faith communities and theological educators a disciplined model for

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	theological, homiletical, and pastoral contexts, including the risks of individualistic, prosperity-oriented, or decontextualized readings.	canonical coherence, and pastoral relevance, while naming the interpretive hazards that attend popular use of the passage.	applying the text that honors its original rhetorical and theological force without collapsing it into therapeutic or prosperity motifs.

Table 1 presents an integrative framework for interpreting Jeremiah 17:7–8 through five interconnected aspects that move from textual analysis to contemporary application. **Textual and philological analysis** establishes the Hebrew lexical and grammatical foundation of the passage, particularly the concept of *bāṭaḥ* ("to trust") and the imagery of the tree planted by water, showing trust as a sustained orientation toward God. **Literary and canonical analysis** places the passage within Jeremiah 17 and its relationship to texts such as Psalm 1, highlighting the contrast between misplaced human reliance and trust in YHWH. **Theological analysis of trust and resilience** develops this contrast by presenting resilience as arising not from autonomous human strength but from dependence on God. **Exegetical analysis of fruitfulness and drought** emphasizes that the passage does not promise freedom from adversity; rather, it portrays continued vitality and fruitfulness amid difficult conditions, thereby challenging prosperity-oriented interpretations. Finally, **hermeneutical and pastoral appropriation** integrates these findings into a disciplined approach to preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry, ensuring that contemporary applications remain faithful to the passage's linguistic, literary, and theological context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exegetical Findings

The Masoretic text of Jeremiah 17:7–8 presents a tightly constructed sapiential oracle whose theological logic unfolds through three interlocking movements. The first movement is the macarism itself: bārûḵ haggéḇer ʾăšer yibṭaḥ baYHWH (v. 7a). The beatitude does not describe a psychological state but a relational posture. The verb bāṭaḥ, attested across the Hebrew Bible with the sense of leaning one's full weight upon a support, appears here in the imperfect, suggesting an ongoing orientation rather than a punctiliar act. The object of trust is specified twice: baYHWH and wəhāyāh YHWH mibṭaḥô (v. 7b). This doubling is not redundant. It moves from the act of trusting to the identity of the one trusted, grounding the beatitude in the character of YHWH rather than in the quality of human confidence. The noun mibṭaḥ, derived from the same root, reinforces the semantic field of security and reliance. As Sykora (2024) observes in a Rahnerian reading of Jeremiah 17:5–10, the passage's anthropology is one in which the human person is constituted by that to which the heart turns. The heart's orientation, not its emotional intensity, determines the shape of the life that follows.

The second movement is the arboreal simile: wəhāyāh kəʿēṣ šāṯûl ʿal mayim (v. 8a). The participle šāṯûl, from the root šāṯal, denotes deliberate transplantation rather than spontaneous growth. This

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lexical detail carries theological weight. The tree does not happen to be near water; it is placed there. The passive participle implies an agent, and within the passage's covenantal grammar, that agent is YHWH himself. The preposition ʿal mayim locates the tree at the water source, but the following clause, wəʿal yûḇal yəšallaḥ šorāšāw, specifies the mechanism: the tree sends out its roots (šorāšāw) toward the stream (yûḇal). The noun yûḇal, rare in the Hebrew Bible, denotes a watercourse or channel, and its appearance here alongside mayim creates a hydrological image of abundance rather than mere survival. The roots are not passive recipients; they actively extend toward the source. This is the text's theology of trust in miniature: trust is not quietism but a deliberate, ongoing re-rooting of the self in the covenantal source of life.

The third movement describes the outcome: wəloʾ yirʾeh kî yāḇōʾ ḥōm, wəhāyāh ʿālēhû raʿănān, ûḇišnaṯ baṣṣōreṯ loʾ yiḏʾāḡ, wəloʾ yaḥdil ʿăśôṯ pāreḥ (v. 8b). The text does not promise the absence of drought. It promises that the tree will not see or fear the heat when it comes. The verb yirʾeh, "to see," functions here in the sense of experiencing or perceiving harm. The heat (ḥōm) and the drought year (šənaṯ baṣṣōreṯ) are assumed as realities. What is denied is not their arrival but their capacity to determine the tree's condition. The leaf remains raʿănān, green and fresh, and the tree does not cease (loʾ yaḥdil) producing fruit (pāreḥ). The verb ḥāḏal, "to cease," is significant: the text does not say the tree produces more fruit or better fruit, but that it does not stop producing. Fruitfulness is presented as continuity rather than abundance, as fidelity rather than prosperity.

