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But Who Gets the Last Word?

STEVE DELAMARTER

I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FIRST TIME A MOVIE STAR TALKED TO ME. At the end of his television show, Roy Rogers looked right into the camera and sang to me, "Happy trails to you, until we meet again." A similar thing happened to my children when Mister Rogers smiled into the camera and reassured them, "I like you just the way you are."

These moments stand out in our memory because it is so odd—even jarring—when an actor or a storyteller steps outside the world of the story, as it were, and enters our own. Sometimes it becomes clear that there are actually three worlds involved: the world of the viewer, the world of the story and the world of the actor. This becomes apparent whenever actors look into the camera and take off their wigs, revealing the distance between themselves and the story.

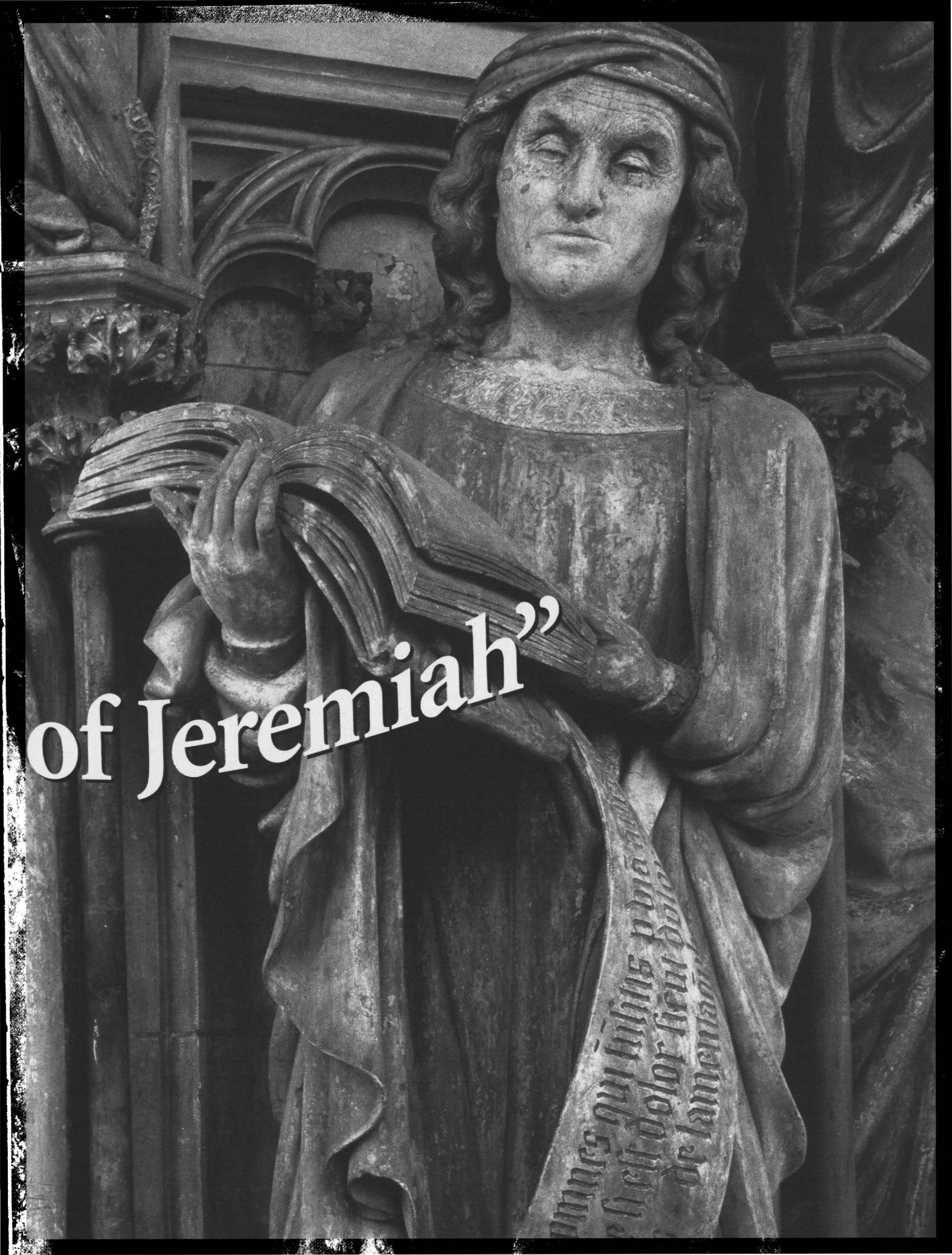
“Thus Far the Words

Until that instant, all of our attention has been focused on the world of the story. Indeed, up to that moment, there is no world other than that of the story. But when actors look straight into the camera and speak to the audience, they reveal other worlds to us.

A similarly remarkable event occurs near the end of the Book of Jeremiah.¹ In the last phrase of the last verse of the next to the last chapter in the book, someone—we don't know who—looks into the “camera” and speaks directly to the audience. The person doesn't say much—only four words in Hebrew. In English it comes out to seven: “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 51:64b).²

It is a wonderful and revealing moment, in which three worlds come into view.

One of these worlds is the world of the audience. Presumably, when these words were first uttered, they were intended for a particular audience. Undoubtedly, the one speaking in Jeremiah 51:64b shared the same world with them. However, as the Book of Jeremiah was passed down through history, the world of the audience lost its connection with a particular time period; it became, in certain respects, timeless. Anyone today who picks up the Book of Jeremiah becomes part of this world. And the note addressed to the audience is transformed into a message for all the worlds of all the audiences who will ever read Jeremiah.



of Jeremiah”

omnes qui tristes in die
et si est dolor sicut dolor
de lamentatione

PRECEDING PAGES: The words of Jeremiah, written in Latin on a scroll, appear to stream down from the prophet's open book. Carved by the Dutch artist Claus Sluter in about 1400, this larger-than-life sculpture is part of a monumental baptismal font (known today as the "Well of Moses") from the Carthusian monastery of Champmol, in Dijon, France. The statue was originally painted and gilded, and the studious prophet wore a pair of genuine copper spectacles.

