

Introduction to Jeremiah 1–25

The book of Jeremiah tells of Jeremiah's words and actions against the background of the destruction of Jerusalem and the house of YHWH, which signified the end both of the nation of Judah and of the Davidic kingship. It should also be read from the differing perspectives of the survivors who were deported to Babylon or fled to Egypt; the voices of the Judeans who remained in the Land can be heard in mournful depictions of war and privation. The book justifies the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 587 BCE by the army of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar from the perspective of the national deity, YHWH: the prophet Jeremiah appears as one who speaks for YHWH. A principal argument is that the fall of Judah and Jerusalem is punishment for social crimes, political affiliations, and the worship of foreign gods. This highly negative view is interrupted by a few promises of salvation (in Jer 3; 23; 30–33) and by a perspective that sees the Babylonian Golah (those forcibly deported to Babylon) as a group preserved by God, who promises that they will return to and resettle in Judah. In the Oracles Concerning the Nations (Jer^{MT} 46–51), which promise evil to Judah's neighbors and to Babylon, YHWH is self-depicted as a mighty ruler of world history who ultimately punishes even the hubris of conquerors. In the call narrative Jeremiah is installed as a prophet to the nations, endowed with royal authority, who will act in the name of YHWH "to uproot and to throw down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). As a whole, the book is characterized by the dominance of destruction and suffering in contrast to rebuilding and living.

Textual Basis of This Commentary

Differences between Jer^{LXX} and Jer^{MT}

As is well known, the Greek text of Jeremiah (Jer^{LXX}) is about a seventh (ca. 14 percent) shorter¹ than the Masoretic text (Jer^{MT}).² Jer^{LXX} is a translation of a Hebrew original and is strictly oriented to that *Vorlage*.³ The translators attempted to reflect every morpheme (i.e., every unit of the language system that bore meaning) in the original text with a Greek morpheme (isomorphism).⁴ The result was that the Greek text contains many Hebraisms and unusual grammatical forms; it

1 So Yehezkel J. MIN, "The Minuses and Pluses of the LXX Translation of Jeremiah as Compared with the Massoretic Text. Their Classification and Possible Origins," (PhD, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977). According to Emanuel Tov's estimate (*Text*, 265) it is shorter by about a sixth, or some three thousand words.

2 Jer^{MT} represents the version of the text according to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS).

3 Cf. STIPP, *Sondergut*, 20, 57–58; POPKO, *Marriage Metaphor*, 259–60.

4 Cf. PIETERSMA and SAUNDERS, *Ieremias*, 876.

would probably have sounded strange and difficult to contemporary Greek readers and thus demonstrated that it was a translation.⁵

Research on Jeremiah since the 1970s, inspired by the discoveries at Qumran, has focused intensively on the differences between Jer^{MT} and Jer^{LXX}, comparing the two major editions of the text, six fragments found at Qumran, four fragments from private collections, and quotations in Hellenistic Jewish writings.⁶ The minimal content of the fragments limits what can be concluded from them, as an overview of the Qumran texts and the fragment from Schøyen's collection shows:⁷

Siglum	Name	Content	Text Type	Paleographic Dating
2Q13	2QJer	Parts of Jer 42–48	Semi-Masoretic	1st half of the 1st century
4Q70	4QJer ^a	Parts of Jer 7–22	Proto-Masoretic	225–175 BCE (Cross)
4Q71	4QJer ^b	Frgm.: Jer 9:11–10:21	Similar to the <i>Vorlage</i> of LXX	200–150 BCE (Tov); Hasmonean ⁸ (Puech)
4Q72	4QJer ^c	Parts of Jer 4–33	Semi-Masoretic	Late 1st century BCE
4Q72a	4QJer ^d	Frgm.: Jer 43:2–10	Partly similar to the <i>Vorlage</i> of LXX	Like 4Q71
4Q72b	4QJer ^e	Frgm.: Jer 50:4–6	Similar to MT	Hasmonean
DSS F.116	DSS F.Jer1	Ms Schøyen 4612/9 Jer 3:14–19	Similar to the <i>Vorlage</i> of LXX	Middle to late Hasmonean

The present state of research is reflected in the collected volume *Textual History of the Bible*.⁹ The ancient manuscripts show that for several centuries a variety of

5 Cf. STIPP, “Gottesbildfragen,” 201–2.

6 We may mention, from among the multitude of studies, JANZEN, *Studies*; TOV, *Septuagint Translation*; BOGAERT, “De Baruch à Jérémie”; GOLDMAN, *Prophétie et royauté*; STIPP, *Sondergut*.