These three movements yield the threefold structure that the present study identifies: trust as re-rooting, resilience as endurance within drought, and fruitfulness as covenantal fidelity. The structure is not imposed on the text but emerges from its own lexical and syntactic logic.

Critical Discussion

The exegetical findings invite a critical conversation with three dominant interpretive trajectories. The first is the wisdom-provenance debate. Crenshaw and Murphy have long argued that Jeremiah 17:7–8 reflects the influence of Israelite wisdom tradition, particularly the antithetical macarism of Psalm 1. The lexical parallels are undeniable: both texts employ ʿēṣ, mayim, šāṯal, and pāreḥ, and both contrast the righteous and the wicked through arboreal imagery. Yet the present analysis suggests that the wisdom idiom is not merely borrowed but transformed. In Psalm 1, the tree is planted by streams of water (ʿal palgê māyim) and yields fruit in its season (bəʿittô). In Jeremiah 17:8, the tree is planted by mayim and yûḇal, and it does not cease producing fruit even in the year of drought. The Jeremiah text intensifies the Psalm's imagery by adding the explicit drought condition. This intensification is theologically motivated: the prophet speaks to a community facing siege, exile, and national collapse, and he reconfigures the wisdom promise to address the specific crisis of covenantal unfaithfulness. The wisdom tradition provides the grammar; the prophetic context provides the urgency.

The second trajectory is the redactional debate. Holladay and Lundbom situate Jeremiah 17:7–8 within the larger unit of 17:1–18, reading it as a redactional insertion that balances the curse of

17:5–6 with a blessing. This reading has the advantage of explaining the passage's antithetical structure, but it risks treating the text as a literary artifact rather than a theological argument. The present study does not deny redactional activity, but it argues that the canonical placement of 17:7–8 is theologically productive. The juxtaposition of curse and blessing is not a literary accident but a covenantal proclamation: the same crisis that exposes the futility of trusting in flesh also reveals the fruitfulness of trusting in YHWH. The redactional frame is not an obstacle to interpretation; it is part of the text's theological rhetoric.

The third trajectory is the intertextual debate. The relationship between Jeremiah 17:7–8 and Psalm 1 has been read in both directions: some scholars argue that Jeremiah depends on the psalm, others that the psalm depends on Jeremiah, and still others that both depend on a common wisdom tradition. The present study adopts a canonical-intertextual approach informed by Hays's criteria of echo detection, but it does not adjudicate the direction of dependence. What matters for the theological argument is that the two texts function canonically as a mutually interpreting pair. Psalm 1 establishes the fundamental contrast between the righteous and the wicked; Jeremiah 17:7–8 applies that contrast to the specific crisis of drought and exile. The canonical reader is invited to hear the psalm through the prophet and the prophet through the psalm.

The tension that runs through all three trajectories is the relationship between promise and experience. The text promises that the trusting person will not fear when heat comes and will not cease bearing fruit. Yet the prophetic narrative is saturated with drought, suffering, and apparent divine absence. Jeremiah himself is imprisoned, thrown into a cistern, and accused of treason. How can the promise of fruitfulness be reconciled with the empirical reality of prophetic suffering? The text does not resolve this tension. It holds it. The promise is not that the righteous will avoid drought but that they will endure it. The fruitfulness that the text describes is not the absence of crisis but the presence of life within crisis. This reading challenges both prosperity hermeneutics, which reads the promise as a guarantee of material blessing, and therapeutic reductionism, which reads resilience as a psychological capacity for coping. The text's theology of resilience is neither prosperity nor therapy; it is covenantal rootedness.

