International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament

Carolyn J. Sharp

JEREMIAH 26–52

Kohlhammer

Kohlhammer

International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT)

Edited by:

Walter Dietrich, David M. Carr, Adele Berlin, Erhard Blum, Irmtraud Fischer, Shimon Gesundheit, Walter Groß, Gary Knoppers (†), Bernard M. Levinson, Ed Noort, Helmut Utzschneider and Beate Ego (Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books)

Cover:
Top: Panel from a four-part relief on the "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III" (859–824 BCE) depicting the Israelite king Jehu (845–817 BCE; 2 Kings 9f) paying obeisance to the Assyrian "King of Kings." The vassal has thrown himself to the ground in front of his overlord. Royal servants are standing behind the Assyrian king whereas Assyrian officers are standing behind Jehu. The remaining picture panels portray thirteen Israelite tribute bearers carrying heavy and precious gifts.
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Bottom left: One of ten reliefs on the bronze doors that constitute the eastern portal (the so-called "Gates of Paradise") of the Baptistery of St. John of Florence, created 1424–1452 by Lorenzo Ghiberti (c. 1378–1455). Detail from the picture "Adam and Eve"; in the center is the creation of Eve: "And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." (Gen 2:22)
Photograph by George Reader

Bottom right: Detail of the Menorah in front of the Knesset in Jerusalem, created by Benno Elkan (1877–1960): Ezra reads the Law of Moses to the assembled nation (Neh 8). The bronze Menorah was created in London in 1956 and in the same year was given by the British as a gift to the State of Israel. A total of 29 reliefs portray scenes from the Hebrew Bible and the history of the Jewish people.

Carolyn J. Sharp

Jeremiah 26–52

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For Leo

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Editors' Foreword

The International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT) offers a multi-perspectival interpretation of the books of the Old Testament to a broad, international audience of scholars, laypeople and pastors. Biblical commentaries too often reflect the fragmented character of contemporary biblical scholarship, where different geographical or methodological sub-groups of scholars pursue specific methodologies and/or theories with little engagement of alternative approaches. This series, published in English and German editions, brings together editors and authors from North America, Europe, and Israel with multiple exegetical perspectives.

From the outset the goal has been to publish a series that was "international, ecumenical and contemporary." The international character is reflected in the composition of an editorial board with members from six countries and commentators representing a yet broader diversity of scholarly contexts.

The ecumenical dimension is reflected in at least two ways. First, both the editorial board and the list of authors includes scholars with a variety of religious perspectives, both Christian and Jewish. Second, the commentary series not only includes volumes on books in the Jewish Tanach/Protestant Old Testament, but also other books recognized as canonical parts of the Old Testament by diverse Christian confessions (thus including the deuterocanonical Old Testament books).

When it comes to "contemporary," one central distinguishing feature of this series is its attempt to bring together two broad families of perspectives in analysis of biblical books, perspectives often described as "synchronic" and "diachronic" and all too often understood as incompatible with each other. Historically, diachronic studies arose in Europe, while some of the better known early synchronic studies originated in North America and Israel. Nevertheless, historical studies have continued to be pursued around the world, and focused synchronic work has been done in an ever greater variety of settings. Building on these developments, we aim in this series to bring synchronic and diachronic methods into closer alignment, allowing these approaches to work in a complementary and mutually-informative rather than antagonistic manner.

Since these terms are used in varying ways within biblical studies, it makes sense to specify how they are understood in this series. Within IECOT we understand "synchronic" to embrace a variety of types of study of a biblical text *in one given stage of its development*, particularly its final stage(s) of development in existing manuscripts. "Synchronic" studies embrace non-historical narratological, reader-response and other approaches along with historically-informed exegesis of a particular stage of a biblical text. In contrast, we understand "diachronic" to embrace the full variety of modes of study of a biblical text *over time.*

This diachronic analysis may include use of manuscript evidence (where available) to identify documented pre-stages of a biblical text, judicious use of clues within the biblical text to reconstruct its formation over time, and also an examination of the ways in which a biblical text may be in dialogue with earlier biblical (and non-biblical) motifs, traditions, themes, etc. In other words, diachronic study focuses on what might be termed a "depth dimension" of a given text—how a

text (and its parts) has journeyed over time up to its present form, making the text part of a broader history of traditions, motifs and/or prior compositions. Synchronic analysis focuses on a particular moment (or moments) of that journey, with a particular focus on the final, canonized form (or forms) of the text. Together they represent, in our view, complementary ways of building a textual interpretation.

Of course, each biblical book is different, and each author or team of authors has different ideas of how to incorporate these perspectives into the commentary. The authors will present their ideas in the introduction to each volume. In addition, each author or team of authors will highlight specific contemporary methodological and hermeneutical perspectives—e.g. gender-critical, liberation-theological, reception-historical, social-historical—appropriate to their own strengths and to the biblical book being interpreted. The result, we hope and expect, will be a series of volumes that display a range of ways that various methodologies and discourses can be integrated into the interpretation of the diverse books of the Old Testament.

Fall 2012 The Editors

Author's Preface

This volume is the product of many years of feminist collaborative work with my esteemed colleague and cherished friend, Christl Maier, who has written the commentary on Jeremiah 1–25 in this series. Our thanks are due the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a grant that enabled us to host Jeremiah consultations at the Philipps-Universität Marburg and Yale Divinity School during the early stages of our work. We learned much from scholars who shared their expertise in those consultations: Ulrike Bail, Gerlinde Baumann, Mark Brummitt, Mary Chilton Callaway, Steed Davidson, Irmtraud Fischer, Wilda Gafney, Michaela Geiger, Alexandra Grund, Else Holt, Judith McKinlay, and Ulrike Sals. Wise counsel was offered as well by Jens Herzer and Rainer Kessler, and the consultations were facilitated by the unflagging administrative assistance of Michaela Geiger, Alexandra Grund, and Heather Vermeulen. I was inspired by those lively intellectual exchanges, which have been catalytic for my thinking about tensions generated by the traditional authority of the commentary writer over against the feminist valorizing of collaboration and the decentering of power, as well as ways in which feminist and postcolonial interpretive strategies should deepen the research questions that have shaped my work.

