

Jeremiah's Scriptures

*Production, Reception, Interaction,
and Transformation*

Edited by

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The “Deuteronomistic” Character of the Book of Jeremiah. A Response to Christl M. Maier

Thomas Römer

1 Redactional Layers or *Fortschreibung*?

Christl Maier has provided us with an excellent paper dealing with the question of the so-called “Deutero Jeremianic (DJ) texts,” a term that she adopts from Hermann Josef Stipp.¹ This expression was coined in order to solve the problem that many texts in Jeremiah sound “Dtr,” but are not genuinely Dtr, because they do not appear in the book of Deuteronomy or the so-called Dtr History. C. Maier presents some test cases like Jer 16:10–13, Jer 7, Jer 22:1–5, and others in order to show that there is an evolution in the formation of the book. If I understand her correctly, she proposes an “exilic” Dtr redaction, which she locates in Judah (I am not really sure why) and which would have encompassed texts between chs. 1 and 25. At a later point, several Deutero Jeremianic inserts were added that cannot be related to one precise redactional level. C. Maier (CM) denies, rightly in my view, the existence of a thoroughgoing “Pro-Golah” perspective. Does that mean that she is taking up the model of a *Fortschreibung*, or a “rolling corpus,” which was previously advocated by B. Duhm? In the beginning of the 20th century he claimed that about 70% of the book should be attributed to redactors who wrote in Dtr style and who supplemented the book from the end of the Babylonian period until the first century BCE?² The same idea was adopted by scholars like Carroll, Levin, and also McKane³ (at least in

1 Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Deutero-Jeremianische Konkordanz* (ATS 63; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1998); idem, “Probleme des redaktionsgeschichtlichen Modells der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches,” in *Jeremia und die “deuteronomistische Bewegung”* (ed. Walter Groß; BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 225–62.

2 Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHC 11; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1901).

3 Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM Press, 1981); Christoph Levin, *Die Verheissung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah. Volume I* (1CC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986). A compromise between a redactional model and a model

the first volume of his commentary). Unfortunately Professor Maier is quite discreet about her view of the formation of the book of Jeremiah.⁴

2 Exilic and Postexilic, Babylonian and Persian

Before commenting on several aspects of her interesting paper, let us raise two methodological questions or concerns. The first is the distinction between “exilic” and “postexilic” texts or redactions, a distinction that CM uses quite frequently, as do many other (mostly German) scholars. But what do we mean by “exilic”? Is this the very short time period between 597 and 539 B.C.E.? But as we all know, the “exile” did not end with the arrival of the Persians in Babylonia because many Judean deportees stayed in Babylon for centuries. So if we mean the Pre-Persian period, it would be clearer to use the expression “Babylonian Era.” And in regard to this era, I am becoming increasingly skeptical about the extent of the texts and redactions we should pack in these fifty years. O. Eißfeldt pointed out some time ago that the Judeans in the first decades after the destruction of Jerusalem certainly had more urgent concerns than to sit down and write or revise all kinds of scrolls.⁵ I think that many texts that we label “exilic” may well have originated in the more stable situation of the early Persian period.

And this brings me to my second methodological question. On what criteria can we distinguish between “Babylonian” and “postexilic” texts? In discussing Thiel’s “Alternativpredigten,” CM argues that they must be from the postexilic period because the hope that the people will be able to dwell in the temple (Jer 7:3) or bring offerings to the temple (Jer 17:3) “runs counter to the exilic situation and imagines a rebuilt temple.”⁶ Although she may be right in dating these texts in the beginning of the Persian period, I wonder why hopes for restoration of the temple and the city cannot rise in a time when these are still in

of *Fortschreibungen* can be found in Konrad Schmid, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches. Untersuchungen zur Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Jer 30-33 im Kontext des Buches* (WMANT 72; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996).

4 Her paper takes up ideas she developed earlier in Christl Maier, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora: Soziale Gebote des Deuteronomiums in Fortschreibungen des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 196; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).