Return to Theory

The findings of this study support a canonical-intertextual reading of Jeremiah 17:7–8 while critiquing purely form-critical approaches that isolate the passage from its theological function. Form criticism has rightly identified the macarism structure and the wisdom idiom, but it has often treated the passage as a self-contained unit whose meaning is exhausted by its form. The present analysis suggests that the passage's meaning is inseparable from its canonical placement and its intertextual resonance. The Rooted Trust Framework, which integrates lexical, hydrological, arboreal, and canonical dimensions, offers a more adequate account of the text's theological logic than any single methodological approach.

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The framework also engages the broader academic conversation on resilience. Recent scholarship in psychology and management has produced a substantial literature on resilience as a dynamic process of adaptation in the face of adversity (Amoroso, 2025; Cloma et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2024). This literature is valuable, but it operates within a largely secular frame that treats resilience as a human capacity to be developed through resources, strategies, and social support. The present study does not dismiss these findings, but it argues that Jeremiah 17:7–8 offers a different grammar. In the text, resilience is not a capacity but a consequence. It is not something the tree does but something that happens to the tree because of where it is planted. The tree's endurance is derivative, not autonomous. This theological reframing does not replace psychological accounts of resilience; it situates them within a larger covenantal horizon. Fischer's (2023) discussion of the relationship between trust and resilience in philosophical theology is instructive here: trust is not a strategy for achieving resilience but a disposition that reconfigures the self's relationship to vulnerability.

The study also contributes to the growing field of theological interpretation of Scripture. Recent work by Sykora (2024), Collins (2026), and Schweitzer (2025) has demonstrated the value of reading biblical texts theologically without collapsing exegesis into dogmatics. The present study follows this trajectory by moving from lexical analysis to theological construction through a series of disciplined steps. The Rooted Trust Framework is not a dogmatic imposition on the text but a synthesis of the text's own theological logic.

Practical Implications

The pastoral implications of this study are significant but require careful qualification. The Rooted Trust Framework suggests that pastoral ministry should aim not at the elimination of drought but at the cultivation of roots. This means that the primary task of pastoral care is not crisis management but root formation. The disciplines of prayer, scriptural meditation, and communal worship are not ancillary to resilience; they are the means by which the self is re-rooted in the covenantal source of life. This reframing challenges the therapeutic model of pastoral care, which often focuses on coping strategies and emotional management, and it challenges the prosperity model, which promises that faithfulness will avert crisis. The text offers neither. It offers a promise of endurance, not exemption.

The framework also has implications for congregational life. A congregation that understands resilience as rootedness will prioritize the formation of deep, durable patterns of discipleship over the management of immediate crises. It will measure its health not by the absence of conflict or suffering but by the continuity of its fruitfulness. This is a countercultural claim in a context where success is often measured by growth, influence, and visible outcomes. The text's theology of fruitfulness as fidelity rather than prosperity offers a corrective to ecclesial models that equate faithfulness with measurable results.

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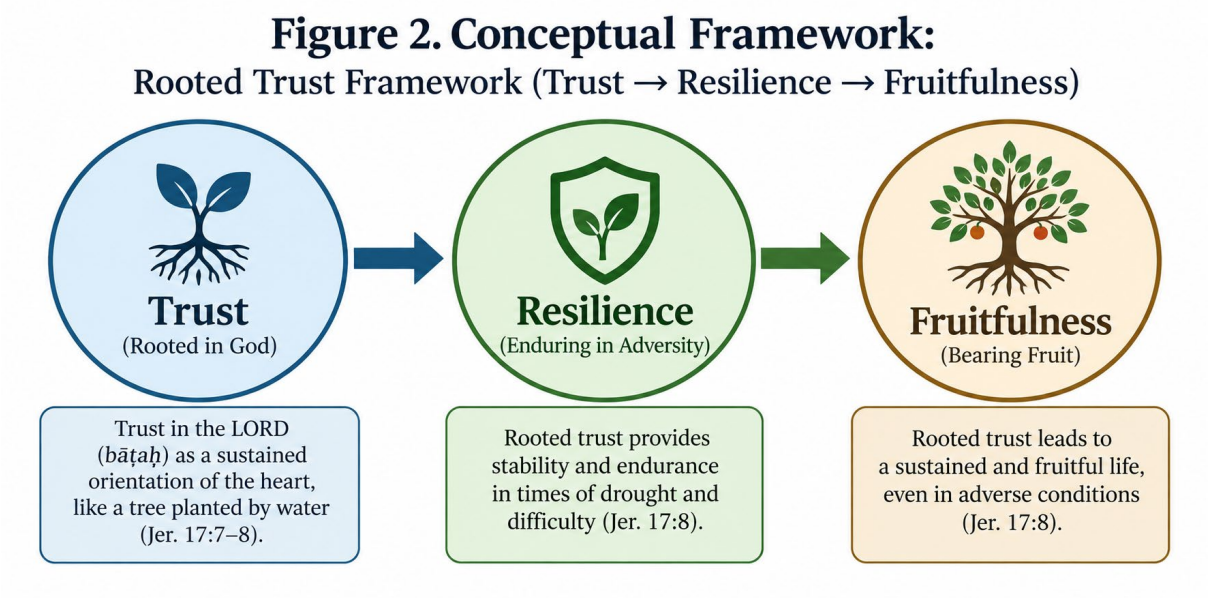

