

A COMMENTARY ON
JEREMIAH

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JEREMIAH

MICHAEL B. SHEPHERD



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A C A D E M I C

A Commentary on Jeremiah

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*Dedicated to the students in my
Hebrew and Latter Prophets courses
at Cedarville University*

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>ANET</i> | <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>Aq.</i> | <i>Aquila</i> |
| <i>BDB</i> | <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> |
| <i>BHS</i> | <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> |
| <i>Codex L</i> | <i>The Leningrad Codex</i> |
| <i>DCH</i> | <i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> |
| <i>GKC</i> | <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> |
| <i>HALOT</i> | <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>LXX</i> | <i>Septuagint</i> |
| <i>MT</i> | <i>Masoretic Text</i> |
| <i>NETS</i> | <i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> |
| <i>SP</i> | <i>Samaritan Pentateuch</i> |
| <i>Symm.</i> | <i>Symmachus</i> |
| <i>Syr.</i> | <i>Syriac Peshitta</i> |
| <i>Tg. Jon.</i> | <i>Targum Jonathan</i> |

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| <i>Theod.</i> | <i>Theodotion</i> |
| <i>TLOT</i> | <i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>Vulg.</i> | <i>Latin Vulgate</i> ¹ |

1. Abbreviations in footnotes can be found in the Bibliography. See also the second edition of *The SBL Handbook of Style*.

INTRODUCTION

Given the plethora of commentaries on biblical books, the publication of a new commentary requires some justification. The present commentary on the book of Jeremiah makes an original contribution to the field in its combination of three features. First, the base text of this commentary is the Hebrew source text behind the Old Greek of Jeremiah. Most commentaries on Jeremiah primarily follow the traditional Hebrew text (the Masoretic Text),¹ yet the growing consensus among textual critics is that the Hebrew source of Greek Jeremiah is the earlier edition.² Second, the object of study in the present commentary is the literature that bears the name of the prophet Jeremiah. It is not an account of the life and times of the prophet. It is not an examination of the oral preaching of Jeremiah. It is also not a reconstruction of the literary prehistory of the book. Rather, it is an analysis and exposition of the composition of the book in its final form. Third,

1. Georg Walser's commentary is an exception (*Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on Ieremias in Codex Vaticanus* [Leiden: Brill, 2012]), but it is based on the Greek text, not the Hebrew source text.
2. See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 286–94. See also Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrische Sondergut des Jeremiasbuches*, OBO 136 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1994). Furthermore, it is this earlier edition that serves as the basis for Ezekiel's interpretation of Jeremiah's enemy from the north (Ezek. 38:14–17) and the interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years in Daniel 9 (see Michael B. Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible*, StBibLit 123 [New York: Lang, 2009], 39–44, 95–99).

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this commentary works with the conviction that the book of Jeremiah was built to last. That is, the eschatological shaping of the book gives it ongoing relevance for future generations of readers. Thus, the task of the commentator is not to “update” the book with contemporary application but to reorient the reader to the perennially relevant concerns of the biblical author. The book itself is fashioned to self-interpret and to self-apply. The interpreter needs only to learn how to follow the clues to its composition.

THE TEXT OF JEREMIAH

The Old Greek translation of Jeremiah is about one-sixth or one-seventh shorter than the Masoretic Text (MT), which is the basis of most modern English translations.³ The longest continuous passages absent from the Greek are Jeremiah 33:14–26 and 39:4–13. The Old Greek is also in a different arrangement, most notably in the placement of the section on the nations (Jer. 46–51) directly after Jeremiah 25:13 in the following order: 49:34–39; 46:2–28; 50–51; 47; 49:7–22, 1–5, 28–33, 23–27; 48. In the nineteenth century, biblical scholars were divided on the question of whether the major differences in length and arrangement between the Old Greek and the MT were due to the presence of a different Hebrew source text or to the work of the translator.⁴ With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the twentieth century, it is now generally recognized that the Old Greek of Jeremiah was based on a Hebrew text that differed considerably from the one found in the MT.⁵ Furthermore, the literal translation technique of Greek Jeremiah

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3. An English translation of the Greek may be found in Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The standard critical edition of the Greek text is Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae*, 3rd ed., *Septuaginta XV* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).
 4. See C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, trans. David Patrick and James Kennedy, Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament 8 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866–1891; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 21. The problem was noted in the early church by Jerome who argued that the Greek text was “sporadically unreliable, having been corrupted by copyists” (Dean O. Wenhe, ed., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, ACCS XII [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008], xxiii).
 5. But see Georg Fischer, *Jeremiah Studies: From Text and Contexts to Theology*, FAT 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 41–59. See also Sven Soderlund, *The Greek Text of Jeremiah: A Revised Hypothesis* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985).

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has suggested all along that it would have been highly unlikely for the translator to deviate substantially from his source text.⁶

The book of Jeremiah is thus extant in two distinct editions, which stood in their final forms at the beginning of two separate processes of transmission. The earlier, shorter edition is represented by the Old Greek and by Hebrew fragments of Jeremiah from Qumran that agree with the Old Greek in shortness and arrangement (4QJer^{b, d}).⁷ The later, longer edition is represented by proto-MT

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6. “In general, if a certain book is rendered literally, it is not to be assumed that the translator omitted large sections that were found in his *Vorlage*. An alternative explanation of the brevity of the LXX is that the translator worked from a shorter *Hebrew* text. By the same token, if a translation unit is free or even paraphrastic, exegetical omissions (even long ones) may be expected” (Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015], 19). Of course, it is possible that the translator may have omitted some text by accident. It is also important to allow for occasional paraphrase or interpretive renderings (or even inner-Greek corruption), but for the most part the major differences in Jeremiah appear to be due to the presence of a different Hebrew source text (see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 115–27). Along with this comes an important caveat: “even if a retroverted variant bears all the marks of a well-supported reading, *such a reading may never have existed anywhere but in the translator’s mind*” (Tov, *Text-Critical Use*, 98). Nevertheless, it is irresponsible to ignore the evidence of the LXX altogether simply because of the presence of this difficulty. As an aside, the present commentary works under the assumption that Greek Jeremiah is the product of a single translator, not two or more. Even the tendency to replace one standard word equivalent with another after LXX chapter 29 can be explained according to the translator’s desire to vary his equivalents based on context (see Andrew G. Shead, “The Text of Jeremiah (MT and LXX),” in *The Book of Jeremiah: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, eds. Jack R. Lundbom, Craig A. Evans, and Bradford A. Anderson, VTSup 178 [Leiden: Brill, 2018], 261–63). It has been suggested that the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve were originally rendered into Greek by the same translator (see Emanuel Tov, “The Septuagint,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, vol. 1, eds. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013], 3).
 7. The tendency of ancient scribes was to add text, not to subtract text. Therefore, the shorter text is generally considered the earlier text unless other factors are involved (e.g., *homoioteleuton*, *homoiarchton*). The Greek and 4QJer^b do not contain Jer. 10:6–8, 10. In both witnesses the verses in chapter 10 occur in the order 1–5a, 9, 5b, 11–12. The Greek and