The IECOT/IEKAT commentary series is not intended primarily as a reception-history series. Entire volumes have been devoted to reception of motifs and passages in Jeremiah in particular historical periods. The space constraints confronting me have been acute, given the complexity of Jer 26–52 and the fact that feminist, postcolonial, and queer engagements needed articulation in these pages, something core to the purpose of this commentary. Thus I am grateful to four experts whose labors have made possible the glimpses into reception of Jeremiah texts that I could afford here: Mary Chilton Callaway, Joy Schroeder, Seth Tarrer, and J. Jeffery Tyler.

Warm thanks are due to Harold Attridge, dean of Yale Divinity School during the inception of this project, who generously supported our research. That support has been vital for nine years of transatlantic collaborative meetings in Marburg, in New Haven, and at annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. I offer my gratitude as well to the current Henry L. Slack Dean of Yale Divinity School, Gregory Sterling, whose unstinting support of faculty research and generosity regarding a new trajectory in my professional formation have been enormously important to me.

I am grateful for the scholarship fostered by the Israelite Prophetic Literature section and the Writing/Reading Jeremiah section of the Society of Biblical Literature, two professional groups with which I first became involved early in my career. Thanks go to Jeremiah scholars who have been special mentors and friends for many years: Walter Brueggemann, Julie Claassens, Else Holt, and Louis Stulman. Other Jeremiah scholars who have inspired me include Mark Brummitt, Corrine Carvalho, Georg Fischer, Rhiannon Graybill, Amy Kalmanofsky, Mark Leuchter, Jack Lundbom, William McKane, Kathleen O'Connor, Hermann-Josef Stipp, and Robert Wilson. I honor the memory of Leo Perdue, whom I never met, for his lifegiving candor about oppressive dimensions of the book of Jeremiah. I learned

much from a Jeremiah conference in Ascona, Switzerland in June 2014 and thank the colleagues who hosted that gathering, Hindy Najman and Konrad Schmid. The wisdom and patience of our excellent editors, Walter Dietrich and David Carr, have been indispensable to this commentary work. I am grateful as well for the superb technical assistance and unfailing kindness of Florian Specker, and for outstanding copy-editing by Jonathan Miles Robker.

In North American universities, land acknowledgement statements have become important to keep us mindful of indigenous peoples whose ancestors were harassed, forcibly displaced, tortured, and killed in militarized colonization processes initiated by settlers of European heritage. The persistent economic, social, and political challenges with which Native groups have contended to the present day are due in no small part to that history of injustice and cultural trauma, and to the failure of governmental and other agencies to make meaningful reparations. Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, Quinnipiac, and other Algonquian-speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now Connecticut. My offices, the Yale libraries that support my research, and the classrooms in which I teach are located on unceded land of the Quinnipiac and Niantic peoples.

I have been emboldened in the writing of this commentary by the conviction of homiletician Frank Thomas that writing can be an act of resistance. I heard Dr. Thomas insist on this at the biennial meeting of the Societas Homiletica in Durham, North Carolina in 2018: “Writing *is* resistance!” Writing unquestionably constituted resistance for some in the scribal circles of ancient Judah, as for other poets, novelists, essayists, and scholarly writers through the centuries. Writing remains a powerful mode of resistance for feminist writers, queer theorists, and others who craft insights aimed at dismantling patriarchy and white supremacy, cis-hetero violence and the erasure of queer realities, economic injustice, and other terrors. Such writing can be prophetic indeed. Among those who have helped me to understand the creative power of writing as resistance are feminist writers and artists who gather regularly at the Trinity Center in Salter Path, North Carolina under the auspices of a remarkable grassroots organization, the Resource Center for Women & Ministry in the South. I offer my warm thanks to the women of Pelican House, especially Jeanette Stokes, Cathy Hasty, Marcy Litle, Joyce Ann Mercer, Beverly Mitchell, Mary Clark Moschella, Márcia Rego, Marion Thullbery, Rebecca Wall, and Rachael Wooten.

Words cannot express my debt to Christl Maier, whose friendship means the world to me. Working collaboratively with her has been beautiful and instructive in ways I have only begun to measure. Our analytical and constructive feminist work unfolds in differing ways in our two volumes, as is entirely appropriate for feminist discourse. Our deployment of differing hermeneutical models, different ways of probing the significance of history, and different varieties of feminist analysis speaks authentically to our lived experience and to the audiences, scholarly and other, that we aim to engage. Christl’s brilliant work on this Jeremiah project and her guild leadership as a feminist scholar have provided continual inspiration and renewed energy in my intellectual life.

My family has been stalwart in supporting me, observing with amusement my spates of joyous productivity and sustaining me during difficult moments