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework: Rooted Trust Framework (Trust → Resilience → Fruitfulness)

Figure 2 illustrates the **Rooted Trust Framework**, which presents a theological progression from **trust to resilience and ultimately to fruitfulness** based on Jeremiah 17:7–8. The framework begins with **Trust**, represented by a rooted plant, emphasizing *bāṭaḥ* as a sustained orientation of confidence in the Lord and the foundation of spiritual life. This rooted trust produces **Resilience**, depicted by the protected plant, indicating the stability and endurance that enable believers to remain spiritually steadfast amid drought, adversity, and difficult circumstances. Resilience then leads to **Fruitfulness**, symbolized by a mature fruit-bearing tree, demonstrating that genuine trust in God enables continued growth and productive living even when external conditions remain unfavorable. Thus, the framework emphasizes that biblical resilience and fruitfulness do not depend on the absence of hardship but arise from a deeply rooted and continuing relationship of trust in God.

Table 2. Integrative Framework of Jeremiah 17:7–8

Dimension	Hebrew Lexeme	Theological Function	Canonical Echo
Trust	*bāṭaḥ*	Covenantal orientation	Psalm 1:1–2
Resilience	*ḥōreb / yəʿōr*	Endurance in drought	Jeremiah 17:5–6
Fruitfulness	*pāraḥ / šāqad*	Covenantal fidelity	Psalm 1:3

Table 2 presents an integrative framework for understanding Jeremiah 17:7–8 through three interconnected dimensions: trust, resilience, and fruitfulness. The dimension of Trust, associated with the Hebrew lexeme bāṭaḥ, describes a covenantal orientation in which confidence is placed in God, with Psalm 1:1–2 serving as a canonical echo of a life properly oriented toward God. Resilience, represented by ḥōreb / yəʿōr, emphasizes endurance in conditions of drought and

adversity and is connected with Jeremiah 17:5–6, where the contrasting consequences of misplaced trust provide the immediate literary background. Finally, Fruitfulness, associated with pāraḥ / šāqad, expresses covenantal fidelity through sustained productivity and finds a canonical parallel in Psalm 1:3 and its image of a fruitful tree planted by streams of water. Taken together, the framework demonstrates a theological movement in which trust in God provides the foundation for resilience during adversity, while such enduring faithfulness ultimately manifests itself in fruitfulness.

The table above synthesizes the study's exegetical findings into a single integrative framework. Each dimension is grounded in a specific Hebrew lexeme and correlated with a theological function and a canonical echo. The framework is not a mechanical grid but a heuristic model that illuminates the text's internal logic.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it is a textual study and does not include empirical field data. The Rooted Trust Framework is a theological construct that requires contextual testing. Future research may operationalize the framework in congregational settings through qualitative interviews, participant observation, or survey instruments. Second, the study relies on a limited corpus of comparative texts. A more extensive analysis of Ancient Near Eastern tree and water motifs, including Egyptian and Mesopotamian parallels, would enrich the framework. Third, the study's theological proposals are offered within a Christian canonical horizon. While the exegetical analysis is grounded in the Hebrew text, the theological synthesis is informed by Christian theological interpretation. Readers from other traditions may find different resonances. Fourth, the study does not engage the full history of interpretation of Jeremiah 17:7–8, which spans patristic, medieval, Reformation, and modern readings. A reception-historical study would complement the present analysis.