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witnesses from the Dead Sea Scrolls, any early versions based on the proto-MT (the Syriac Peshitta, *Targum Jonathan*, and the Latin Vulgate), and the MT itself.⁸ These are not merely two stages in the same literary development of the book, as if the Hebrew text attested by the Old Greek and 4QJer^{b, d} were a preliminary form of the composition that continued to mature into the final expression found in the MT. Rather, the first edition was a recognizable final form of the book that stood at the beginning of its own process of transmission, which continued (primarily through the Old Greek translation tradition) beyond the making of the second edition.⁹ The second edition

4QJer^d both have the shorter readings in Jer. 43:4–6 (LXX 50:4–6). These Hebrew fragments from Qumran are not to be equated with the *Vorlage* of the Old Greek (i.e., they sometimes agree with the MT against the LXX or have nonaligned readings), but they are very similar to it in significant ways. The Dead Sea Scrolls can be viewed in English in Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1999). Hebrew transcription is available in Eugene Ulrich, ed., *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). 4QJer^a generally agrees with the MT, although it also has agreements with the LXX against the MT and possesses some nonaligned readings. It has Jeremiah 7:30–8:3 added by a second hand (originally omitted by scribal oversight). 2QJer and 4QJer^c are generally closer to the MT than to the LXX, although they sometimes agree with the LXX against the MT and sometimes have nonaligned readings. DSS F.Jer 1 (Manuscript Schøyen 4612/9) and DSS F.Jer 2 (Manuscript Museum of the Bible SCR.003172) have readings in Jeremiah 3:15, 19 and Jeremiah 23:8 respectively that agree with the LXX against the MT. The nonaligned readings from the Qumran fragments are probably not enough to posit entire literary stages before, between, or after the two editions represented by the LXX and the MT. By the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is probably better to think of scribal adjustment of Hebrew manuscripts based on knowledge of the two existing Hebrew editions and other factors. For a full discussion of the Qumran witnesses, see Armin Lange, “Texts of Jeremiah in the Qumran Library,” in *The Book of Jeremiah: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, eds. Jack R. Lundbom, Craig A. Evans, and Bradford A. Anderson, VTSup 178 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 280–302.

8. The proto-MT is the consonantal framework of the MT prior to the addition of vowel pointing, accents, and marginal notes.
9. Following the events of the first century AD, the Jewish Old Greek translation of Jeremiah was preserved in the Christian community. Rabbinic Judaism adopted the proto-MT as its standard text. The Qumran community responsible for 4QJer^{b, d} did not survive the first century. Given

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represents a punctuation in the transmission process of the first edition that produced a systematic and comprehensive layer of revision, creating the head of a completely separate stream of transmission known as the history of the MT.¹⁰

It is important to note that the second edition of the book is not simply a collection of disparate textual variants to the first edition. It is the product of consistent editing across the whole. Emanuel Tov has provided a helpful list of editorial (addition of headings, repetition of sections, addition of new verses and sections, addition of new details, free rewriting), exegetical (clarification, homogenizing additions, contextual clarifications, amplified formulas), and other aspects (peculiar words and expressions, resumptive repetition; tendencies: the guilt of the nation, the centrality of God, actualization, priestly subjects, fulfillment of prophecy) that define the nature of the added layer of the

the tradition of the origin of the Septuagint in Alexandria, Egypt (*Letter of Aristeas*), it has been suggested that the Hebrew form of Jeremiah behind its Greek translation had its beginnings in Egypt (see Jer. 43–44), while the MT form is linked to Babylon and Palestine. It must be said, however, that both forms are attested from the same time and place among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

10. John Van Seters has objected to the use of terms such as “edition” and “editor” to describe the biblical literature and those who produced it as anachronistic (*The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006]). Van Seters rightly insists that the biblical compositions are the products of authors/composers. Nevertheless, as Joel Baden has noted in his review of Van Seters (*JNES* 68, no. 2 [2009]: 129–31), it is one thing to object to the use of certain terms, but it is quite another to object to the ideas attached to them. With regard to Jeremiah, Van Seters prefers William McKane’s proposal of a “rolling corpus” as advocated in his two-volume commentary in the International Critical Commentary series. According to McKane, the MT does not represent a systematic revision of the LXX *Vorlage*. Rather, it is the result of many small-scale scribal additions and adjustments accrued over time in the process of transmission. The problem with this view is that there is very little extant textual evidence for the supposed intermediary stages of development between the LXX *Vorlage* and the MT. The consistency with which the same kinds of additions and adjustments are made throughout MT Jeremiah argues against a rolling corpus (see J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, HSM 6 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973]). McKane’s analysis at the microlevel is brilliant, but his lack of conception of the book as a whole does not position him very well to see that two different versions of the same book with two very distinct messages have been produced.