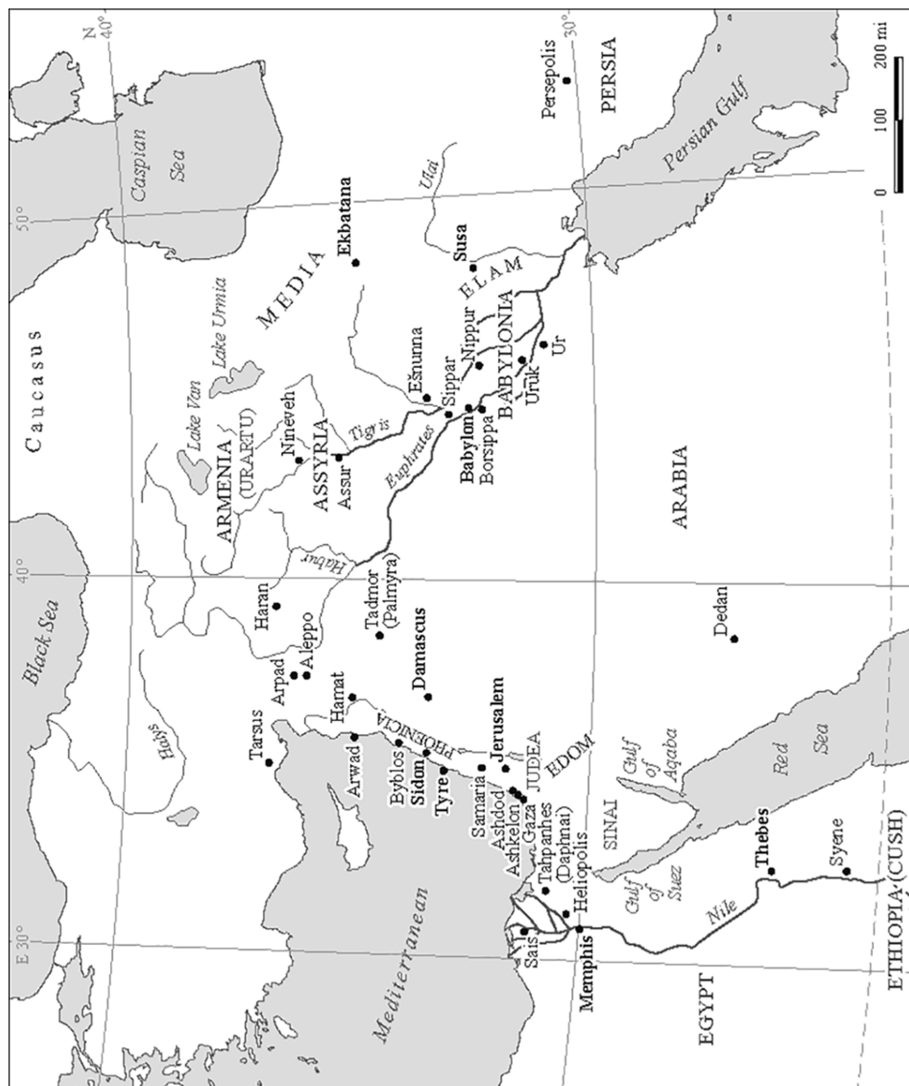
when I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work. Our offspring, Dinah and Jake, have been loving and sardonic in just the right measure to help me maintain perspective during this arduous process. Nothing would have been possible, on this commentary or anything else, without the love and counsel of my beloved life partner, Leo Lensing. It is to Leo that I dedicate this volume.

CJS
Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist
June 2021

Abbreviations

ANEATP	James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
BCT	*The Bible and Critical Theory*
BigS	*Die Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006)
BMW	Bible in the Modern World
CrStHB	Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible
Dtr-Jer	Deutero-Jeremianic
fp	feminine plural
fs	feminine singular
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K. and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
Jer^{LXX}	the Septuagint text of Jeremiah
Jer^{MT}	the Masoretic text of Jeremiah
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
mp	masculine plural
ms	masculine singular
NEAEHL	*New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: vols. 1–4, The Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993; vol. 5, The Israel Exploration Society, 2008)
NZB	Zürcher Bibel, 2nd ed. (2007)
OEANE	*The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, Eric M. Meyers, editor in chief (New York: Oxford, 1997), 5 vols.
PGOT	Phoenix Guides to the Old Testament
RRBS	Recent Research in Biblical Studies
RVR	Reina-Valera Revision (1995)
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SSLL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
TCT	Textual Criticism and the Translator
W/O	Waltke, Bruce K. and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)

Map of the Ancient Near East



Introduction to Jeremiah 26–52

Jeremiah 26–52 is an ancient record of Judeans struggling to make sense of political and social catastrophe. As the Neo-Babylonian imperial juggernaut approached Jerusalem, readying its warriors to strike at the core of Judean communal and religious life, terror must have settled on the hearts of Judeans like a leaden shroud. Those gifted with prophetic vision, those with priestly responsibilities, and those in political leadership would have been desperate to guide Judah toward responses that could guarantee the protection of their God. Among those swept up in the maelstrom of fear created by this crisis were Ezekiel son of Buzi and Jeremiah son of Hilkiah. Both were priests. Both had experiences of prophetic commissioning, hearing a divine voice that urged them to take up theological and political positions that would be deemed by their compatriots to be radical, offensive, even risible. The crisis they faced would be protracted. Anxieties simmering from the time of the assassination of Judean king Josiah at Megiddo in 609 BCE (2 Kgs 23:29) became acute with Nebuchadrezzar's first deportation of Judean elites in 597. The sense of political urgency may have been subterranean for a time, as Judeans sought to go on with their lives despite their growing alarm. But it would have percolated insistently during the reign of Zedekiah.

Jerusalem under siege

The crisis erupted into a deadly state of emergency during Babylon's eighteen-month siege of Jerusalem from January 588 to July 587. As deprivations during the siege became more severe, residents of the city would have seen the weakening and death of loved ones from starvation. When the Babylonians finally breached the walls of Jerusalem, many would have witnessed or experienced beatings and sexual violation; survivors would have seen the slaughter of family members and neighbors. The horror continued with the Babylonians' defiling and plundering of Jerusalem, their maiming of Zedekiah and execution of Judean officials at Riblah, and their forced deportation of traumatized survivors in 587. Those Judeans who fled to Egypt would have had the screams of their neighbors still ringing in their ears. Their lives as refugees in Egypt would have continued in the social and psychological ruination of trauma, the days of many surely marked by survivor's guilt and cultural disorientation. Judah lay in ruins, in every way that ruination may be conceived: the capital city was left undefended, the temple had been desecrated, and the social corpus of Judah had been grievously injured. A few years later, in 582, traumatized survivors eking out an existence in Judah would have to endure a third deportation aimed at snuffing out any lingering sparks of political resistance.