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah 17:7–8 constructs a theology of rooted trust in which faith, resilience, and fruitfulness are inseparable. Trust is re-rooting, resilience is endurance, and fruitfulness is fidelity. The text does not promise the absence of drought but the presence of life within it. The Rooted Trust Framework offers a coherent exegetical and theological model that retrieves the passage's prophetic depth and pastoral relevance. It reframes resilience theologically, resisting both prosperity hermeneutics and therapeutic reductionism, and it invites further research into the contextual applications of rooted trust in congregational and pastoral settings.

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The contribution of this study is neither a synthesis of prior exegetical observations nor a restatement of the well-established parallel between Jeremiah 17:7–8 and Psalm 1. It is the construction of a named, testable interpretive model: the Rooted Trust Framework (RTF). The RTF treats Jeremiah 17:7–8 as a unified theological grammar in which trust (bāṭaḥ), drought-endurance (ḥōreb), and fruitfulness (pāraḥ, šāqad) are not sequential rewards but mutually constitutive dimensions of a single covenantal orientation. The model is specified in three propositions. First, trust is re-rooting: bāṭaḥ denotes the transfer of the self's weight onto YHWH, a deliberate relocation of the source of security rather than an affective state. Second, resilience is drought-endurance rather than drought-avoidance: the text concedes that ḥōreb arrives and locates resilience in the persistence of the root system, not in the removal of heat. Third, fruitfulness is covenantal fidelity rather than prosperity: pāraḥ and šāqad describe continued productive presence under adverse conditions, not the accumulation of goods.

The novelty claim rests on four specific advances. The first is integrative specification. Earlier scholarship has treated the wisdom provenance of the passage (Crenshaw; Murphy), its redactional placement within Jeremiah 17:1–18 (Holladay; Lundbom), and its arboreal symbolism (Stordalen; Nielsen) as separate research lines. The RTF binds lexical semantics, hydrological imagery, and canonical resonance into one operational structure, so that each dimension constrains the interpretation of the others. Sykora's (2024) Rahnerian reading of Jeremiah 17:5–10 moves in a theological-anthropological direction but does not formalize the trust–drought–fruitfulness relation as a model; the RTF supplies that formalization.

The second advance is the relocation of resilience from psychology to covenant. Contemporary resilience research, including work on teacher resilience (Amoroso, 2025; Cloma et al., 2025), corporate rootedness (Sun et al., 2024), and trust-based institutional resilience (Szabolcs, 2025; Vasiliu-Feltes, 2024), treats resilience as a capacity of the agent or the organization. The RTF reframes resilience as a function of placement: what sustains the tree is not its own toughness but its proximity to yəʿōr. This reframing converges with theological accounts of faith as trust rather than belief (Fischer, 2023) and with exegetical work on enduring faith (Dim, 2023), while resisting the therapeutic reduction that detaches endurance from its covenantal ground.

The third advance is the explicit theorization of tension. The RTF does not dissolve the contradiction between the promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought, exile, and prophetic suffering; it makes that contradiction a structural feature of the model. Fruitfulness is defined as fidelity under drought, which means the model predicts continued covenantal productivity precisely where prosperity paradigms predict collapse. This is a falsifiable claim in pastoral settings, and it distinguishes the RTF from readings that treat the passage as an unconditional wisdom promise.

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The fourth advance is canonical and contextual portability. By anchoring the model in the antithesis with Jeremiah 17:5–6 and the echo of Psalm 1:1–3, the RTF generates a comparative instrument that can be applied to other prophetic and sapiential texts without collapsing them into a single wisdom idiom. The framework also supplies a pastoral diagnostic: congregations can be assessed not by the absence of crisis but by the depth and direction of their rooting practices. This aligns with calls for theologically grounded rather than merely strategic pastoral formation (Tamba et al., 2025; Setiawan et al., 2025) and with broader work on faith, transformation, and communal practice (Dwiraharjo & Young, 2025; González Mendoza, 2025).