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second edition.¹¹ The material found in this layer should not inform the textual critic's establishment of the text of the first edition. Of course, textual variants in the second edition found outside the added layer may contribute to an understanding of the text of the first edition.¹²

It is often said that the major changes from the first edition of Jeremiah to the second do not substantially affect the book's theological message.¹³ This is not quite correct. The changes affect the reading of the book in at least two very important ways. In the first edition, the mysterious enemy from the north (Jer. 1:13–15; LXX 25:1–13; et al.) is never identified with a historical enemy. This leaves open the possibility of an eschatological enemy, which is the way Ezekiel reads the prophecy (Ezek. 38:14–17; cf. LXX Num. 24:7; Rev. 20:8). In the

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11. Emanuel Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 365–83. It has been observed that the first edition contains similar features (e.g., headings [Jer. 46:2, 13; 49:28, 34]). This might suggest to some that the two extant versions of the book represent two moments in one larger stream of tradition with still earlier, shorter versions prior to the extant versions and with incrementally larger versions between the extant versions (see, e.g., Justus Theodore Ghorrmley, "Scribal Revision: A Post-Qumran Perspective on the Formation of Jeremiah," *Textus* 27 [2018]: 161–86). This is all very hypothetical. There is no a priori reason why the original final form of the book must lack editorial/authorial and exegetical features. The situation is not unlike the transmission history of the book of Psalms. Greek tradition has additional psalm superscriptions compared to what is found in Hebrew witnesses. Thus, scholars typically presuppose a trajectory that goes back to a time when none of the psalms had a superscription. Nevertheless, there is no textual witness to the book of Psalms that completely lacks superscriptions. A purely text-critical approach would evaluate the merits of each reading on a case-by-case basis. Regarding Jeremiah, the task is to explain the extant texts, not texts that do not exist.
 12. "But again, texts and their variants have a rich life, and individual variants can and do cross the boundaries between variant editions. Thus those who say simply that texts exhibiting different editions should not be used to correct individual variants in the other begin with a good premise but are also likely to be mistaken as often as they are correct" (Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 110).
 13. E.g., "Apart from the certainly remarkable different positioning of the oracles to the nations, however, the LXX version does not present any notable differences in content by comparison with the Hebrew" (Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Orton [Leiden: Deo, 2005], 203).

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second edition, the enemy from the north is identified with Babylon (e.g., MT Jer. 25:1–13).¹⁴ This becomes an internal problem for the MT in Jeremiah 50:3 where it is anticipated that the enemy from the north will come against Babylon.¹⁵ Second, in the first edition of the book, Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years (Jer. 25:11; 29:10) is understood in two different ways. In Jeremiah 29:10, Jeremiah is writing to the exiles in Babylon and encouraging them to submit to Babylonian authority, to accept God's just judgment, and to await restoration at the end of a literal period of seventy years. This is the way Daniel understands the prophecy in Daniel 9:1–19. In the Hebrew text behind the Old Greek of Jeremiah 25:1–13 (see Jer. 25:11), there is no reference to Babylon in the prophecy of seventy years, leaving open the possibility that the number seventy is symbolic of a complete, indefinite period (cf. Gen. 4:24; Matt. 18:22). This is the way Gabriel interprets the prophecy in Daniel 9:24–27 ("seventy sevens"). Thus, the historical return from Babylon prefigures an eschatological restoration. On the other hand, the MT (i.e., the second edition) of Jeremiah 25:11 limits the prophecy to a historical fulfillment when it identifies the enemy from the north as Babylon. To summarize, the first edition of Jeremiah (Old Greek, 4QJer^{b, d}) is not only the earlier, shorter edition but also the open-ended, potentially eschatological edition read by Ezekiel and Daniel.¹⁶ The second edition of the book

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14. The tendency of ancient scribes was to add historical information to help their readers, but where the original intent was to leave the text open ended, the addition of historical information obscured the meaning. One such example of this occurs in Numbers 24:7. Where the Hebrew text behind the LXX refers to an unidentified, eschatological enemy named "Gog" (see the Samaritan Pentateuch; cf. Ezek. 38–39; Rev. 20:8), the MT refers to the historical Amalekite king "Agag" in 1 Samuel 15.
 15. This is usually thought to be the Medes (Jer. 51:11, 28; cf. Isa. 13:17; Dan. 5:28), but the Medes are never explicitly identified as the enemy from the north. Both Babylon and Media are to the east in relation to Israel. This problem is typically resolved by explaining that a nation from the east like Babylon would attack the land of Israel from the north (see Ezek. 21:25 [Eng., 21:20]; 26:7), although it is also important to note that the coalition of kings led by Chedorlaomer in Genesis 14 entered from the south and departed northward.
 16. This feature of the first edition's content can also be seen in the placement and arrangement of the nations section after Jeremiah 25:13. The first (Jer. 49:34–39) and last (Jer. 48) units conclude with the phrase "at the end of the days" (Jer. 49:39; 48:47), framing the nations oracles as images of eschatological events. The absence of Jeremiah 48:45–47 in the

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(MT) is not only the later, longer, and rearranged edition but also the historicized edition.¹⁷

A biblical doctrine of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:14–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21), not to mention the exigencies of making a translation and commentary, requires a careful text-critical decision about which edition of Jeremiah is God-breathed and superintended by the Spirit. The present commentary follows the original edition of the book attested by the Old Greek and 4QJer^{b, d} while keeping a close eye on the MT and other witnesses for additional help with the text and its early history of interpretation. A full presentation of the Hebrew *Vorlage* (source text) of Greek Jeremiah based on Joseph’s Ziegler’s critical edition in the Göttingen Septuagint series is available for the first time at the end of this volume.¹⁸

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Bernhard Duhm and Sigmund Mowinckel articulated the position of classic historical-critical scholarship by identifying the presence of three basic strata in the book of Jeremiah: (1) the authentic words of Jeremiah found largely in the poetry of Jeremiah 1:1–25:13; (2) the historical-biographical material of Baruch found mostly in the prose of Jeremiah 26–45; and (3) the “sermonic” prose of the book’s Deuteronomistic redaction (parts of Jer. 7:1–8:3; 11; 14; 18; 21; 25; 26; 32; 34; 40; 44).¹⁹ According to John Bright, the so-called confessions of

Old Greek is due to *homoioteleuton* (Jer. 48:44b, 47a). Such framing has influenced the frequent allusion to Jeremiah 50–51 in Revelation 17–18. See commentary for further details.

17. This feature of the second edition’s content can be seen in its placement and arrangement of the nations section at the end of the book (Jer. 46–51) prior to the appendix in Jeremiah 52. The arrangement follows the list of nations in Jeremiah 25:15–26 to whom the cup of judgment passes, culminating with Babylon. Thus, the book concludes in Jeremiah 50–51 with the main historical interest of this edition—Babylon.
18. See also Louis Stulman’s backtranslation of the prose sections of Greek Jeremiah, *The Other Text of Jeremiah: A Reconstruction of the Hebrew Text Underlying the Greek Version of the Prose Sections of Jeremiah with English Translation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).
19. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, KHC 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901); Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiana: Dybwad, 1914). See Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 348–65. See also William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 10–95. There was also a D source, which consisted of Jeremiah 30–31.