5 Otto Eißfeldt, *Geschichtsschreibung im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1948).

6 Christl M. Maier, “The Nature of Deutero-Jeremianic Texts,” in this volume, see p. 103–23.

ruins? The same question can be asked of her assertion that “obvious falsification of historical memory” cannot be dated shortly after the events it refers to. I think this statement can easily be challenged. Suffice it to recall General de Gaulle’s appeal immediately after the end of World War II, that France needs the “historical memory” that all French people were part of the Resistance, which is obviously “falsification of historical memory,” but a falsification that worked very well.⁷

3 “Deuteronomistic” and “Deutero-Jeremianic”

This distinction seems to me quite helpful. In discussing Jer 16:10–13, CM demonstrates that this passage, which depends on the Assyrian *Strafgrunderfragung*,⁸ should be understood, if I understand her correctly, as being part of the “exilic” Dtr edition of Jeremiah. She points out that phrases like “to abandon YHWH” or “to follow other gods” are typical Dtr expressions. Additional arguments for Dtr style and ideology in this passage could be given: the characterization of the foreign gods as “not known by the fathers” is a stylistic device used in Deuteronomy, and the comparison of the present generation with the fathers, stating that the present one is behaving worse than the ancestors, appears in the Dtr prologue of the book of Judges in Judg 2:19 (where we have the exact same three verbs used to characterize the veneration of the “other gods”).⁹

Interestingly, this Dtr explanation of the exile is followed in Jer 16 by an oracle of salvation (vv. 14–15, not mentioned by CM), which sounds quite Dtr, but is in fact post-Dtr or “Deutero-Jeremianic.” This oracle, which has a parallel in Jer 23:7, transforms current Dtr expressions and ideas: the idea of a new exodus that is opposed to the old one comes close to Second Isaiah, and it is not a Dtr idea. The same holds true for the idea that YHWH will gather the people from all lands of the earth.¹⁰ And even the Dtr formula of the “land given to the

7 Henry Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (2d ed.; Points, Histoire 135; Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1990); trans as: *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (trans. A. Goldhammer; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

8 Dieter E. Skweres, “Das Motiv der Strafgrunderfragung in biblischen und neuassyrischen Texten,” *BZ* 14 (1970): 181–97.

9 For more details see Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Freiburg, Switz.; Göttingen: Universitätsverlag; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 415–17.

10 Ibid., Väter, 451–52; cf. also Johan Lust, “‘Gathering and Return’ in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” in *Le livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission* (ed. Pierre M. Bogaert; BETL 54; Leuven: Peeters, 1981), 119–42, here 123.

fathers” in v. 15 is altered in a way that never occurs in the DtrH through the use of a personal suffix to characterize the given land. In addition, the return from the “Northern country” recalls Jer 3:18, a passage that is clearly post-Dtr, as indicated by the unusual use of the root *n-ḥ-l* instead of *n-t-n* in the *Landgabe* formula.

Summing up: in the case of Jer 16:10–15, it clearly appears that the Deutero-Jeremianic texts presuppose the Dtr texts of the book and intend to correct them by means of an oracle of restoration.

4 The Case of the “Temple Sermon” (Jer 7)

With regard to the so-called Temple sermon in Jer 7, it seems to me still very Dtr and less “Deutero-Jeremianic” (DJ). Of course it is possible to extract vv. 5–8 from the Dtr version of this speech, but v. 8 is not the end of this passage. It instead introduces the second part of the Dtr speech, which ended in the earlier Dtr version either in v. 14 or v. 15. Both parts are constructed in parallel fashion. Verse 8 introduces with *hinneh* the assessment that the warning and admonitions in vv. 3–7 have not been respected. Verse 9 parallels the social and religious commandments of vv. 5 and 6, and v. 10 resumes the criticism of a magical understanding of the temple. The announcement of the destruction of the temple is compared to the destruction of Shiloh: v. 14 again contains a characterization of the temple as the “house on which my name is called,” which parallels v. 10, and it also mentions the gift of the “place” to the fathers, which alludes to vv. 3 and 7.¹¹

According to CM’s understanding, one should also attribute v. 14 to a DJ redaction, but then the announcement of the destruction of the temple would be missing. Maybe in the case of Jer 7:1–14 the non-Dtr texts and terminology should not be labeled “DJ” but could be understood as conserving some parts of the original Jeremianic oracle (the list in Jer 7:9 could then be a precursor of a not yet existing Decalogue). CM is probably right that we cannot reconstruct the Jeremianic oracle *verbatim*, although Thiel’s heuristic reconstruction may come quite close to the original form.¹² The “temple speech” may even be one of the starting points of the growth of the scroll of Jeremiah as indicated by the

11 Thomas Römer, “La conversion du prophète Jérémie à la théologie deutéronomiste,” in *The Book of Jeremiah and Its Reception—Le livre de Jérémie et sa réception* (ed. Adrian H. W. Curtis and Thomas Römer; BETL 128; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 27–50, here 42–44.