Two qualifications are necessary. First, the RTF is a textual-theological construct, not an empirically validated instrument; no field data, interview transcripts, or statistical estimates were generated in this study, and no such values are reported. Second, the model's transferability across Christian traditions and non-Western congregational contexts remains untested. These limitations define the research agenda rather than diminish the contribution. The RTF's value lies in offering a coherent, named, and contestable model that specifies what Jeremiah 17:7–8 claims about trust, resilience, and fruitfulness, and what evidence would confirm or disconfirm those claims in lived communities of faith.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study offers an exegetical and theological construction rather than an empirical investigation, and its limitations follow directly from that design. Four constraints merit explicit acknowledgement, each of which delimits the scope of the Rooted Trust Framework and generates a corresponding research agenda.

The first limitation concerns the absence of empirical validation. The framework proposed here—trust as re-rooting, resilience as drought-endurance, and fruitfulness as covenantal fidelity—remains a textual and theological construct. No congregational sample, psychometric instrument, or field protocol was employed, and therefore no claims regarding its explanatory or predictive validity in lived contexts can be sustained. This is a deliberate methodological boundary, since the study's aim was exegetical precision rather than measurement, but it means that the framework's pastoral utility is asserted rather than demonstrated. Recent work on resilience in applied settings has advanced through validated instruments and longitudinal designs (Amoroso, 2025; Cloma et al., 2025), and theological accounts of resilience risk remaining conceptually isolated if they do not enter comparable empirical conversation. Future research could operationalize the three dimensions as measurable constructs, develop a rooted-trust scale, and test its psychometric properties—factor structure, composite reliability, and discriminant validity—across Christian traditions. Such work would need to avoid the reductionism this study critiques, treating measurement as a complement to, not a replacement for, theological description.

The second limitation is interpretive plurality. The Hebrew lexemes central to the passage—bāṭaḥ, šāṯal, yəʿōr, pāraḥ, and šāqad—carry semantic ranges that resist singular translation, and the

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scholarly debate over whether Jeremiah 17:7–8 constitutes an appropriated wisdom saying or a prophetic oracle shaped by wisdom idiom remains unresolved. This study adjudicates that debate in favour of canonical-theological coherence, but the adjudication rests on interpretive judgement rather than decisive textual evidence. The tension between the promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought, exile, and prophetic suffering is likewise held rather than dissolved. Sykora's (2024) reading of Jeremiah 17:5–10 alongside Karl Rahner demonstrates that the passage sustains multiple theological appropriations, and the present framework should be received as one defensible reading among several rather than as an exhaustive account. Future research might pursue a reception-historical study tracing how the passage has functioned in contexts of actual communal crisis, thereby testing whether the drought-endurance reading resonates with historical communities that read the text under siege.

The third limitation concerns canonical scope. The intertextual analysis is restricted primarily to Psalm 1 and the immediate antithesis of Jeremiah 17:5–6. Broader resonances—with Isaiah's waters in the wilderness, Ezekiel's river, or the Johannine vine and living-water imagery—are gestured toward but not developed. A fuller canonical treatment would require a monograph-length study and would need to engage the Ancient Near Eastern arboreal and hydrological corpus more extensively than the present article permits. Comparative work on tree and water symbolism in Mesopotamian and Egyptian materials remains a productive avenue, particularly where it can clarify whether Jeremiah's imagery subverts or appropriates royal ideology.

The fourth limitation is contextual and cultural. The framework was developed from a text composed in the geopolitical crisis of late seventh- and early sixth-century Judah, yet its proposed application is largely to contemporary pastoral settings whose social conditions differ markedly. The study does not account for how communal, economic, or ecclesial structures mediate the experience of drought, nor does it engage non-Western hermeneutical perspectives in which rootedness may carry different connotations. Future research should therefore proceed in two directions: a qualitative interview protocol exploring how pastors and congregants narrate resilience in crisis, and cross-cultural reception studies examining whether the rooted-trust grammar translates across contexts. Both would require ethical clearance and transparent coding procedures that this textual study did not need.