Prophetic responses to trauma

Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets would mine Judah's sacred traditions to make sense of all they had witnessed: terrible suffering of Judeans in every sector of society, the brutal dismantling of their country's political infrastructure and cultural resources, the evisceration of Jerusalem's economic stability, and more. To undertake this work, the prophets and the scribes who preserved and amplified their traditions would have had to muster all the wisdom, creativity, and cultural acumen at their disposal in circumstances that must have been challenging, whether exilic or postexilic. They strove, sometimes with blistering polemic, sometimes with soaring lyricism, to take account of the past and imagine a future

for this decimated community—or better, communities plural, given the realities of some Judeans' militarized captivity in Babylon and others' migration to Egypt or another locale. To write scrolls that could take nuanced account of sacred traditions, ongoing and bitter arguments about political responsibility, and contested visions for recovery would have been extraordinarily demanding work for these scribes, even generations after the disaster. The contemporary reader might well balk at the harshness of victim-blaming rhetoric or the narrative strategy of honoring vicious invaders as doing God's work. Indeed, this commentary will balk over and over again at such interpretive moves, explicating the text from a feminist position that declines violence in rhetoric and lived politics. But we may still be awed by the monumental accomplishment of these prophets and scribes. As Kathleen O'Connor observes, the book of Jeremiah "is a work of resilience, a moral act for the rebuilding of the community from the ashes of catastrophe."[1]

The prose narratives in Jer 26–52 are charged with political conflict, an inevitable result of enormous pressures that were put on the leadership of Judah not only in the Babylonian crisis proper, but in the aftermath when leaders and visionaries had to work, despite their trauma, despite dislocation and cultural disorientation, to devise a way in which Judah could become whole again. The survival of their people depended on a pragmatically sound plan for assimilating the catastrophic losses and injuries that the Judean social body had sustained. Jeremiah 26–52 is a textual site of deep cultural injury.[2] The reader who examines it closely can see its inflammations and fractures, its wounds barely healed, its long angry scars still in the process of formation when Jeremiah reached its final forms in what became the Septuagintal and Masoretic traditions. Fierce internecine arguments knife through this material. Vitriolic disputes bubble up through dialogues between characters in the story and through uncompromising theological pronouncements made by Jeremiah and his God, making visible a toxic antagonism in the social body of Judah regarding how to respond to the Neo-Babylonian threat and—because much of this material was shaped in the aftermath—how to explain the injury that the Judean body had suffered.

Poetry, lyrical and passionate, is to be found in the Book of Consolation (chs. 30–31) and the oracles against the nations ("OAN," chs. 46–51). Intense theological and political drama is characteristic of the entire book of Jeremiah. But the drama performed in poetic registers catalyzes differing effects in the implied audience than do the prose narratives. In early chapters of Jeremiah, poetic oracles express the looming punishment of Judah in elliptical terms, heightening suspense for the implied audience. The chaos of potential response to the divine threat is expressed, for example, in the command to the implied audience to run frantically through the streets of Jerusalem seeking even a single person who acts justly, so that Yhwh might relent from punishing Judah (5:1); as the oracle unfolds and Jeremiah himself undertakes the search, it is clear that such efforts will be futile. The inhabitants of Benjamin are to flee Jerusalem (6:1)—the implied audience may feel compelled to run and hide as well from the monstrous foe approaching from

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1 O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*, 17.

2 For the ancient Judean historical context from the perspective of trauma studies, see David M. Carr, "Jerusalem's Destruction and Babylonian Exile," in *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 67–90.

the north. By contrast, the prose of Jer 26–52 reads as the product of authoritative voices that have mastered the ambiguities of the earlier poetry, claiming the purposes of YHWH with robust confidence and referential specificity. Stylistically, this yields the impression that the terrifying uncertainties and chaos that animated the earlier prophetic oracles have yielded to political clarity about the inexorable purposes of YHWH for harm against the covenant people and the inescapable fate sweeping over Judah, Jerusalem, and Judeans in diaspora in Babylon and Egypt. Within this prose onslaught, the poetry in the Book of Consolation stands as a beacon of hope. These poems' articulations of hope are not positioned as the final word of the book, as in Amos or Ezekiel. In the structure of Jer^{MT}, that final word belongs to the artfully vitriolic OAN and the grim scene of the despoliation of Jerusalem and its people in Jer 52. But these oracles serve as an oasis, a way-station for building resilience for the journey, replenishing the spirits of readers making their way through the wasteland (שמה) of a wrecked Judah.

The Formation of Jeremiah 26–52

There are competing models for understanding diachronic processes of composition and redaction of the book of Jeremiah. All astute readers agree that the book is in places turbulent and chaotic, this quality generating fascination for the reader eager to follow the twists and turns of theological logic and the dominant streams and contrary eddies of its imagery. An underlying literary structure may be glimpsed here and there, with linkages among smaller larger units of text especially in the prose; some of the more volatile poetic material may be understood in light of that structure as well. But there are also poetic oracles and snippets of prose that add sheer difference and complexity, rather than congruence, to their local literary context and to the larger contours of the book. Some readers find the shifts in perspective, thematic foci, metaphorization, and ideology that unfold within Jeremiah to frustrate systematic interpretation. Others, notably redaction critics who argue for coherent layers through large swaths of diverse material, pursue systematic analysis of linguistic and semantic features. Still other readers delight in what they perceive to be an artful quality like that of a tapestry or mosaic, the Jeremiah traditions taking on richness and depth from the strategic interweaving of disparate threads and the assemblage of smaller pieces even if the purposes and provenances of those pieces cannot be determined fully.[3]

Traditional source-critical scholarship on Jeremiah has worked in light of a series of assumptions about earlier and later materials that were given influential articulation by Bernhard Duhm (1847–1928) in a 1901 commentary and Sigmund

3 Stulman sees Jeremiah as "a rich and labyrinthine tapestry reflecting a plurality of social locations and pieties" (*Order Amid Chaos*, 184). For Jeremiah as mosaic, see Fischer, *Stand der Theologischen Diskussion*, 113 and the literature cited there.