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Jeremiah located in Jeremiah 11–20 are “as close an approximation as is possible of the prophet’s *ipsissima verba*,”²⁰ while the Deuteronomic prose discourses are the prophet’s preaching “as it was remembered, understood, and repeated in the circle of his followers.”²¹ For Bright, the contrast between the Jeremiah of the poetry and the Jeremiah of the prose has been greatly exaggerated, and he suggests the unlikelihood of a major distortion of his message during the lifetime of his associates.

The above modern critical analysis in its various manifestations has unfortunately not led to a better understanding of the book in its entirety. In fact, the book’s lack of storyline and chronological arrangement has left many interpreters with the impression that it is little more than a disorganized anthology of reminiscences that provides a rather imperfect window into the past. To say the least, there is certainly a void when it comes to explanation of how the book has been able to function coherently as Scripture down through the ages in the context of the Hebrew canon.²² Form-critical analysis has provided a helpful way to categorize prophetic oracles at the microlevel, but the goal of such analysis has traditionally been the *Sitz im Leben* (“setting in life”).²³ The “new” form criticism seeks rather to investigate the prophetic literature as the primary object of study in its own right—the *Sitz im Text* (“setting in the text”).²⁴ This paves the way for analysis of

20. John Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), lxix.

21. Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxxii. Cf. Isa. 8:16. Leslie Allen compares this to the making of the NT Gospels: “Each Gospel possesses its own interpretive framework; its contents are nuanced differently, addressing the particular needs of the Christian community for which it was written. Each is a product of a later generation than the time of the scenes it narrates. Each Gospel shapes the Jesus tradition in its own way (‘the Gospel according to . . .’), as it takes over and develops earlier oral and written records. Inspiration lies in the Gospels at the book level, despite the red type used in some Bibles to highlight words attributed to Jesus” (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008], 7).

22. Biblical scholars have now largely abandoned the classic critical view of the book in favor of various redactional theories or more holistic approaches.

23. See Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

24. See Michael H. Floyd, “New Form Criticism and Beyond: The Historicity of Prophetic Literature Revisited,” in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, eds. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 17–36.

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compositional strategy at the macrolevel and recognition of the hermeneutical features of the prophetic books that have exerted such a powerful influence on readers both ancient and modern and enabled the texts to remain relevant to the present and the future.²⁵ The prophetic books are composite yet unified.²⁶ Techniques employed to unify the prophetic compositions include, for example, the use of programmatic passages (e.g., Isa. 2:1–5; Jer. 1:10; Hos. 3:4–5), macrostructural framing (e.g., Isa. 1:1–2:5; 65–66),²⁷ seam work (e.g., the Book of the Twelve),²⁸ parallels (e.g., Jer. 7 and 26; 39 and 52), and repetition (e.g., the recognition formula in Ezekiel).

The way the book of Jeremiah presents itself is the way it is intended to be read. This must be respected even if the critic reconstructs a different reality. Thus, if the book presents itself as the product of Jeremiah and Baruch reading the Torah through the lens of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 1:5) in conversation with the larger context of the canon, then this meaning must be recognized as the book's intended design. For the present commentary, no distinction is made between the book's presentation and reality. On the surface, the first edition of the book attested by

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25. Those responsible for this literature “redefined prophecy in terms of the records of past revelations rather than oracles currently being spoken, and they reshaped the prophetic tradition by delimiting the prophets and oracles that make up the prophetic canon. In the way that they integrated interpretive commentary with the oracle collections that provided the raw material for the prophetic books, they also modeled and thus defined the right way of interpreting this canon” (Floyd, “New Form Criticism and Beyond,” 30). According to Karel van der Toorn, these “scribes” (e.g., Baruch) were the “new prophets” (see LXX Prov. 29:18) (*Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007], 107, 169, 173–204). See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 128–29. See also Allen, *Jeremiah*, 14–18.
26. “In my view, Jeremiah is the work of ‘one mind,’ intended exactly in this way with all its complexity and ‘irregularities’” (Fischer, *Jeremiah Studies*, 12). For this view of authorship and composition, see S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), xi; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982; repr., Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2002), 42.
27. See Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 542–47.
28. See Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the Book of the Twelve: The Minor Prophets*, KEL (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 23–36.

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the Old Greek follows the basic judgment (Jer. 1:1–25:13)—nations (Jer. 49:34–39; 46:2–28; 50–51; 47; 49:7–22, 1–5, 28–33, 23–27; 48)—restoration (Jer. 30–33) pattern known to readers of other prophetic books.²⁹ The opening of the book (Jer. 1:1–2:13) introduces the prophet (Jer. 1:4–9), the program (Jer. 1:10), and the major themes to be developed (divine faithfulness, the enemy from the north, idolatry, opposition, divine presence [Jer. 1:11–19]) and sets them firmly within the context of the biblical narrative (Jer. 2:2–13). The book's appended conclusion (Jer. 52) not only complements the account of the Babylonian invasion in Jeremiah 39 but also points the reader forward in a manner not unlike its parallel at the end of the book of Kings (2 Kgs. 25). The broad division of the book into poetry (Jer. 1–25) and prose (Jer. 26–45) sets up a mutual relationship between Jeremiah's words, which interpret the events, and the narratives that provide a context for his words. Thus, for example, Jeremiah's speech at the temple gate in chapter 7 receives its counterpart in the narrative of the response to the speech in chapter 26. The narrative of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's historical prophecies in chapters 34–44 serves as a down payment on the fulfillment of Jeremiah's eschatological prophecies (e.g., Jer. 30–31).

Beyond this it is necessary to look within the book for signals and specific clues to its composition. The opening superscription (Jer. 1:1–3) marks the entire book as “The word of God that came to Jeremiah” (MT: “The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of the LORD came”; cf. MT Jer. 51:64b) and indicates the span of the prophet's ministry. The next major macrostructural marker occurs in Jeremiah 25:13: “all that is written in this book.” This closing note clearly delineates the “book” (*sēfer*) of Jeremiah.³⁰ Immediately following the conclusion to Jeremiah's book is the heading to the nations section: “That which Jeremiah prophesied concerning the nations.”³¹ According to the

29. E.g., Isaiah: judgment (Isa. 1–12), nations (Isa. 13–23), and restoration (Isa. 40–66); Ezekiel: judgment (Ezek. 4–24), nations (Ezek. 25–32), and restoration (Ezek. 34–39); Zephaniah: judgment (Zeph. 1:1–2:3), nations (Zeph. 2:4–15); and restoration (Zeph. 3:9–20).