Finally, the study does not address the relationship between rooted trust and lament. Jeremiah's own laments complicate any neat equation of trust with equanimity, and a framework that cannot account for faithful protest risks becoming another prosperity theology in reverse. Future work should integrate the lament tradition into the model, asking whether drought-endurance includes the capacity to cry out. Until such empirical, comparative, and contextual work is undertaken, the Rooted Trust Framework should be regarded as a theologically grounded hypothesis inviting testing rather than a settled conclusion.

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CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine Jeremiah 17:7–8 as a coherent theological unit rather than a devotional fragment, and the exegetical analysis supports reading the passage as a deliberately constructed sapiential oracle in which trust, resilience, and fruitfulness form an indivisible sequence. The semantic field analysis of bāṭaḥ, šāṯal, yəʿōr, ḥōreb, and pāraḥ indicates that the text does not present faith as an interior mood but as a covenantal reorientation that relocates the self away from human contingency and toward YHWH. Trust, in this reading, is an act of re-rooting. Resilience is not the absence of drought but the capacity to remain verdant within it. Fruitfulness is not the reward appended to trust but its organic expression, a point that distinguishes the passage from both prosperity hermeneutics and secular therapeutic accounts of coping.

The Rooted Trust Framework proposed here integrates lexical, hydrological, arboreal, and canonical dimensions that earlier scholarship has tended to treat separately. Form-critical readings have correctly identified the macarism structure but have often detached it from the water and tree imagery that carries the theological weight. Canonical readings have rightly linked the passage to Psalm 1 but have sometimes subordinated Jeremiah's prophetic voice to intertextual dependence. Redactional approaches have clarified the placement of the oracle within Jeremiah 17:1–18 but have not always accounted for its internal theological logic. The framework advanced in this article holds these dimensions together and insists that the three elements cannot be disaggregated without interpretive loss. This integrative move constitutes the study's principal contribution to the theological interpretation of Scripture and to the emerging dialogue between biblical studies and resilience theory (Sykora, 2024; Fischer, 2023).

The findings also speak to the tension identified at the outset between the promise of fruitfulness and the empirical reality of drought. The text does not resolve this tension by guaranteeing exemption from crisis; it resolves it by redefining the location of life. The tree planted by water still faces chorev. What it does not face is depletion, because its roots reach a source that the drought cannot touch. Read canonically, this logic anticipates the New Testament identification of Christ as living water and the vine upon which fruitfulness depends (John 4:14; 15:5), a connection that theological exegesis is warranted in drawing without collapsing the prophetic text into allegory (Dwiraharjo & Young, 2025; Dim, 2023). The pastoral implication is that resilience formation is not primarily a matter of skill acquisition or psychological resourcefulness but of cultivating rootedness through disciplined attention to the means of grace. Congregations that adopt this framing may find that the Rooted Trust Framework offers a more theologically accountable alternative to managerial resilience models, which tend to locate strength in the individual rather than in the covenantal relationship that sustains the individual (Cloma et al., 2025; Amoroso, 2025).

Several limitations must be acknowledged. This study is text-centered and draws no empirical field data; the framework is therefore a theological proposal awaiting contextual testing rather than a validated instrument. The absence of interview or survey evidence means that claims about pastoral

effectiveness remain inferential. The analysis also depends on the Masoretic Text and does not pursue the Septuagint or Qumran witnesses in detail, which may yield additional semantic nuance. Finally, the canonical-intertextual method, while methodologically warranted, involves interpretive judgments that other readers may weigh differently.

Future research may address these limitations by operationalizing the Rooted Trust Framework in congregational settings, developing a qualitative interview protocol to examine how believers narrate experiences of drought and fruitfulness, and testing the framework's transferability across Christian traditions and cultural contexts. Comparative work with Ancient Near Eastern tree and water motifs would further clarify the distinctiveness of Jeremiah's formulation. Such work would not displace the exegetical findings presented here but would situate them within the lived faith of communities that continue to read Jeremiah 17:7–8 as a word addressed to their own seasons of drought.

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