Most of the Book of Jeremiah is concerned with the life and times of the prophet. But the last chapter leaps forward in time to summarize the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies. In between, an unidentified voice informs us: "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." The final chapter, this voice implies, comes from a different source. Indeed, the last chapter is borrowed—almost word for word—from the Book of Kings. In the accompanying article, author Steve Delamarter asks: Whose voice is this? And why is it absent from some of the earliest manuscripts of the Book of Jeremiah?

But who is speaking in Jeremiah 51:64b? Is it the prophet himself? Probably not. In the first place, the voice in Jeremiah 51:64b speaks about Jeremiah in the third person—something most people don't do. In fact, we know that Jeremiah is quite capable of speaking for himself, and when he does he uses the first person. We hear his voice directly throughout the Book of Jeremiah. He speaks first in 1:4: "Now the word of the Lord came to *me*"; and in 1:9: "Then the Lord put out his hand and touched *my* mouth; and the Lord said to *me*, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.'" All of this indicates that Jeremiah is probably not the speaker in 51:64b.

So again we ask: Who is speaking in Jeremiah 51:64b? What do we know about this person? What do we know about this person's world, the world of the original audience? Is it the same world as that created and played out in the body of the Book of Jeremiah? Or is it a different world? And what motivates the person to speak at all? What compels this person to draw attention to himself,* to step out of the shadows of the world of the story and insinuate himself into the world of the audience? Is this the first and only time that we hear this voice in the Book of Jeremiah?

Let's address the last question first. As it turns out, there are many times in the Book of Jeremiah when someone other than the prophet speaks. Several episodes in the Book of Jeremiah begin with a notice such as this one at 27:1: "In the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord." These are the words of a narrator, someone who is telling the Jeremiah story. This is by no means unusual. But one of the interesting things about the Book of Jeremiah is that

*It is probably a male voice, so to avoid repeated references to both sexes, I will make this assumption and employ the masculine pronoun.

this task of narration is passed back and forth between a nameless, omniscient narrator and Jeremiah himself, who sometimes engages in a form of self-narration as he recounts what has happened to him.