30. See commentary for discussion of whether this refers to what precedes or to what follows. The term *sēfer* in biblical Hebrew means “document” and can refer to a smaller document such as a letter or a deed (e.g., Jer. 29:1; 32:10–15), but it can also refer to a larger literary work on a “scroll” (*megillah*). It does not refer to a bound codex or book.

31. The MT takes this relative clause with what precedes rather than as a heading for what follows. It then adds the material in Jeremiah 25:14 and continues with the passage about the cup of judgment in Jeremiah 25:15–26.

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Vorlage of the Old Greek, this introduces a collection of oracles that begins with Elam (Jer. 49:34–39; 46:2–28; 50–51; 47; 49:7–22, 1–5, 28–33, 23–27; 48).³² The material in Jeremiah 25:15–29:32 between the nations corpus and the book in Jeremiah 30–33 does not have a formal introduction or conclusion. Its boundaries are marked by the clearly delineated sections that precede and follow.

The next “book” (*sēfer*) is the one Jeremiah is instructed by the LORD to write or to have written in Jeremiah 30:2: “Write for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you in a book.” This book is known as the Book of Comfort (or Consolation) because it contains the highest concentration of words of restoration. It is possible that this book only consisted of the poetic material in Jeremiah 30–31 at one time, but it now features the prose material in Jeremiah 32–33 as well. It is also possible that the message of hope once had a life of its own and only applied to the immediate return from Babylon in the latter part of the sixth century BC, but now within the larger context of the composition of Jeremiah these words of future deliverance are thoroughly eschatological.³³ The final section of substantial size then appears in chapters 34–44. This section is primarily prose and divided into subunits by its use of the heading, “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD” (Jer. 34:1, 8; 35:1; 40:1; 44:1; cf. MT 36:1b; see also Jer. 34:12; 35:12; 36:27; 37:6; 39:15; 42:7; 43:8).³⁴

The very brief chapter 45 is the word or message that Jeremiah spoke to his scribe Baruch. It is thus a scribal colophon that concludes the main body of the book. The use of colophons to conclude sections (e.g., Lev. 7:37–38) and books (e.g., Eccl. 12:9–14; Rom. 16:22) is well attested in biblical literature.³⁵ This may also be compared to the presence

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32. Within the nations section there is a reference to a “book” (*sēfer*) in which Jeremiah wrote or had written all the calamity that would come to Babylon, namely, all the words written in Jeremiah 50–51 (Jer. 51:60). Seraiah was to take this book to Babylon and read it publicly (Jer. 51:61–62). Upon completion of this reading, he was to bind a stone to it and cast it in the Euphrates as a sign that Babylon would sink and not rise (Jer. 51:63–64).
 33. “The promises have thus been loosened from their original historical moorings and given a fully eschatological function. Both Israel and Judah—and every successive generation of God’s people—live from this same promise of divine faithfulness” (Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 351).
 34. This heading also occurs earlier in the book (Jer. 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 30:1; 32:1).
 35. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 27–32.

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of introductory and concluding notices in later codices from the scribes who produced them. For instance, the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible is the Leningrad Codex (c. AD 1008). This manuscript begins with a colophon from its scribe, Samuel ben Jacob, and includes information about the manuscript such as its date and city of origin (Cairo). The scribe's name also appears in two of the carpet pages (ff. 474r and 479r) toward the end of the manuscript between the Masoretic lists and again at the very end with an appended poem written by the scribe (f. 491r). For the book of Jeremiah, the presence of a scribal colophon in chapter 45 means that the following final chapter, Jeremiah 52, is rightly labeled an appendix, even though it is now an integral part of the book's composition. Even the MT, which rearranges the nations corpus and moves it from its original location after Jeremiah 25:13 to its position between chapters 45 and 52 (MT Jer. 46–51), thus obliterating the role of chapter 45 as a scribal colophon, still recognizes the need to set chapter 52 apart and adds at the end of Jer. 51:64: "up to here are the words of Jeremiah" (> Old Greek; cf. MT Jer. 1:1). This raises the question of who appended chapter 52—Jeremiah himself, Baruch, or someone else. Given the intriguing relationship between this chapter and 2 Kings 25 (see also 2 Chr. 36), it is possible that its inclusion is owed to someone like Ezra (Ezra 7:6, 10), who fitted Jeremiah's book to the larger context of the received biblical canon.³⁶

Perhaps more than any other biblical book, the book of Jeremiah bears witness to its own process of composition. This is nowhere more the case than in the story of Jeremiah 36. According to this story, Jeremiah receives divine instruction in the fourth year of Jehoiakim

36. Comparable to this are the added conclusions to the Pentateuch (Deut. 34:5–12) and the Prophets (Mal. 3:22–24 [Eng., 4:4–6]) divisions of the canon (see Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon*, 85–89, 120–23; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 239–52). The death account of Moses is traditionally not attributed to Moses but to Joshua (*b. B. Bat.* 14b), yet the perspective is that of someone like Ezra in the postexilic period looking back over the history of Israel's prophets ("And never again did a prophet arise in Israel like Moses" [Deut. 34:10a; see Deut. 18:15, 18]). The last three verses of Malachi are appended to the book and do not form part of the six disputations that constitute the book's main body. They look back to the Torah of Moses and anticipate the coming of a prophet like Elijah who will prepare the way of the LORD (see Mal. 3:1). It is noteworthy then that both texts are followed at the beginning of the canonical divisions (as in Luke 24:44) that come after them by unique texts identical to one another (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2).