Mowinckel (1884–1965) in a 1914 work.[4] While varied positions and differences regarding historical dating had been explored in source-critical scholarship for decades, the overarching framework dominating the scholarly reconstruction of Jeremiah at that time is simple enough to describe. Poetic oracles from early in the prophet's career (dubbed Source A) were expanded by prose biographical material about Jeremiah (Source B) and Deuteronomistic prose additions (Source C). The increasingly complicated book was supplemented, finally, by other materials considered to have been generated in the late exilic and postexilic periods (Source D). Source-critical arguments have been contested, emended, and critiqued in more recent scholarship. For example, a sharp rebuttal is offered by Bernard Levinson on grounds of methodological weakness:

> In the case of Jeremiah scholarship, the efforts of Bernhard Duhm and Sigmund Mowinckel to work out the book's compositional layers have provided the foundations of most subsequent research. So entrenched are the questions asked … that the contours of the text are obscured, along with the reality of its intellectual and theological life.… The harder the models are pushed to explain the evidence, the more they break down into contradiction.[5]

Whatever one's position as regards preexisting literary sources, it seems evident that the formation of the Jeremiah traditions into the book we have today is the result of expert scribal practices of editing and shaping materials over time, the textual artisans enjoying a significant measure of creative freedom in the process.[6] Many scholars are convinced that the existence of redactional layers in Jeremiah, and even diverse "editions" of the book, can be proved from literary and text-critical evidence. There is no gainsaying the historical data regarding differing Greek and Hebrew streams of the Jeremiah traditions and ongoing expansion in the MT tradition; as is well known, the Greek tradition of Jeremiah seems to be roughly one-seventh shorter than the Masoretic tradition. How one interprets those divergences, in local instances and in macrostructural theories, depends a great deal on one's governing premises.[7]

Redaction critics debate numerous larger points and smaller details of the schemata they propose for understanding the compositional history of Jeremiah. Seismic shifts do occur over time in this arena of Jeremiah study, as in every scholarly terrain. Scholars of an earlier generation spoke with assurance of the *ipsissima verba* of the historical prophet Jeremiah, understood to have been pre-

4 Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, KHC 11 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901); Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania: Jacob Dybwad, 1914). For an assessment of ways in which the persona of Jeremiah has been constructed in the work of Duhm and other traditionally historicist commentaries, see Joe Henderson, "Duhm and Skinner's Invention of Jeremiah," in Holt and Sharp, eds., *Jeremiah Invented*, 1–15.

5 Bernard M. Levinson, "Zedekiah's Release of Slaves as the Babylonians Besiege Jerusalem: Jeremiah 34 and the Formation of the Pentateuch," in Dubovský, Markl, and Sonnet, eds., *Fall of Jerusalem*, 313–327 (314).

6 For a review of Jeremiah scholarship from 1970 to 2010, see the four-article series by Liwak, "Vierzig Jahre Forschung zum Jeremiabuch."

7 On influential analyses of the textual relationship(s) between Jer^{LXX} and Jer^{MT}, see Liwak, "Vierzig Jahre Forschung I," 163–173.

served in the early poetic oracles in particular; but this way of understanding an earlier historical core or *Kern* encrusted with later accretions is no longer the governing model in scholarly conversations. Redaction-critical analyses are compelling for those who find it viable to tie many different sorts of philological and historical evidence, from minor to major in scale, to proposed layers of editorial reworking, these usually theorized to be demonstrable especially on the basis of shared language and congruence of perspective. Superb redaction critics include my feminist colleague in this commentary project, Christl Maier, as well as Rainer Albertz and Hermann-Josef Stipp. Much can be learned from their painstaking work. Other scholars, in whose ranks I include myself, prefer to analyze literary effects of editorial interpolations, these signaled by such clues as irresolvable ideological tensions and awkward shifts of emphasis in the flow of material, without seeking to tie a host of individual verses or motifs too closely to hypothetical layers of editorial intervention conceived as having been worked systematically through large swaths of material.

Throughout this commentary, the literary readings on offer should not be taken as an implicit defense of a presumed unity of particular narratives in their historical provenance. Some would frame the politics of scholarship in such a way that there seem to be only two sides: those who accept multiple layers in a biblical text (vigorous dispute of the details is welcomed), and those who defend the "unity" of the narrative. But those are not the only options. In my view, literary criticism offers excellent proposals that clarify our understanding of particular textual tensions, while acknowledging that editorial interventions may have been enacted that can neither be proved nor read in definitive ways *qua* interventions. The logic of a proposed interpolation may remain unclear; perhaps it was simply preserved without having been intended as part of a larger ideological program. It may be the case that shifts of emphasis, unexpected developments in characterization, and so forth are best understood as literary effects designed to illumine new or deeper dimensions of the plot. Whatever the case, the reader would do well to remember the literary-critical notion of the intentional fallacy, viz., that authorial intention is never truly available to those who engage a work of literature. Shifts and unexpected developments in a narrative may have amplifying, complicating, or other interesting consequences in particular reading contexts, and these can be explored even though it can never be proved that a scribe intended those consequences. Thus, some readers hold literarily-focused interpretation to be more productive than redaction-critical speculation on putative compositional layers. This is not the same as defending the unity of the narrative or as implying that a single author was responsible for the literary production of the text. On that last point, a few scholars do conceive of Jeremiah as having been created, in the main, by a single scribal hand, sometimes identified as the historical Baruch. As regards literary coherence interpreted historically, one should note the arguments of Georg Fischer that the book of Jeremiah, while literarily complex and artful in its use of sources, was created by a single author in the late Persian period.[8]

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8 For Fischer's perspective on compositional issues and redaction-critical theories and his view that Jeremiah is a unified work, see his *Stand der theologischen Diskussion*, 91–114.

Scholars of a postmodern bent, led a generation ago by Robert Carroll (1941–2000) and Pete Diamond (1950–2011) and growing in numbers to the present day, have problematized methodological assumptions underlying historical empiricism and contest totalizing claims about the origins, structural features, and ideological purposes of the Jeremiah traditions.[9] Claire Carroll frames contemporary research on Jeremiah in terms of a dialectical quest moving between two poles: theorizing that honors coherence and theorizing that honors decentering and disorder.[10] Ongoing debates enliven scholarship regarding the extent, goals, and characterization of the authorship and editorial activity that formed the complex book of Jeremiah.