Is the voice in Jeremiah 51:64b the voice of a narrator? Not exactly. Narrators *tell* stories; they don't tell *about* stories. Whoever is speaking in Jeremiah 51:64b is not telling the story, he is speaking *about* it. His comment is something like "What you have heard to this point in the story comes from Jeremiah. What comes after this point in the story does not."

This kind of voice appears only one other place in the Book of Jeremiah, at the very beginning:

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. Jeremiah 1:1-3

The voice is commenting on the book as a whole, telling us that the words of Jeremiah lie ahead. It is setting the book up, characterizing the contents for the readers before they plunge into the first episode. This is not the voice of a narrator, but of an editor or publisher.

So we have an interesting connection between Jeremiah 1:1-3 and Jeremiah 51:64b. Like bookends, these passages stand at the beginning and the end of the body of the Book of Jeremiah. In each, the speaker looks into the "camera" and addresses the audience. Further, each has a common perspective and function, that of an editor or publisher surveying and characterizing the body of the book.

But the Book of Jeremiah does not end with this voice at the end of chapter 51. There is a 52nd chapter. What is this?

The voice in 51:64b has already told us two important things, one explicitly, one implicitly. Explicitly, the voice characterizes the material in the Book of Jeremiah before chapter 52 as "the words of Jeremiah"—a phrase that encompasses both Jeremiah's words and his narrator's. Implicitly, the speaker is trying to make it clear that in a sense, one story is ending and another, told in a different voice, is beginning.

Up until now, the book has been concerned with the life and times of Jeremiah, and especially with his prophecies in the face of the Babylonian threat. But chapter 52 looks back on the fulfillment of Jeremiah's words in the events stretching from 598 (the year of King Jehoiachin's exile) all the way to 562 (the year he was released from prison).

How the Book of Jeremiah Came to Be: The Biblical Version of Events

With the Babylonians threatening to attack Jerusalem, God commanded Jeremiah to write down all the words that he had spoken to the prophet. According to the Book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah summoned his scribe Baruch and instructed him to begin writing the words. The biblical report (quoted below) on how this and a second draft of the text came into being is unique in the Bible.

The clay seal impression at right, which surfaced on the antiquities market and is now in a private London collection, belonged to that very Baruch, and the faint whorls of a fingerprint on the upper left edge of the seal impression may have been left by the scribe himself. (A second impression made from this same seal is in the Israel Museum. See "The Fingerprint of Jeremiah's Scribe," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1996.) The Hebrew script dates to the late seventh century B.C.E, the time of Jeremiah. In this period, papyrus scrolls were commonly tied with string and then sealed with a lump of clay, called a bulla. A scribe would then press his seal into the clay, making the document official. The inscription on this bulla reads "Belonging to Berekhyahu son of Neriyaahu the scribe." Berekhyahu is a form of the name Baruch; Neriyaahu is a form of Neriah. The longer versions incorporate the divine name Yahweh in the form -yahu. The shorter versions of the father's and son's names appear in the biblical passage quoted below, which is based on what author Steve Delamarter identifies as the Second Edition of Jeremiah.



DIGITAL IMAGE
BY BRUCE
AND KENNETH
ZUCKERMAN, WEST
SEMITIC RESEARCH/
SHLOMO MOUSSAIEFF
COLLECTION, LONDON

In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

Take a scroll and write upon it all the words that I have spoken to you—against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that when the House of Judah hears of all the disasters that I intend to do to them, all of them may turn from their evil ways, so that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him. And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, "I am prevented from entering the House of the Lord, so you go yourself, and on a fast day in the hearing of all the people in the Lord's house you shall read the words of the Lord from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the people of Judah who come up

from their towns. It may be that their plea will come before the Lord, and that all of them will turn from their evil ways, for great is the anger and wrath that the Lord has pronounced against this people." And Baruch son of Neriah did all that the prophet Jeremiah ordered him about reading from the scroll the words of the Lord in the Lord's house ...