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to take a scroll and write in it all the words that the LORD has spoken to him since the days of Josiah in the hope that the people will hear of the impending calamity and repent (Jer. 36:1–3). Jeremiah then summons his scribe Baruch, who writes the words at Jeremiah’s dictation (Jer. 36:4). Jeremiah is not allowed to enter the temple (see Jer. 7; 26), so he instructs Baruch to give the public reading of the scroll (Jer. 36:5–7). When Baruch reads the scroll, Micaiah reports it to the officials (Jer. 36:9–13), who then request Baruch to read the scroll to them (Jer. 36:14–15). When they hear the content of the scroll, they advise Baruch and Jeremiah to go into hiding before it is read to the king (Jer. 36:16–19). The officials initially report the words of the scroll to the king, while the scroll itself remains in safekeeping (Jer. 36:20), but the king sends Jehudi to take the scroll, and Jehudi reads the scroll before the king and his officials (Jer. 36:21). As Jehudi reads three or four columns of text at a time, the scroll is torn with a scribe’s knife and thrown into the fire until it is destroyed in its entirety, despite the objection of some (Jer. 36:22–23, 25). Jehoiakim does not respond to the reading with the tearing of his clothes in the manner of the response of his father Josiah to the reading of the Torah (Jer. 36:24; cf. 2 Kgs. 22:11), but he does order the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah, who are in hiding (Jer. 36:26). Jeremiah then receives instruction to have the scroll rewritten (Jer. 36:27–28); when the scroll is rewritten, many words are added to the original (Jer. 36:32).

The story is remarkable here for at least three reasons: the content of the scroll, the making of the scroll, and the remaking of the scroll. It is generally agreed that the content of the original scroll consisted of material from Jeremiah 1:1–25:13 to some extent. This is because the message of judgment most closely matches that section (Jer. 36:3, 29–31; cf. Jer. 20:4–5; 22:18–19; 25:5). Within the final form of the book of Jeremiah, the scroll of the book in Jeremiah 36:2, 4 is the “book” of Jeremiah in 25:13b, if indeed 25:13b refers to what precedes. The account of the making of the scroll is clearly outlined: (1) Jeremiah collects words received from the LORD over the course of his prophetic ministry; (2) Jeremiah dictates these words to his scribe Baruch; and (3) Baruch gives these words their textual form. It is difficult to overstate the role of Baruch in this. He not only textualizes the prophecy, but he also “performs” the text in its public reading. In the remaking of the scroll, the added words are not to be thought of as a mere expansion of an earlier version of Jeremiah 1:1–25:13, nor are they a reference to the making of the second edition of the book. Within the final form of the book of Jeremiah, this speaks of the growth of the book beyond the boundaries of

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Jeremiah 1:1–25:13.³⁷ The scribal colophon in Jeremiah 45 likely stood at the end of Jeremiah 1:1–25:13 at one time (see Jer. 25:1; 36:1; 45:1).³⁸ As the nations section, the Book of Comfort, and the material in Jeremiah 34–44 were added, the colophon would move to occupy the final position until the addition of the appendix in chapter 52.

JEREMIAH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CANON

The book of Jeremiah was not created in a literary vacuum. It was created in the context of an emerging canon as a work that not only cited other biblical literature but also was itself cited among the biblical books.³⁹ This was the way the book of Jeremiah was received and understood by those who gave the biblical books their final shape. They composed and arranged the books in light of one another in order to form a coherent and unified body of literature.⁴⁰ Thus, the Prophets received Moses, but they also transmitted Moses (e.g., 2 Kgs. 17:13;

37. “The book of Jeremiah is like an old English country house, originally built and then added to in the Regency period, augmented with Victorian wings, and generally refurbished throughout the Edwardian years. It grew over a long period of time” (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 11).

38. See Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 308–9.

39. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 35–95; Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 61–66. See also Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

40. “The reception of the authoritative tradition by its hearers gave shape to the same writings through a historical and theological process of selecting, collecting, and ordering. The formation of the canon was not a late extrinsic validation of a corpus of writings, but involved a series of decisions deeply affecting the shape of the books” (Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 59). “The reuse and reapplication of previous writings within biblical tradition argues for an implicit understanding of canonicity; also . . . the editors of the biblical canon have intentionally inserted specific indications of reshaped existing literary junctures in order to interpret the various parts of the biblical canon in light of the whole” (Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation*, FAT 27 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 105). See also the helpful discussion in Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone, “The Historical Formation of the Writings in Antiquity,” in *The Shape of the Writings*, eds. Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 4–35.

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Jer. 26:4–5; Dan. 9:10; Ezra 9:10–11).⁴¹ Likewise, the Prophets show an awareness of one another (e.g., Ezek. 38:17; Zech. 1:4–6; 7:7, 12), and the Writings are in dialogue with both Moses and the Prophets (e.g., Ps. 1; Dan. 9:2; Neh. 8–9; Chr.). It is precisely in this way that the Hebrew Bible is built to interpret itself and to maintain its relevance.⁴²

Jeremiah falls within the Prophets division of the Hebrew Bible (see Dan. 9:2), which is the second of three divisions known as the Tanakh (see Zech. 7:12): [T]orah (Gen.–Deut.), [N]eviim (Former Prophets [*b. Sotah* 48b]: Josh.–Judg.–Sam.–Kgs.; Latter Prophets: Isa.–Jer.–Ezek.–Twelve [Hos.–Mal.]), and [K]etuvim or Writings (Ps.–Job–Prov.; the Megilloth: Ruth–Song–Eccl.–Lam.–Est.; Dan.–Ez./Neh.–Chr.). All direct witnesses to the Hebrew Bible attest to this basic threefold

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41. Transmission of Moses was originally entrusted to the priests (Deut. 31:9), but their failure to uphold this responsibility is evident in the story of 2 Kings 22. “The prophets were aware of the meaning of the Pentateuch through their own reading and study of it. As a result of that, they helped to preserve it by producing a new ‘prophetic edition’ of the Pentateuch based on their understanding of Mosaic law. This is the ‘canonical Pentateuch’ in our Bible today. Further evidence of the ‘prophetic update of the Pentateuch’ is found in some early texts and versions” (John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 14). “The act of quotation sets in motion a hermeneutical dynamic by which the quoted and the quoting text mutually interpret each other” (Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*, JSOTSupp 180 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 198).
42. “The Bible, despite its textual heterogeneity, can be read as a self-glossing book. One learns to study it by following the ways in which one portion of the text illumines another. The generations of scribes who shaped and reshaped the Scriptures appear to have designed them to be studied in just this way. Thus Brevard S. Childs speaks of ‘the interpretive structure which the biblical text has received from those who formed and used it as sacred scripture’ . . . ; rather it means that the parts are made to relate to one another reflexively, with later texts, for example, throwing light on the earlier, even as they themselves always stand in the light of what precedes and follows them” (Gerald Bruns, “Midrash and Allegory,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Frank Kermode and Robert Alter [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987], 626–27). “Also, within the canon, in the final versions of the prophetic books, material that is not contemporary again becomes contemporary material in a higher sense for all later generations who wish to orient themselves toward the Bible” (Odil Hannes Steck, *The Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness*, trans. James D. Nogalski [St. Louis: Chalice, 2000], 186).