7 This information is drawn from Eibert J. C. TIGCHELAAR, “Jeremiah’s Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Growth of a Tradition,” in Hindy NAJMAN and Konrad SCHMID, eds., *Jeremiah’s Scriptures*, 301–2. The Schøyen fragment was published in Torleif ELGVIN, Kipp DAVIS, and Michaël LANGLOIS, eds., *Gleanings from the Caves. Dead Sea Scrolls and Artefacts from the Schøyen Collection*, LSTS 71 (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 215–23. Three additional fragments from private collections with three or four words, or in one case three verses, are unimportant; Tigchelaar does not exclude the possibility that they may be modern forgeries.

8 The adjective refers to the period of Hasmonean rule (163–137 BCE), so dubbed by Josephus, A.J. 14.490–491, describing a Jerusalemite priestly clan. Leading members of this family, called Maccabees, in the years 167/6 BCE rose against the Hellenistic religious reforms of the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 215–164). They exercised political power and the high-priestly office in Jerusalem until the year 37 BCE, when Judea fell under Roman rule.

9 Cf. WEIS, LANGE, and FISCHER, “Jeremiah.” The three authors represent competing theses regarding text-critical priorities.

versions existed simultaneously, with Jer^{MT} and the Hebrew *Vorlage* for Jer^{LXX} to be seen as “the extreme representatives of the Jeremiah textual tradition that remained fluid until the texts were eventually standardized.”¹⁰ Karin Finsterbusch and Armin Lange estimate that the Greek translation was completed before the end of the second century BCE¹¹ but is based on a *Vorlage* that had probably reached Alexandria at some earlier time.¹²

The present state of research shows the improbability of the thesis that Jer^{MT} has priority,¹³ either because of systematic shortening by the Greek translators (as advocated by Georg Fischer, Andreas Vonach, and others),¹⁴ or because of significant lacunae in their Hebrew *Vorlage* (as Jack Lundbom argues).¹⁵

The text tradition continued to develop along two independent lines, though the expansion of Jer^{MT} was significantly greater than that of Jer^{LXX}.¹⁶ The additional 14 percent of the text in Jer^{MT} is made up of inserted passages (10:6–8, 10; 17:1–4;¹⁷ 29:16–20; 30:10–11, 15, 22; 33:14–26; 39:4–13), several doublets (6:13–15 = 8:10b–12; 15:13–14 = 17:3–4; 46:27–28 = 30:10–11; 49:22 = 48:40b, 41b), and individual expansions by means of “lexemes, word-combinations, grammatical constructions, and orthographic idiosyncrasies”¹⁸ that, on the one hand, derive from everyday speech but, on the other hand, reveal some stylistic preferences: thus names, titles,¹⁹ place names, and new introductions (2:1–2aα; 7:1–2a; 16:1; 27:1; 46:1; 47:1) are added. Hermann-Josef Stipp terms the language of these expansions a “pre-Masoretic idiolect”²⁰ and interprets them as an expansion of the Hebrew text tradition by a few scribes.

On the basis of the manuscript findings and allusions to the text of Jer^{MT} in the books of Daniel and Sirach, Finsterbusch and Lange posit a *terminus ante quem*

10 FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1141.

11 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1146; there is a survey of various datings in FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, *MT-Jeremia 1–24*, 13.

12 So AEJMELAEUS, “Jeremiah at the Turning Point,” 460.

13 With STIPP, *Sondergut*, 7–16; FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, *Textgeschichte*, 1143. Cf. the thorough critique of the thesis of Fischer and Vonach in STIPP, *Jeremia-Septuaginta*.

14 Cf. Georg FISCHER, “Zum Text des Jeremiabuches,” *Bib* 78 (1997): 305–28; HThKAT, 46; VONACH, *Jeremias. Erläuterungen*, 2713–2723 and 2733.