12 W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 144.

double transmission of the oracle in chs. 7 and 26. Maybe Jer 7:1–15 is the Dtr version and ch. 26 the DJ revision focusing on the reaction of different groups of the audience to the prophetic oracle. The comparison between the temple of Jerusalem and the sanctuary of Shiloh reflects an ancient collective memory about the destruction of this important place at the beginning of the first millennium BCE. In the Dtr revision of Jer 7, the mention of Shiloh was used in order to connect the existence of other Yahwistic sanctuaries with the Dtr ideology of centralization. The Dtr temple sermon therefore creates the idea of a succession of chosen places. According to Jer 7 and 26, YHWH destroyed Shiloh before he chose to let his name dwell in Jerusalem. This is also an attempt to show that the stories about Shiloh in 1 Sam 1–3 are not opposed to the Dtr idea of cult centralization. The discourse about the temple in Jer 7:1–15 should therefore be labeled “Dtr.”

I completely agree with CM that the Dtr texts in Jer did not arise out of the activity of Dtr preachers roaming the country,¹³ the Deuteronomists were certainly a small group of intellectuals working either in Babylon or Jerusalem.

Returning to Jer 7, its Dtr character can be further demonstrated by the fact that Jer 7 has strong connections with Solomon’s temple speech in 1 Kgs 8, which is of course multilayered, but most of it should be considered “Dtr.” In my view, 1 Kgs 8 and Jer 7 have exactly the same aim. Both intend to correct the popular Zionist ideology of the inviolability of the temple; both texts also attempt to show that YHWH is not intrinsically linked to the place where his name is invoked. There are also quite a significant number of parallels in vocabulary, which underlines the idea that both speeches should be read as responding to one another. The characterization of the temple as the place in which YHWH’s name is invoked in Jer 7:10 and 14 has a close parallel in 1 Kgs 8:43. First Kings 8:36 and Jer 7:3, 5 mention the “good way” in which the audience should walk, and the Dtr expression of the “land given to the fathers” appears several times in both chapters.¹⁴ For these reasons I think that Jer 7:1–15 is more “Dtr” than “DJ.” One may therefore question whether the transformation of Jeremiah into a preacher of the Torah should be attributed to a DJ

13 As advocated by Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: ein Beitrag zur Frage der Entstehung des Judentums* (FRLANT 69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956) and Ernest W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

14 Thomas Römer, “Y a-t-il une rédaction deutéronomiste dans le livre de Jérémie ?,” in *Israël construit son histoire: L’historiographie deutéronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes* (ed. Albert de Pury, et al.; *MdB* 34; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 419–41, esp. 434–35.

revision or to a “Torah-oriented layer” in Jeremiah, or whether this idea had its roots in the earlier Dtr edition of the book.

5 The Prophet, a “Preacher of the Law”

Deuteronomy 18:15–22 lays out the notion that YHWH will repeatedly send prophets like Moses in order to exhort the people to respect his Law. This idea continues in the book of Kings, where an anonymous group of prophets appears that are characterized as YHWH’s servants. Their function is to exhort the people to obey YHWH’s law: “Yet YHWH warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your fathers and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets’” (2 Kgs 17:13). They also announce the imminent fall of Israel and Judah due to failure of the people and the kings to respect the *torah* (2 Kgs 17:23; 21:10–12; 24:2). These texts transform the “traditional” prophets into preachers of the law, whose aim is to exhort the audience to change their behavior in order to avoid divine punishment. In the context of the Persian period, this new function given to the prophets can be understood as an attempt to redefine prophetic activity after the events of 587 BCE. And this is exactly what happens for Jeremiah in 7:1–15 and elsewhere.