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shape (e.g., Prol. Sir.; 4QMMT; Luke 24:44; Philo *Contempl.* 1f., 25; *b. B. Bat.* 14b–15a; Codex B19^a), although there is some variation in the order of books within the Latter Prophets and particularly in the Writings.⁴³ The Writings division need not concern the present discussion. It is enough to say that there is good evidence for Psalms at the beginning (4QMMT; Luke 24:44; *Contempl.* 1f., 25) and Chronicles at the end (Matt. 23:35; *b. B. Bat.* 14b).⁴⁴ As for the Latter Prophets, there

43. With the exception of Jerome who follows the tripartite structure of the Hebrew canon, early Christian authors who provide lists of canonical books do not require a specific order of books (see E. Earle Ellis, “The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, eds. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004], 653–90). They seem more concerned to indicate what books are in the canon than to argue for a particular arrangement. The great fourth- and fifth-century codices of the Greek Bible (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus), which vary in their presentation, do not make claims either explicitly or implicitly about what books are to be included or in what order they are to appear. They are best understood “more as service books than as a defined and normative canon of scripture” (Ellis, “Old Testament Canon,” 678). The earliest reference to Greek translation speaks of translation of the threefold shape of the Hebrew Bible (Prol. Sir.). Thus, inclusion of apocryphal books says very little about the extent of the canon (“there is no evidence whatever that any of the Apocrypha ever had a place in any of the three divisions of the canon” [Roger T. Beckwith, “Formation of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Mikra*, 83–84]). Likewise, separation of the Former and Latter Prophets in Vaticanus and its placement of the Latter Prophets at the end of the “Old Testament” in the order of The Book of the Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Baruch-Lamentations-Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel-Susanna-Bel and the Dragon are of little consequence as a historical witness to the shaping of the Hebrew Bible. Even later translation traditions within Christianity that follow the placement of the Latter Prophets at the end do not follow the extent and order of these books in Vaticanus. The placement of the Latter Prophets in these traditions appears due to what was received rather than to conscious reflection on composition at the canonical level. On the other hand, Hebrew tradition presses readers to follow internal clues to composition beyond the book level.

44. See Hendrik J. Koorevar, “Chronicles as the Intended Conclusion to the Old Testament Canon” and Georg Steins, “Torah-Binding and Canon Closure: On the Origin and Canonical Function of the Book of Chronicles,” in *Shape of the Writings*, 207–35, 237–80. For the Psalms-Job sequence, see Will Kynes, “Reading Job Following the Psalms,” in *Shape of the Writings*, 131–45. Job then provides an important canonical context

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are two competing orders within Hebrew tradition.⁴⁵ The oldest and most common is the order found in Sirach 48–49, the Aleppo Codex, the Cairo Codex, and the Leningrad Codex among others: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve.⁴⁶ This puts the Prophets in the chronological order of the prophets with whom the books are associated (with the Book of the Twelve on the end spanning from preexilic to postexilic prophecy). The other order is somewhat anomalous and is found in the Babylonian Talmud: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve (*b. B. Bat.* 14b). The rationale given for this order is driven by the connection with the preceding book of Kings, which the Talmud believes to be written by Jeremiah (*b. B. Bat.* 15a): “Since the end of the book of Kings is about the destruction, and Jeremiah is wholly devoted to destruction, and Ezekiel starts off with destruction but ends up with consolation, while Isaiah is wholly consolation, we locate destruction adjacent to destruction, consolation to consolation.”⁴⁷

This commentary will keep a close eye on the intertextual relationships that the book of Jeremiah has with other books in the biblical canon.⁴⁸ Jeremiah’s use of the language and theology of Deuteronomy

for reading Proverbs (see Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, BCOT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 61–63). For the Megilloth and Daniel-Ezra/Neemiah-Chronicles, see Steinberg and Stone, “The Historical Formation of the Writings in Antiquity,” 49–51; Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible*, 1–7, 59–61, 67–68; John H. Sailhamer, “Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 25–37.

45. The placement of Lamentations after Jeremiah, and Daniel after Ezekiel (e.g., Vaticanus), is not a feature of Hebrew tradition. Both Lamentations and Daniel are among the Writings.
46. Isaiah has a strong textual link to the Former Prophets (2 Kgs. 18–20; Isa. 36–39).
47. Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tractate *Baba Batra* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 54. While the characterization of these three books is somewhat simplistic, the effort to explain the arrangement of the books shows an interest in the establishment of canonical order and its meaning. Note that there is no explanation for the placement of the Twelve.
48. The term “citation” will be used somewhat broadly as a catchall to describe many of these connections. Terminology in the field of analysis of textual dependence and inner-biblical exegesis (e.g., allusion, echo) is not standardized, and everyone seems to have their own pet definitions. Furthermore, demonstration of citation does not constitute proof. Study of literature deals in probabilities. Therefore, while it is important to establish

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is well known and need not be rehearsed here in full,⁴⁹ but suffice it to say that the relationship between the two is not unlike that between Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets (the so-called Deuteronomistic History).⁵⁰ That is, Deuteronomy presents itself as Moses' own exposition of the Torah built into the composition of the Pentateuch (Deut. 1:5). It provides commentary on the laws (e.g., Deut. 5 [Exod. 20]; 12–26; 28 [Lev. 26]), narratives (e.g., Deut. 2–3 [Num. 13–14; 20–21]; 9 [Exod. 32]), and poetry (e.g., Deut. 33 [Gen. 49]) of Genesis through Numbers. What better way then for the Former Prophets and Jeremiah to relate to the book of Moses than through its own explanation of itself? The Former Prophets offer a Deuteronomistic narrative context for the prophecies in Jeremiah punctuated and interpreted by the speeches of its major characters and the reflections of its narrator (Josh. 1:8; 24; Judg. 2; 1 Sam. 12; 1 Kgs. 8; 2 Kgs. 17; see also 1 Sam. 2:1–10; 2 Sam 1:17–27; 7; 22:1–23:7). Also, the Deuteronomistic material in Jeremiah is not merely a redactional layer to be peeled back for separate examination but an integral part of the fabric of the book's final composition.