Scribal culture

The scribes of ancient Israel and Judah have been understood in recent scholarship to have portrayed the figure of Jeremiah and shaped the contours of the book from the perspective of postexilic reflection. Karel van der Toorn reminds us that technologies of writing in ancient Near Eastern oral environments were very different from those activities in contemporary Western cultures. Collections of prophetic oracles—as well as other discrete units such as aphorisms and laws—may have been organized more by loose parataxis than by an overarching design or incrementally unfolding plot.[11] Given this, the literary significance of juxtaposition and other structuring elements should be considered; scholars of the prophetic literature look for catchwords, doublets, and other signs of locally performed linkage as potentially having semantic value. No mere copyists, scribes were erudite composers and editors of texts in their own right. The diligent and imaginative work of teams of scribes was essential for the generation and preservation of prophetic literature that would be intelligible in their social contexts.[12] Of course, the scribes could be critiqued as well as honored for what they expressed and taught; ancient scribal contestations seethe through the Jeremiah poetry and prose. Jeremiah fulminates against (some of) the scribes, "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of [Yhwh] is with us, when, in fact, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie?" (8:8).[13] Scribes wrote up economic documents such as trade inventories and deeds for financial transactions (see Jer 32). But they also produced halakic, theological, and political literature, whether that literature was attached to an authoritative name—Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah—or not. They assuredly worked in circles of traditionists. As van der Toorn observes, "the notion of the author as an autonomous agent of creative genius is a historical construct" that reflects early

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9 In Hauser, ed., *Recent Research on the Major Prophets*, see Robert P. Carroll, "Surplus Meaning and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Dodecade of Jeremiah Studies (1984–95)," 195–216; idem, "Century's End: Jeremiah Studies at the Beginning of the Third Millennium," 217–231; A. R. Pete Diamond, "The Jeremiah Guild in the Twenty-First Century: Variety Reigns Supreme," 232–248.

10 Claire E. Carroll, "Another Dodecade: A Dialectic Model of the Decentred Universe of Jeremiah Studies 1996–2008," *CBR* 8 (2010): 162–182.

11 Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 15.

12 On the historical contingency of constructions of prophecy in the ancient Near East and in modern scholarship, see Martti Nissinen, "Prophecy as Construct, Ancient and Modern," in *"Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela": Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, Robert P. Gordon and Hans M. Barstad, eds. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 11–35.

13 The NRSV is the default translation I use for biblical texts outside of Jer 26–52. I substitute "[Yhwh]" for "Lord" as needed to avoid importing theological resonances via translation that may not have obtained in the Hebrew original.

modern European sensibilities.[14] Social and political dimensions of the scribal literature of ancient Israel and Judah are of importance for historians and ideological critics interested in the politics of literary revision. This ancient literature matters also for literary critics interested in the philology and grammar of ancient composition, poetic acumen, and scribal skill in fashioning narratives with drama, suspense, and nuanced characterization.[15]

Engagement of the implications of scribalism and scribal technologies in ancient Israel and Judah has proceeded along multiple trajectories. Chad Eggleston reviews four theories of writing visible in biblical scholarship on the scribal composition and redaction of Jeremiah.[16] First is writing as degeneration, texts growing from original oral inspiration to later prosaic expressions assessed as stultifying and tendentious by comparison with oral charism; here Eggleston cites the work of Julius Wellhausen. Second is writing as progress, technologies of recording and reiterating making possible an increasing scribal sophistication. Third is writing as dictation, a perspective which underlines the importance of capturing the quality of originary speech utterance or dialogue; on this, Eggleston cites scholarship on a spectrum from Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) and Sigmund Mowinckel to Susan Niditch. Finally is writing as deconstruction, a perspective that explores written texts as expressions of contradictions and contestations that can unravel or complexify their own claims; here, Eggleston cites Robert Carroll as an early practitioner of this approach within biblical studies. Contemporary scholarly engagements of scribal culture understand that oral, written, and remembered traditions exist and develop side by side in multiple forms, with many fluid directions of influence, rather than being enacted on a diachronic trajectory wherein one technology supplants another. Of relevance for the study of Jeremiah are four clues to scribal activity highlighted by Eggleston: the "literary conventions of colophons, superscripts, deictic language, and resumptive repetition."[17] The scribes may have obscured some of their redactional decisions and linguistic choices as they preserved and amplified the Jeremiah traditions. But they also left visible traces that show the intentionality of their work with the heritage of the prophet.

Redactional Theories

Jeremiah 26–52 comprises, for the most part, Deutero-Jeremianic (Dtr-Jer) prose and later additions. In Christl Maier's volume on Jer 1–25 in this series, the reader will find

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14 Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 31.

15 On the scribal practice of revision through the technique of adding introductory material, see Sara J. Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Expert literary critics working with biblical texts are too many to name. One might start with the foundational contributions of Robert Alter, Adele Berlin, Meir Sternberg, and Phyllis Trible, explore the work of Timothy Beal on narrative and F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp on poetry, then move to essays in the magisterial three-volume work edited by Susanne Scholz, *Feminist Interpretation*, esp. Vol. III.

16 Eggleston, *"See and Read All These Words,"* 17–38.

17 Eggleston describes these scribal interventions in *"See and Read All These Words,"* 56–60. He observes that Jeremiah "provides a strikingly high number of references to its own textualization, and these occur at crucial literary seams in the book" (123).

erudite discussion of theories on the provenance and redaction of the first half of the book, including poetic blocks of text such as those in Jer 2–6 and the laments of Jeremiah; she also makes important suggestions about some of the material in the second half of Jeremiah. Here I offer general remarks on the models for which scholars argue as regards the composition and redaction of Jeremiah. The poetry in the latter half of the book, viz., the Book of Consolation (chs. 30–31) and the OAN (chs. 46–51), will be given focused attention. Following is an outline of my own methodological convictions. I challenge what I see as weaknesses in overly precise hypothetical models reliant on chains of assumptions that may be plausible but cannot be definitively proved. Especially egregious is the assumption of co-temporality of a narrated practice or belief with the historical time of the scribe composing the text that reflects on that practice or belief. Praxis is fluid; different constituents within the same time period can disagree. Carol Meyers rightly points to a challenge for reading biblical texts as sources or reflections of historical periods: "Late priestly or Deuteronomic sources may sometimes encode practices that are centuries older and in other cases may prescribe new or narrowly practiced behaviors that subsequently became more widely observed."[18] Though her example is specific, her methodological caution is instructive for many kinds of diachronic argumentation regarding the growth of texts and the discursive practices and knowledge they enshrine.

