

Jeremiah 10:11 – A Chiasm In Aramaic

While the vast majority of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, a tiny amount was also written in Aramaic (only about 250 verses out of a total of over 23,000). While it is well known that parts of Ezra (4:8-6:18, 7:12-26) and Daniel (2:4b-7:28) are written in Aramaic, it often goes unnoticed that the book of Jeremiah also contains one verse (10:11) written in this language. Interestingly, this Aramaic sentence in Jeremiah has a chiasmic structure. The verse reads...

Jeremiah 10:11 (ESV)

Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens."

The word order in the original language, which shows the chiasmic structure, is...

A The gods who
 B the heavens
 C and the earth
 D did not make
 D' they will disappear
 C' from the earth
 B' and from under the heavens
A' shall these

The NET Bible contains some useful information for this verse in their study note: "This passage is carefully structured and placed to contrast the Lord who is living and eternal (v. 10) and made the heavens and earth (v. 12) with the idols who did not and will disappear. It also has a very careful concentric structure in the original text where "the gods" is balanced by "these," "heavens" is balance by "from under the heavens," "the earth" is balanced by "from the earth," and "did not make" is balanced and contrasted in the very center by "will disappear." The structure is further reinforced by the sound play/wordplay between "did not make" (*Aram* לֹא יַעֲבֹדוּ [la' 'avadu]) and "will disappear" (*Aram* יֵאָבְדוּ [ye'vadu]). This is the rhetorical climax of Jeremiah's sarcastic attack on the folly of idolatry."