15 Cf. Jack R. LUNDBOM, “Haplography in the Hebrew Vorlage of LXX Jeremiah,” *HS* 46 (2005): 301–20.

16 Cf. STIPP, *Sondergut*, 152–65; POPKO, *Marriage Metaphor*, 263.

17 However, Jer 17:1–4 was probably part of the *Vorlage* and dropped out later; see below *ad loc.*

18 STIPP, “Verhältnis der Textformen,” 61.

19 VONACH (*Jeremias, Erläuterungen*, 2702), counts 56 instances of the epithet “Sabaoth” in Jer^{MT} and 43 other singular expressions that are absent from Jer^{LXX}. Other extras in Jer^{MT} are filiations (37 instances) as well as designations of occupations and statuses (38 instances).

20 Cf. STIPP, “Der prämasoretische Idiolekt”; IDEM, “Linguistic Peculiarities of the Masoretic Edition of the Book of Jeremiah. An Updated Index,” *JNSL* 23/2 (1997): 181–202. For the character of the expansions in the Masoretic text and their interpretation as “second edition” cf. Tov, “Some Aspects”; IDEM, “Literary History.”

for the Proto-Masoretic version in the early third century BCE.²¹ They find in the longer additions within Jer^{MT} “a specific priestly-levitical profile” (cf. Jer^{MT} 27:18–19, 21–22; 29:14) and a “sharp critique of conditions in Jerusalem and Judah”²² (cf. Jer^{MT} 17:1–4; 39:4–13) combined with hope for the assembly of the whole Golah and the reestablishment of a legitimate royal rule and of the cult in Jerusalem after the judgment of the nations (cf. Jer^{MT} 19:10–14; 30:10–11, 22; 31:17; 33:14–26). They trace the Proto-Masoretic redaction of the book to a priestly group of Egyptian Jews who took a critical stance toward the Hellenization of the Temple in Jerusalem.²³

Change of Translators in Jer^{LXX}?

As early as 1903 the British scholar Henry St. John Thackeray proposed the thesis, based on a striking shift in equivalent words for translating certain Greek terms, that the Greek version of the book of Jeremiah was the work of three different translators: (1) Jer^{LXX} 1–28(29); (2) Jer^{LXX} (28)29–51 (with Bar 1:1–3:8); (3) Jer^{LXX} 52.²⁴

Especially obvious examples are shifts in the representation of the messenger formula יהוה אמר כה from τάδε λέγει κύριος in Jer^{LXX} 1–28 to οὕτως εἶπεν κύριος within ch. 29, and the translation of the expression שִׁמָּה/שָׂמָה + הִיָּה, “ruin, lay waste” with τάσσειν εἰς ἀφανισμόν in the first part and τοθεῖναι/εἶναι εἰς ἄβατον in the second. Hebrew עַתָּה, “time,” is translated twenty-five times in Jer^{LXX} with καιρός, but thereafter three times with χρόνος.

Emanuel Tov rejected this thesis in a comprehensive study published in 1973.²⁵ He offers thirty examples of exclusive semantic correspondences in Jer^{LXX} extending throughout the book, and also lists fifty-one examples of words, formulas, and expressions that are translated differently in Jer^{LXX} 1–28 and Jer^{LXX} 29–52. Tov ascribes these differences to a reviser who reworked the original translation of chs. 29–52. He says that in the transmission of the Greek text, for unexplained reasons, two different scrolls were combined and copied, an original translation of chs. 1–28 and a revised version of chs. 29–52.

Stipp agrees with Tov as regards the exclusive equivalences between the two halves of the book but rejects his thesis of partial revision. He argues that Jer^{LXX}

21 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1149. They call “Proto-Masoretic” what Stipp dubs “Pre-Masoretic.” I am following Stipp because I share his thesis regarding the structure of the Hebrew text tradition. For the definition see Emanuel Tov, “Proto-Masoretic,” “Pre-Masoretic,” “Semi-Masoretic,” and “Masoretic.” A Study in Terminology and Textual Theory,” in IDEM, *Textual Developments. Collected Essays IV* (VTSup 181) (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 195–213. AEJMELEUS (“Jeremiah at the Turning Point,” 460) dates the Proto-Masoretic version to the first third of the second century.

22 FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1150–51.

23 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1151–52.

24 Cf. Henry St. John THACKERAY, “The Greek Translators of Jeremiah,” *JTS* 4 (1903): 245–66; IDEM, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship. A Study in Origins*. Schweich lectures, 1920 (London: Milford, 1921), 29–37.