Clarity about differences in methodological approaches is essential for students and other readers seeking to craft their own positions regarding the formation of Jeremiah.[19] There is no doubt that the Jeremiah narratives and oracles, especially in the Masoretic tradition, underwent a lengthy process of growth. Further, it is transparently evident and a matter of scholarly consensus that when compared with Jer^{LXX}, as regards many (though certainly not all) variants, Jer^{MT} must be considered an expansionist edition. On this and related matters, the field-shaping work of Emanuel Tov is to be commended. Text criticism on Jeremiah owes an enormous debt to him, even as scholars have critiqued and nuanced his claims.[20] My translation has put into square brackets those terms that do not appear in Jer^{LXX}. I have relied in this regard on the excellent work of Karin Finsterbusch and Norbert Jacoby, *MT-Jeremia und LXX-Jeremia 25–52: Synoptische Übersetzung*

18 Meyers, "Feast Days and Food Ways," 228.

19 For overviews of debates in Jeremiah scholarship regarding formation of the book, see the following in Najman and Schmid, eds., *Jeremiah's Scriptures*: Robert R. Wilson, "Exegesis, Expansion, and Tradition-Making in the Book of Jeremiah," 3–21; Georg Fischer, "A New Understanding of the Book of Jeremiah: A Response to Robert R. Wilson," 22–43; Christl M. Maier, "The Nature of Deutero-Jeremianic Texts," 103–123; Hermann-Josef Stipp, "Formulaic Language and the Formation of the Book of Jeremiah," 145–165.

20 Emanuel Tov's early articles included "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History" in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 211–237; "The Jeremiah Scrolls from Qumran" (*RevQ* 14 [1989]: 189–206). For his views on method, see his *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed., revised and expanded; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012; cf. 286–294 on Jer) and three volumes of essays: *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*, VTSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays*, TSAJ 121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), and *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint: Collected Essays*, VTSup 167 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

und Analyse der Kommunikationsstruktur.[21] Reading through their work and this translation, the novice unfamiliar with text criticism of Jeremiah will notice immediately that titles and other identifiers have been added in Jer^{MT}, including the identifier "the prophet" for Jeremiah. In Jer^{LXX}, the divine name Yhwh is often used standing alone (κύριος), though occasionally "the God of Israel" (ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ) is present. By contrast, in the Hebrew tradition, to יהוה the scribes have regularly added "of Hosts" (צבאות), "the God of Israel" (אלהי ישראל), or most elaborately, "of Hosts, the God of Israel" (צבאות אלהי ישראל). In Jer^{MT} we see more occurrences of the titles "king of Judah" and "king of Babylon." Family lineage names of individuals occur more commonly in the Hebrew textual tradition. Another type of addition found regularly in Jer^{MT} is the noun clause "saying of Yhwh" (נאם־יהוה). Considering supplementary MT expansions and other Jeremianic language in light of theories of dating of stages of Biblical Hebrew, Aaron Hornkohl argues that the book of Jeremiah "belongs to a transitional stratum of biblical literature that bridges the gap between the classical and late strata," and further, that "use of late linguistic elements characterizes not only those parts of Jeremiah reflected exclusively in the Masoretic tradition, but the entire book."[22] Hornkohl concedes that "much more unites [Classical Biblical Hebrew] and [Late Biblical Hebrew] than separates them" and that distinguishing between them can be "a complicated enterprise."[23] But affirming the value of a "clearly stated conclusion" as over against "hedged generalities," he insists that linguistically, Jeremiah shows "admixtures of classical and post-classical tendencies that point … decisively to a shared linguistic background in the transitional period between CBH and LBH proper" and that the later MT expansions should likely be dated to "the early post-exilic period at the latest."[24]

Stipp argues that the MT expansions utilize postexilic linguistic elements, yet must have reached their final form before the Qumran Jeremiah texts were copied and before the redactor of Daniel 9 had used Jeremiah between 167 and 164 BCE. So the MT expansions were likely added in the fourth and third centuries.[25] Methodological cautions are offered by Andrew Shead, whose text-critical study of Jer 32 shows that Jer^{LXX} sometimes supplies its own expansions, for example adding "to Jeremiah" and Nebuchadrezzar's title "king of Babylon" in 32:1 and reiterating the name "Shallum" (Σαλωμ) in 32:8. Jeremiah^{LXX} has lost text to haplography as

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21 See Finsterbusch and Jacoby, *MT-Jeremia und LXX-Jeremia 25–52*. The MT edition used by Finsterbusch and Jacoby is based on Codex Leningradensis as seen in BHS, except in cases of obvious scribal error and occasionally as regards vocalization. The LXX edition they use is the Göttingen eclectic edition of Joseph Ziegler.

22 Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization*, 359–360.

23 Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization*, 11, 367.

24 Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization*, 366–368. For critique of Hornkohl on the grounds of methodological flaws, see Robert Rezetko, "The (Dis)Connection Between Textual and Linguistic Developments in the Book of Jeremiah: Hebrew Bible Textual Criticism Challenges Biblical Hebrew Historical Linguistics," in *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, ed. Raymond F. Person and Robert Rezetko (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 239–269, esp. 249–250, 257–266.

