

International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament

Carolyn J. Sharp

JEREMIAH 26–52



Kohlhammer

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International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT)

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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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This commentary illuminates Jer 26-52 through historical, literary, feminist, and postcolonial analysis. Ideologies of subjugation and resistance are entangled in the Jeremiah traditions. The reader is guided through narratives of extreme violence, portrayals of iconic allies and adversaries, and complex gestures of scribal resilience. Judah's cultural trauma is refracted through prose that mimics Neo-Babylonian colonizing ideology, dramatic scenes of survival, and poetry alight with the desire for vengeance against enemies. The commentary's historical and literary arguments are enriched by insights from archaeology, feminist translation theory, and queer studies.

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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 unflinching

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)

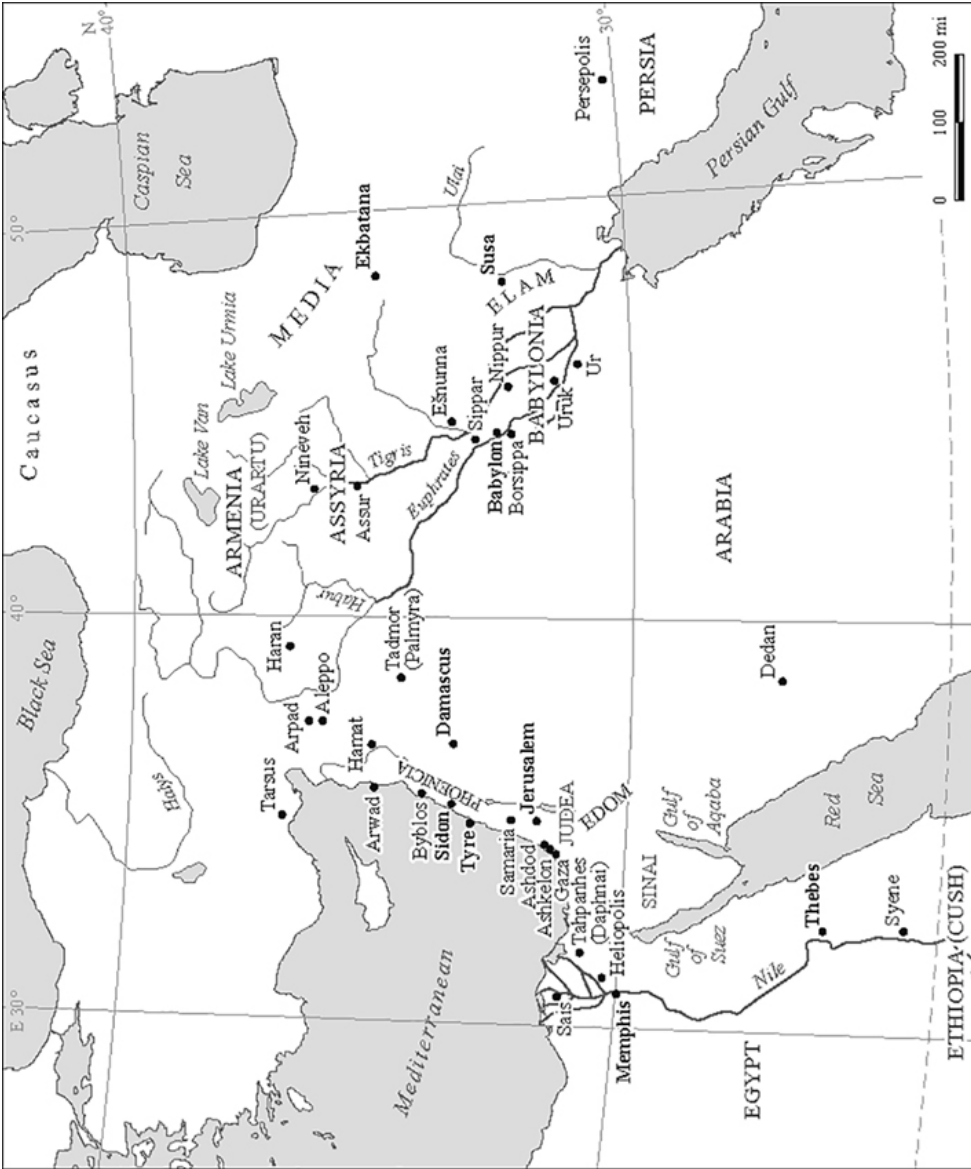
SBTS Sources for Biblical and Theological Study

SLL 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 Hilkiyah. 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 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 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 preserved 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