25 Cf. Tov, *Septuagint Translation*, 162–63.

contains significant shifts in translation equivalents apart from the major division in ch. 29, and that these could not all be traced to a change of translators or to recensions; such differences can also be expected to occur in unified translations.²⁶ Likewise Albert Pietersma, who, together with Benjamin Wright, prepared the English translation of the Septuagint text, opposes Tov's thesis and attributes the Greek version to a single translator who could have chosen different synonyms according to context, since an isomorphic translation does not necessarily demand consistency in the representation of certain lexemes.²⁷

Karin Finsterbusch and Norbert Jacoby emphasize that certain renderings of Hebrew words, formulas, and expressions frequently appear in clusters within certain sections.²⁸ The resolutions of Hebrew nominal forms into verbal ones and the use of tenses, modes, and aspects of the verbs are also found in clusters. They trace this to a small group of translators who cooperated so closely that no "hands" can be identified with certainty, but they do propose that, nevertheless, the individual translators had some latitude in their presentation. They exclude a definitive revision of the work by a "master" such as Tov supposes.²⁹ In light of the studies by Stipp, Pietersma, and Finsterbusch/Jacoby, I accept that the whole book of Jeremiah was translated by a small group of Alexandrian scholars; I will refer to them as "the translators."

The Communicative Situation in Jer^{LXX} and Jer^{MT}

Recently Finsterbusch and Jacoby have presented a comprehensive comparison of Jer^{MT} and Jer^{LXX}, with a German translation oriented towards the respective originals.³⁰ They have also published preliminary studies on specific topics.³¹ I can therefore omit a lengthy discussion here and only point out the most important differences. I will discuss their findings and Stipp's studies on Jer^{MT} and Jer^{LXX} in commenting on the individual passages. The following table indicates the different communicative situations of the two versions marked at the beginning and end of the book.

26 Cf. STIPP, "Offene Fragen zur Übersetzungskritik des antiken griechischen Jeremia-buches," in IDEM, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch*, 141–53, at 153.

27 Cf. ALBERT PIETERSMA, "Of Translation and Revision. From Greek Isaiah to Greek Jeremiah," in MICHAEL N. VAN DER MEER, et al., eds., *Isaiah in Context. Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, VTSup 138 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 361–87, at 386–87.

28 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, *MT-Jeremia 25–52*, 18–22.

29 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, *MT-Jeremia 25–52*, 22 n. 63.

30 FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, *MT-Jeremia 1–24; MT-Jeremia 25–52*.

31 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH, "Kommunikationsebenen"; EADEM, "Different Beginnings"; FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, "Völkergericht"; JACOBY, "Isomorphism."

LXX 1:1–7*	MT 1:1–7*
¹ The message of God that came to Jeremiah, (son) of Hilkiah, of the priests who dwelt in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ² that came to him as the word of God in the days of Josiah, the son of Amos, the king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³ And it came in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, until the eleventh year of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. ⁴ And the word of the KYRIOS came to me ... ⁶ And I said ... ⁷ And the KYRIOS said to me ... 51:31 The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book as dictated by Jeremiah ...	¹ The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, of the priests in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ² to whom the word of YHWH came in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³ It came in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, until the exiling of Jerusalem in the fifth month. ⁴ Now the word of YHWH came to me ... ⁶ I said ... ⁷ YHWH said to me ... Par Jer 45:1 51:64 ... Thus far the words of Jeremiah.

The narrative voice in Jer^{LXX} emphasizes that the book contains God's words to Jeremiah. In the course of 1:1–7, Jeremiah recapitulates this divine speech (v. 4) and begins a dialogue with God, with the result that the two speeches are interwoven with one another. At the end of the book, we find the oracle of salvation for Baruch and the indication that Baruch has written down Jeremiah's words as he dictated them (Jer^{LXX} 51:31–35). Here, the narrative voice is identified with that of Baruch. In Jer^{MT}, the oracle of salvation for Baruch loses its prominent position and is moved to ch. 45.