25 Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches: Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte*, OBO 136 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 142–143.

well, though in Shead's opinion, "never is there more than a single word added or omitted" in the LXX of Jer 32.[26] Shead says, "it would be rash to assume that translation policy is constant over the entire book" and, further, "what Jeremiah has to offer is a delight to the redaction critic and a frustration to the textual critic," for "the recensional independence of M and G places the identity of their parent beyond the reach of text-critical method," two points with which many scholars would agree.[27]

Qumran and beyond

Six Jeremiah texts were found among the scrolls discovered in Caves 2 and 4 of the Qumran community at the Dead Sea: 2Q13, 4Q70, 4Q71 (designated 4QJer^{b} in earlier research), 4Q72 (known as 4QJer^{c}), 4Q72a (4QJer^{d}), and 4Q72b (4QJer^{e}).[28] Eibert Tigchelaar offers an overview of the contents as follows: 2Q13 comprises "parts of Jer 42–48"; 4Q70 comprises "parts of Jer 7–22"; 4Q71 is a fragment from Jer 9:22–10:21; 4Q72 comprises "parts of Jer 4–33"; 4Q72a is a fragment from Jer 43:2–10; and 4Q72b is a fragment from Jer 50:4–6.[29] Tigchelaar explains that three of these seem to represent a text type closer to Jer^{LXX} (4Q71, 4Q72a, and a fragment held in the private collection of Martin Schøyen), but other manuscripts "are not aligned exclusively to either the MT or the LXX text."[30] Some fragmentary passages portray Jeremiah as exhorting the people to Torah observance, with the prophet located either in Tahpanhes, as in Jer 43, or in Babylon, as in Bar 1. Tigchelaar cites 4Q385a frag. 18 and 4Q389 1, known as the Apocryphon of Jeremiah C,[31] and 4Q470, which is about Zedekiah.[32] The relevant lines in 4Q385a 18 i describe Jeremiah accompanying Judean deportees to Babylon as far as "the river" and giving them instructions—presumably about covenant fidelity—as regards "what they should do in the land of [their] captivity." The lines in 4Q385a 18 ii

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26 Shead, *Open Book*, 253.

27 Shead, *Open Book*, 257 and 262.

28 For critical editions of the Jeremiah texts from Qumran, see Maurice Baillet, Jósef T. Milik, and Roland De Vaux, eds., *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumrân*, DJD III (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); Eugene Ulrich, Frank Moore Cross, Russell E. Fuller, Judith E. Sanderson, Patrick W. Skehan, and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Qumran Cave 4.X: The Prophets*, DJD XV (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997). See Fischer, *Stand der Theologischen Diskussion*, 19–25.

29 Eibert Tigchelaar, "Jeremiah's Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Growth of a Tradition," in Najman and Schmid, eds., *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, 289–318 (301). He adds, "There are at least four other Jeremiah fragments in private hands. It is very unlikely they are from Qumran, and some may be modern forgeries" (302). For more on Jeremiah texts from Qumran, see Christl Maier's chart in the Introduction to her volume in this series.

30 Tigchelaar, "Jeremiah's Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 289–290. Cf. also Armin Lange, "Texts of Jeremiah in the Qumran Library," in Lundbom, Evans, and Anderson, eds., *Book of Jeremiah*, 280–302. On fragments held privately, see *Gleanings from the Caves: Dead Sea Scrolls and Artefacts from the Schøyen Collection*, ed. Torleif Elgvin, Kipp Davis, and Michael Langlois, LSTS 71 (New York: T & T Clark, 2018).

31 See Tigchelaar, "Jeremiah's Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 292–293; see 303–304 for translation of 28 lines from the *Apocryphon of Jeremiah C* mentioning the prophet Jeremiah.

32 For critique of Tigchelaar's term "Jeremianic Collection" for these texts, see James Nati, "Unities and Boundaries across the Jeremianic Dead Sea Scrolls: A Response to Eigbert Tigchelaar," in Najman and Schmid, eds., *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, 327–329.

show Jeremiah refusing to intercede on behalf of the Judeans at Tahpanhes (cp. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 44:1–30) and lamenting over Jerusalem. These traditions are characterized by George Brooke as "a pluriform set of Jeremiah discourses to be set alongside those … assigned to Moses, Ezra, and David in Second Temple Judaism."[33] Another such text is the Letter of Jeremiah, written in Greek circa 100 BCE; a fragment of this found in Qumran Cave 7 (7Q2) contains vv. 43–44.[34] The text is treated in the Vulgate as the sixth chapter of Baruch, an intertestamental work usually dated to the second or first century BCE that locates Baruch in Babylon among the diaspora Judeans. Baruch 1–5 has the scribe reading aloud a lengthy penitential prayer followed by wisdom poems. In the Letter of Jeremiah, the prophet addresses Judeans about to be forcibly taken to Babylon "because of the sins that [they] have committed before God" (v. 2); notably, the duration of Judeans' time in the Babylonian diaspora is prophesied to be "seven generations," considerably longer than the seventy years of Babylonian hegemony expected in Jer 25:11–12 and 29:10. Marie-Theres Wacker offers a feminist perspective on dimensions of this material that is relevant to my project here, both generally and as regards Jer 44:

> Either women are completely missing and therefore subject to contradictory assignments of their place within the community (Bar), or they are used as shocking examples to demean the religion of the "others" (Ep Jer).… I consider it crucial to be aware … that there might be specific failures of "fathers and rulers" (Bar 1:15–3:8)—and that fossilized structures themselves can lead to a pathology of power.[35]

From the intertestamental period may be mentioned the other Baruch traditions: the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch), the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch), and the Paraleipomena Ieremiou (4 Baruch), regarding which, Jens Herzer dates the original Jewish text to 130 CE and Christian redaction of it to after the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–135.[36] In the Paraleipomena Jeremiou are fascinating extrabiblical traditions, including Jeremiah and Baruch watching the temple vessels be swallowed by the earth on the eve of the Babylonians' capture of Jerusalem (3:8, 14); several extended narratives about Baruch and "Abimelech" the Ethiopian; Jeremiah being present with Judeans in Babylon to teach them (5:21), then returning with the people to Jerusalem (8:1–5); and the death of Jeremiah by stoning (9:1–32). Eva Mroczek notes that 4 Bar. 7:33–36 "quotes part of Ps 137 as sung by Jeremiah."[37]

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33 George J. Brooke, "Modelling Jeremiah Traditions in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Response to Eibert Tigchelaar," in Najman and Schmid, eds., *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, 307–318 (312).

34 Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 472.

35 Marie-Theres Wacker, *Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah*, Wisdom Commentary Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 133.

36 Herzer, *4 Baruch*, xxx–xxxvi.

37 Mroczek, *Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 60. Herzer observes that "literal citations are otherwise absent in *4 Baruch*" (*4 Baruch*, 129); this citation may emphasize the importance of Ps 137 for establishing the exilic setting in this work.