Jeremiah's relationship to other members of the Latter Prophets and to the Writings is extensive and will bear itself out in the course of the following commentary, but a few comments are in order here to set the stage. The book of Jeremiah shares with the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve the concern not merely to document the past but to look forward to the future and final work of God in Christ.⁵¹ This comes primarily in the depiction of what lies beyond Babylonian exile in the eschaton for the people of God (Isa. 40–66; Jer. 30–33; Ezek. 34–39; Joel 3:1–5 [Eng., 2:28–32]; Amos 9:11–15; Zech.). Such an eschatological and messianic outlook makes possible the reading of the new covenant passage (Jer. 31:31–34) in Hebrews 8, which does not see the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in the postexilic period but in the formation of a people fitted for the last days. Likewise, while there is plenty to say about Psalms-Job-Proverbs, the Megilloth (especially Lam.), and Ezra/Nehemiah-Chronicles in relation to Jeremiah, it is primarily the book of Daniel among the Writings that highlights

criteria (e.g., verbal links, grammar/syntax, sequence, context, expansion, etc.), there will always be room for doubt. See Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 1–6, 107–9.

49. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 53–64.

50. See Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSupp 15 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981).

51. For citation of Jeremiah in the composition of the Twelve, see Shepherd, *Commentary on the Book of the Twelve*, 23–36.

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the eschatological and messianic value of Jeremiah and forms a bridge between it and the NT book of Revelation (Dan. 9). Its vision of the last days, the Messiah, and the defeat of a final enemy would not be possible without its reading of Jeremiah's book.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The above discussion of text, composition, and canon should make it evident that matters of authorship and date with regard to the book of Jeremiah are anything but simple and straightforward. Therefore, the following treatment seeks only to present the biblical witness to these issues. First and foremost, it must be said in accordance with the superscription (Jer. 1:1–3) that the entire composition is “The word of God that came to Jeremiah” (MT: “The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of the LORD came”). This means that Jeremiah's words are God's words. Jeremiah's interpretations of things are not merely his own (2 Pet. 1:20). The given span of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry is c. 627–587 BC, but the book indicates that he functioned in his role as prophet even beyond this time period (Jer. 40–44). Jeremiah was a young man in 627 (Jer. 1:6), so he presumably could have lived into the second half of the sixth century. There is no account of Jeremiah's death in the book, but the LORD says through Zechariah in 520 BC that “the former prophets” (i.e., preexilic prophets) like Jeremiah and Ezekiel do not live forever, yet the words that the LORD spoke through them, which are now vindicated, remain in the texts that bear their names (Zech. 1:1, 4–6).⁵²

Two other names must be mentioned in connection with the composition of Jeremiah: Baruch and Ezra. The book itself testifies to the central role of Baruch in its making (Jer. 36; 45; see also Jer. 32:12, 13, 16; 43:3, 6).⁵³ It is Baruch who gives textual expression to God's words, which have come through Jeremiah (2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21). This relationship between prophet and scribe is one that must not be overlooked, especially given the importance of the written text of Scripture. Jeremiah's priestly background (Jer. 1:1) would presumably have provided him with access to written texts and scribal training,⁵⁴ but he nevertheless entrusted the writing of his

52. Tradition also assigns Kings and Lamentations to Jeremiah (*b. B. Bat.* 15a). See the superscription to LXX Lamentations.

53. See also Yuval Goren and Eran Arie, “The Authenticity of the Bullae of Berekhyahu Son of Neriyahu the Scribe,” *BASOR* 372 (2014): 147–58.

54. See William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),

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words to Baruch.⁵⁵ Of course, Baruch's years overlapped Jeremiah's, but it is not clear if Baruch was significantly older or younger than Jeremiah.

As for Ezra, his name comes into play in both biblical and postbiblical tradition (Ezra 7:6, 10; 9:10–11; Neh. 8–9; *m. Avot.* 1:1; *b. B. Bat.* 15a; *b. Sanh.* 21b) as one who along with his associates (the Men of the Great Assembly) had a hand in shaping the received biblical texts into the form known to Jesus and the NT authors (Luke 24:44; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).⁵⁶ Among other things, the lack of direct attribution of the appendix in Jeremiah 52 (2 Kgs 25) to either Jeremiah (see again MT Jer. 51:64b) or Baruch (Jer. 45) suggests a link to this work.⁵⁷ The hermeneutical gain from this is the fact that those responsible for the present form of the biblical texts had the vantage point to view all the literature simultaneously. This makes possible the reading of the Hebrew Bible as a single book made of many books.

THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH

The message of the book of Jeremiah is concisely stated in the programmatic text of Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to pluck up and to tear down and to destroy [MT adds: and to throw down], and to build and to plant." The language of this text is distributed throughout the entire composition (Jer. 12:14–17; 18:7–10; 24:6; 31:27–28, 40; 32:41; 42:10; 45:4). It is a message of judgment and restoration, not

165–94; Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 132–34.

55. This is analogous to the apostle Paul who had the requisite training (Acts 22:3), yet he dictated his letter to the Romans to his amanuensis Tertius (Rom. 16:22).
56. A comparison with the language of Ecclesiastes 12:12 suggests that Ezra's activity involved studying, "making" or "composing," and teaching the Torah (Ezra 7:10), but his exposition in Nehemiah extends beyond the boundaries of the Pentateuch into the Former Prophets (Neh. 9:23–31), and his prayer in Ezra 9:10–11 shows his general indebtedness to the prophets. The Talmud attributes several books of the Prophets and the Writings to Ezra (Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles) and the Men of the Great Assembly (Ezekiel, the Twelve, Daniel, Esther).
57. The Talmud attributes to Jeremiah the book of Kings, which contains the parallel to Jeremiah 52 in 2 Kings 25. Thus, Ezra may have used Jeremiah's own work, which was not part of the book of Jeremiah as produced by the prophet, to connect the book of Jeremiah to the Former Prophets (Joshua–Kings).

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only the historical judgment at the hands of the Babylonians and the subsequent return but also the prefigured eschatological judgment of all worldly opposition to God and his people and the final restoration of the lost blessing of life and dominion in the land of the covenant. It is a message of the consequences of a broken covenant relationship (Jer. 11:9–14) and the hope of a new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34). It is a message of a failed monarchy (Jer. 21:1–23:4) and the hope of a messianic king (Jer. 23:5–6). This message is not for one nation only but for all nations (Jer. 1:5, 10; 3:17; 4:2). Likewise, the book is not for one audience but for all who read it.