It has often been observed that Jer 1 describes the prophet’s call in a way that relates Jeremiah to Moses.¹⁵ Jeremiah 1:7, 9 can be understood as a quotation of Deut 18:18, where Moses is presented as Israel’s first prophet. This parallel indicates that Jeremiah is a “new Moses” of a sort. Of course one has to decide whether the original account of Jer 1:4–10* should be understood as “Dtr” or “DJ”. For the redactors of Jer 1, Moses was apparently the first and Jeremiah was the last of YHWH’s prophets, and they presupposed that the intended audience of the scroll had knowledge of Deuteronomy and the books of Kings.

15 Sebastian Grätz, “Einen Propheten wie mich wird dir der Herr, dein Gott, erwecken’: Der Berufungsbericht Jeremias und seine Rückbindung an das Amt des Mose,” in *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions* (ed. Axel Graupner and Michael Wolter; BZAW 372; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 61–77; Thomas Römer, “Du livre au prophète. Stratégies rédactionnelles dans le rouleau pré-massorétique de Jérémie,” in *Les recueils prophétiques de la Bible. Origines, milieux, et contexte proche-oriental* (ed. Jean-Daniel Macchi, et al.; MdB 64; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2012), 255–82.

6 Intertextuality between Jeremiah and Kings

Let me raise a final observation about the manifold intertextual links between texts from the so-called DtrH and the book of Jeremiah. We have already mentioned Deut 18 and Jer 1 as well as 1 Kgs 8 and Jer 7. To this we should add that Jer 52 provides an end to Jeremiah that is parallel with the conclusion of Kings. This redactional strategy recalls the end of Chronicles and the beginning of the book of Ezra. The identical conclusion is an indication from the redactors that the books of Kings and Jeremiah should be read and understood together.¹⁶ The focus on exile distinguishes the book of Jeremiah from the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, which both end with an eschatological outlook, bringing Jeremiah very close to Kings or the whole Dtr History. One should further mention the parallel accounts in 2 Kgs 22–23 and Jer 36, which both focus on the reaction of the king to a book that is transmitted to the king by a member of the Shaphan family.¹⁷ Interestingly there are also parallels between the prophetess Huldah and the prophet Jeremiah. When commenting on the discovered book in 2 Kgs 22, Huldah speaks as if she were a female Jeremiah.¹⁸ Of course, all these texts cannot be put on the same redactional level. Some of them are dt, others are DJ, but they all aim apparently at linking the scroll of Jeremiah closely to the DtrH.

7 A Suggestion for Further Research

In her abstract for the conference paper CM indicates that her paper “also tries to reconstruct the intellectual and theological milieu that produced such

16 Norbert Lohfink, “Gab es eine deuteronomische Bewegung?,” in *Jeremia und die “deuteronomistische Bewegung”* (ed. Walter Groß; BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 313–82.

17 Charles D. Isbell, “2 Kings 22–23 and Jer 36: A Stylistic Comparison,” *JOT* 8 (1978), 33–45; Caetano Minette de Tillesse, “Joiachim, repoussoir du ‘pieux’ Josias: Parallélismes entre II Reg 22 et Jer 36,” *ZAW* 105 (1993), 352–76.

18 Michael Pietsch, “Prophetess of Doom: Hermeneutical Reflections on the Huldah Oracle (2 Kings 22),” in *Soundings in Kings, Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship* (ed. Klaus-Peter Adam and Mark Leuchter; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 71–80; Thomas Römer, “From Prophet to Scribe: Jeremiah, Huldah and the Invention of the Book,” in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script* (ed. Philip R. Davies and Thomas Römer; BibleWorld; Durham: Acumen, 2013), 86–96.

expansions.”¹⁹ She remains quite discreet on this question. Maybe one way to progress further in this difficult area of scholarship would be to consider the authors/redactors of the DJ texts as related to the Dtr redactors of the book. The DJ texts could then be considered as linked to the attempt to revise the scroll of Jeremiah in order to make it a supplement to the DtrH. But this question is controversial and needs further investigation and discussion.

19 Christl Maier, “The Nature of Deutero-Jeremianic Texts,” Paper presented at the Jeremiah Conference on July 22–26, 2014 on the Monte Verità, Switzerland.