In contrast, Jer^{MT} describes the content of the book as the words of Jeremiah that God spoke to him; this is emphasized by numerous appearances of the word-event, messenger, and citation formulas.³² The narrative voice introduces Jeremiah in 1:1–3, and at 1:4 he begins to speak about himself. Within chs. 1–10, compared to Jer^{LXX}, Jer^{MT} contains two additional headings, at 2:1–2* and 7:1–2*, with explicit orders to the prophet to speak. It is striking that the messenger formula often serves in prose speeches and redactional passages as an emphatic introduction of divine speech (e.g., in 2:2; 11:21; 12:14; 19:1; 26:2), differently from its usual function (to introduce a speech by the prophet).³³ It causes breaks in the text that remind the reader of the divine speaker and thus exercises a structural function.³⁴

32 The messenger formula כה אמר יהוה, “Thus says YHWH,” occurs 153× in the book, the Greek equivalents τάδε λέγει κύριος 64× and οὕτως εἶπεν κύριος 71×. The citation formula בְּאֵם־יְהוָה, λέγει or εἶπεν κύριος, “word of YHWH,” appears 167×, 84 of them in Jer 1–25.

33 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH, “Messenger Formula”; MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 292–95.

34 Cf. STIPP, HAT, 303.

In Jer^{MT}, the voice of Jeremiah is dominant only as far as ch. 25;³⁵ the subsequent text contains stories about him and oracles to the nations, in which the narrative voice occupies the foreground (cf. Jer^{MT} 46:1–2). At the end of the book, Jeremiah commissions Seraiah, who is being deported to Babylon, to read a scroll containing the list of calamities that will befall Babylon and then to sink this scroll in the Euphrates (Jer^{MT} 51:60–64a = Jer^{LXX} 28:60–64). The concluding note, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah” (Jer^{MT} 51:64b) is lacking in Jer^{LXX} 28:64. The narrative voice in Jer^{MT} is not identified, though according to Finsterbusch it is “inserted” repeatedly in the course of the book by means of brief remarks or longer narrative passages.³⁶ Its principal task is to guide readers through this complex book.

The Positioning of the Oracles concerning the Nations in Jer^{LXX} and Jer^{MT}

In Jer^{MT} and Jer^{LXX}, the oracles concerning the nations (OAN) are placed in different contexts; their placement follows a number of logical orders that are not obvious at first glance.

LXX		MT	
1:1–25:14a	Oracles of doom against Judah	1:1–25:14	Oracles of doom against Judah
		25:15–38	Story of the cup of wrath
		26–45	Narratives and oracles of salvation
25:14b–32:42	Oracles concerning the nations	46–51	Oracles concerning the nations
25:14b–26:1	Elam (<i>Promise 25:19</i>)	46:1–28	Egypt (<i>Promise 46:26b</i>)
26:2–28	Egypt	47:1–7	Philistia
27:1–28:64	Babylon	48:1–47	Moab (<i>Promise 48:47</i>)
29:1–7	Philistia	49:1–6	Ammon (<i>Promise 49:6</i>)
29:8–23	Edom	49:7–22	Edom
30:1–5	Ammon	49:23–27	Damascus
30:6–11	Kedar	49:28–33	Kedar/Hazor
30:12–16	Damascus	49:34–39	Elam (<i>Promise 49:39</i>)
31:1–44	Moab	50:1–51:64	Babylon
32:1–24	Story of the cup of wrath		
33–51	Narratives and oracles of salvation		
52	Historical appendix	52	Historical appendix

35 On this see FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, *MT-Jeremia 1–24*, 27.

36 FINSTERBUSCH, “Kommunikationsebenen,” 249; cf. SHEAD, *A Mouth Full of Fire*, 52–53.

Jer^{LXX} is often assigned to the so-called eschatological *schema*, that is, the sequence of oracles of doom directed against Jeremiah's own people, then to other peoples followed by oracles of salvation for his own nation.³⁷ That model, however, does not fit the book of Jeremiah because in Jer^{LXX} 33–51 = Jer^{MT} 26–45 oracles of salvation are only marginally evident, and even the stories about Jeremiah are essentially about negative things to come.³⁸

In Jer^{LXX}, the OAN begin immediately after the summary of the disaster that will fall on Judah (25:1–14a) with a saying about Elam (Jer^{LXX} 25:14b–26:1). Following the oracles concerning nine foreign nations, Jer^{LXX} 32:1–24 offers the narrative of the cup of wrath, which functions as an implementation report of the oracles of doom against Judah and the foreign peoples. Of the latter, in Jer^{LXX} 25:19 only Elam receives a promise that in the distant future YHWH will alter its fate.

In Jer^{MT}, the OAN are placed at the end of the book (chs. 46–51), and the story of the cup of wrath is at 25:15–38.³⁹ A third section of the book begins with the new superscription before the first address to Egypt, “The word of YHWH that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations” (46:1). The sequence of foreign peoples begins with Egypt, and in addition to Elam (49:39) there are three other nations that receive a word of hope: Egypt (48:26b MT*), Moab (48:47 MT*), and Ammon (49:6 MT*).

I agree with the many scholars who think that Jer^{LXX}, including the central placement of the OAN, relies on a Hebrew *Vorlage* that is older than Jer^{MT} and thus has text-critical priority.⁴⁰ The principal reasons for thinking that in Jer^{MT} the OAN have been deliberately rearranged,⁴¹ both in their sequence and in their placement within the book, are as follows:

- (1) The sequence of the Jer^{LXX} OAN cannot be explained beyond question, which suggests that it came about simply by collection. Evidently the list first includes the great empires and then Judah's neighbors. Elam, which is missing from the OAN in other prophetic books, is placed before the others, given a hopeful promise, and the saying is dated to the beginning of Zedekiah's reign (Jer^{LXX} 26:1). Finsterbusch and Jacoby understand Elam as symbolic of the Persians, who are named alongside Elam in the list of nations in Jer^{LXX} 32:25 and whose highlighting is seen as an indicator that tradents living in the Persian period exercised a certain degree of diplomatic license in favor of the great power of their time.⁴²

37 Cf., e.g., SCHMID, *Buchgestalten*, 315–18; FISCHER, *Jeremia*, HThKAT, 43–46, 744.

38 Cf. the detailed analysis in STIPP, “Das eschatologische Schema.”

39 FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY (“Völkergericht,” 48–49) have clarified the question of this passage: it was left over when the OAN were transposed and then was secondarily attached to Jer 25:1–14.

40 JANZEN, *Studies*, 128; TOV, “Literary History,” 363; BOGAERT, “De Baruch à Jérémie,” 168–73, 430–32; STIPP, *Sondergut*, 90–91; AEJMELEAUS, “Jeremiah at the Turning Point,” 460; FINSTERBUSCH and LANGE, “Textgeschichte,” 1143. See also “Redactional Theories” in the introduction to Carolyn SHARP's *Jeremiah* 26–52, pp. 25–33.

41 This position is also represented by HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah* 1, Hermeneia, 313; CARROLL, *Jeremiah*, OTL, 490; MCKANE, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, ICC, 621–22; STIPP, *Sondergut*, 111–19; WANKE, *Jeremia*, ZBK. In contrast, SCHMIDT (*Das Buch Jeremia*, ATD 20, 280–81) assumes that an originally independent collection of sayings to the peoples was inserted at different points in the LXX and in the MT.

42 Cf. FINSTERBUSCH and JACOBY, “Völkergericht,” 41, 44–45.

The sequence of the Jer^{MT} OAN essentially matches the list in the narrative of the cup of wrath (Jer^{MT} 25:19–26). The placement of Egypt at the beginning can be explained by the preceding narrative in Jer^{MT} about the flight to Egypt in Jer 43–44. Like the oracle of salvation to Baruch in 45:1, the first oracle to Egypt (46:2) is dated to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The oracle to Babylon, whose 110 verses make it the longest, is placed at the end, as climax. Here again there is a content link inasmuch as the concluding narrative in Jer 52 describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.

(2) The focus on Babylon in Jer^{MT} that is evident in the placement of the words to Babylon at the end is likewise evident in the pre-Masoretic additions in Jer 25:1–14, which explicitly name the king of Babylon and his people. In addition, the punishment of Judah described in Jer^{LXX} 25:11 as “service among the Gentiles” has been reworked by the pre-Masoretic revision to represent enslavement of all the nations to the king of Babylon. In addition, Jer^{MT} 25:14 introduces the motif of vengeance for Babylon’s deeds, likewise mentioned in Jer 27:7 and made a *Leitmotif* in the oracles concerning Babylon in Jer 50–51. In Jer 1–19, the enemy from the north is deliberately left unidentified—something Stipp calls “Babelschweigen,”⁴³ that is, “silence about Babylon”—but in Jer^{MT} 25 Nebuchadnezzar is named over and over again and even called “servant of YHWH” (25:9; 27:6; 43:10, all MT): that is, world ruler by the grace of YHWH. Certainly, that world domination is for a limited time and remains subject to YHWH’s actions, for at the end of the book, the collapse of Babylonian rule is painted in full color, thus making YHWH’s power visible. The introduction of Jeremiah as “prophet to the nations” (1:5, בְּרִיא לְגוֹיִם) and his sovereign-like installation by YHWH “over nations and over kingdoms” (עַל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל־הַמַּמְלָכוֹת, 1:10) is in a sense affirmed by the placement of the OAN at the end.

(3) The positioning of the narrative of the cup of wrath and the list of nations in Jer^{LXX} 32, as a summary and conclusion to the OAN, is immediately obvious. In contrast, the function of their positioning at the center of the book (Jer^{MT} 25:15–38), separated from the OAN, is only evident at a second viewing. In the structure of Jer^{MT}, the pericope about the cup of wrath functions as a reminder, in the middle of the book, of Jeremiah’s role as a prophet to the nations (1:5), and also, with the description of the stepwise divine acts of judgment on Judah (25:18), foreign nations (25:19–25), and Babylon (25:26; cp. 25:14), serves to introduce an arc of tension that will extend via Jer 27:7 and 50:9, 41–42, to the destruction of Babylon in 51:48–58. The divine judgment on the whole world poetically staged in Jer^{MT} 25:30–38 thus constitutes an introduction to the second half of the book in Jer^{MT}.

(4) Another intertextual link to the nations makes more sense in Jer^{LXX}. In the argument with Hananiah about the near future, Jeremiah mentions prophets before him who foretold war with many lands and with great empires (Jer^{MT} 28:8 = Jer^{LXX} 35:8). In the Greek version, this verse points not only to God’s sending of the prophets as mentioned in Jer 25:3–4 but also back to the preceding OAN.

(5) The promise of a good future for Elam in Jer^{LXX} serves as a model for three other promises in Jer^{MT}: Egypt will be resettled (46:26b); Moab (48:47) and Ammon (49:6), like Elam, will experience a change of fortune (שׁוּב שְׁבוּת). Why those nations in particular? The resettlement of Egypt and its significance for Israel’s posterity should be regarded as contemporary reminiscences of the late redactor. The restoration of those three nations could be traced to the fact that neither Egypt nor the lands east of the Jordan had been part of the Davidic-Solomonic realm, which a later age hoped to see restored. Consequently, they were not competing with Israel.

On the whole it is evident that Jer^{LXX} has text-critical priority, whereas Jer^{MT} represents a later stage of development. However, that general assessment does not mean that Jer^{LXX} can simply be translated back into Hebrew in order to obtain the original text. Although this is a translation that is very precise, its wording closely aligned with the wording of its Hebrew *Vorlage*, it is possible that mistakes in reading and copying are present, together with corruptions of the text and changes to the tradition. Consequently, we must assess in each individual case which variant deserves priority. Since this commentary is an interpretation of Jer^{MT}, the notes on text and translation can discuss only the most consequential deviations in Jer^{LXX}. While my translation follows the MT, I will attempt to make variants visible when they are relevant to the interpretation, using the following symbols:

[]	additional text in MT
< >	additional text in LXX
.../...	separates the MT reading (given first) from that in the LXX; the preferred reading will be in normal type, the one of lesser text-critical value in smaller type
{ }	Clarifications of the gender and number of words in Hebrew
()	C.M.'s additions to aid understanding

The Historical Background of Jeremiah's Prophecy

The book's superscription (Jer 1:1–3) gives the time frame for Jeremiah's work as lying between the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (627 BCE), and the conquest of Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah (July 587). However, the story of the installation of Gedaliah as Babylonian governor, his murder, and the subsequent flight of Judeans to Egypt (40:6–41:18) depicts events that took place after Jerusalem's fall. The content of a number of texts makes it clear that they stem from the period of Babylonian rule (587–539) and that of Persia (539–330). The most important events for Judah during the period thus envisaged will be briefly explained in what follows so that readers of the commentary may have a general overview of the political, social, and community situation of those who wrote and revised the book of Jeremiah.⁴⁴

Judah at the End of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

In the year 639 BCE, Josiah ascended the throne of Judah, at a time when the influence of the Neo-Assyrian empire was declining and Egypt was gradually gain-

44 For questions regarding the prophet himself see the synchronic analysis of Jer 1:1–19.