[The officials] said to [Baruch], "Sit down and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them. When they heard all the words, they turned to one another in alarm, and they said to Baruch, "We certainly must report all these words to the king." ... Leaving the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary, they went to the court of the king; and they reported all these matters to the king. Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama, the secretary; and Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. Now the king

was sitting in his winter apartment (it was the ninth month), and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier ...

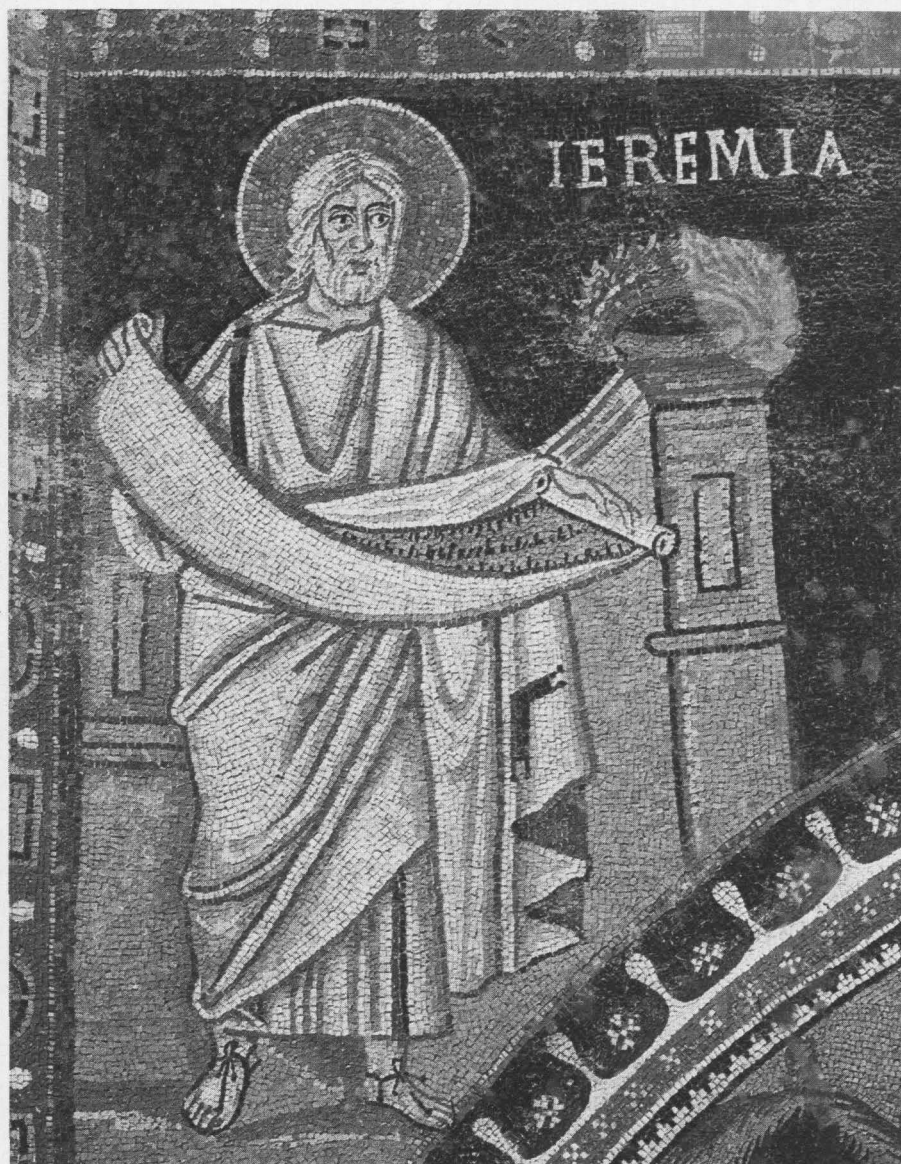
Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words that Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which King Jehoiakim of Judah has burned ...

Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

Jeremiah 36:1-32

THE AGED PROPHET unfurls his scroll, in this sixth-century mosaic from the Church of San Vitale, in Ravenna, Italy. The Book of Jeremiah recounts the life and oracles of the prophet, who was active in Judah in the late seventh and early sixth century B.C.E., in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. During the reign of Jehoiakim (c. 609-598), Jeremiah warned the Jerusalemites that God would destroy their Temple—the House of God—if they did not mend their ways: “Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house? ... Therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh [a shrine destroyed in the days of Solomon]. And I will cast you out of my sight” (Jeremiah 7:9-10, 14-15).

When Babylon gained control over Jerusalem, the prophet begged the new Jewish king, Zedekiah, not to revolt but to submit to Nebuchadnezzar until God broke the yoke of Babylon. Ignoring the prophet’s plea, Zedekiah rebelled. Babylon renewed its siege of Jerusalem, breached the city walls and destroyed the Temple. Zedekiah—the last king of Judah—was brought before Nebuchadnezzar, blinded and sent into exile in Babylonia.



The voice in 51:64b informs us that chapter 52 is neither the words of Jeremiah nor those of Jeremiah’s narrator. So whose voice is this?

Often in biblical literature, these sorts of questions are impossible to answer with certainty. The Chronicler, for example, tells his readers that there are lots of other sources of information out there. Presumably he borrowed from some of them. Literary critics have identified in various biblical books the telltale clues of materials apparently incorporated from other sources. We know, theoretically, that it often happened. But in the case of Jeremiah 52, the borrowing is not simply theoretical: Jeremiah 52 is virtually the same—almost word for word—as 2 Kings 24:18-25:30.

The extent of the overlap between Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24-25 is far greater than can be accounted for on the basis of a common oral tradition (a few examples are highlighted in the box on pp. 40-41). There is a literary dependence at work here somewhere. Either

the Book of Jeremiah borrowed from 2 Kings, or 2 Kings borrowed from Jeremiah, or both of them made use of a common third source.

This particular riddle is solved with relative certainty when one observes how well this material fits into the history that runs from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, usually referred to by scholars as the Deuteronomistic History. The vocabulary, form and content of the passage are most at home in the Deuteronomistic History. Just one example: The formula used to introduce the account of Zedekiah’s reign (2 Kings 24:18; Jeremiah 52:1) is a stock formula used more than 40 times in Kings, but it appears only this once in Jeremiah. These kinds of comparisons make it seem most likely that Jeremiah is borrowing from 2 Kings.

Having made the connection between Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24-25, what else can we learn about the voice in Jeremiah 51:64b? First, we can begin to deter-

mine when Jeremiah 52 was appended to the body of the Book of Jeremiah. The last paragraph of our passage in Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 25 (which is also the last paragraph of the Deuteronomistic History) indicates the earliest possible time the text could have been composed. It begins: "In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison" (2 Kings 25:27). Assuming that King Jehoiachin was deported with the rest of the ruling class in the Babylonian action against Judah in 598 B.C.E., the 37th year of his exile would be around 562 B.C.E. To be on the historically conservative side, scholars usually allow a decade between the last event recorded in a book and the earliest time at which it was written. If this is so, the text could date as early as 550 B.C.E.

But what is the latest time at which the Deuteronomistic History could have been composed? Since the Deuteronomistic History is quoted by Chronicles, it must have been composed (and risen to some sort of authoritative status) by the Chronicler's time (mid-to late fifth century B.C.E.). Most scholars are convinced, however, that the Deuteronomistic History was completed even earlier, in the mid-sixth century B.C.E., at least before 538 B.C.E. This is because the Deuteronomistic History does not mention the Persian king Cyrus's edict of 538 B.C.E., which allowed the Jews to return from the Babylonian Exile. Reports of Cyrus's edict are given in two places in the Hebrew Bible: in Ezra 1:1-4 and, more briefly, in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, both of which note that Jeremiah predicted this event. It seems highly unlikely that the Deuteronomistic Historian would not have mentioned this pivotal event if he knew of it.

This indicates that the Book of Jeremiah—in the form we know it, with a 52nd chapter—must not have come into being any earlier than 550 to 538 B.C.E., since chapter 52 was copied from the Deuteronomistic History, which dates no earlier than this period. And this means that the voice that speaks to us in 51:64b speaks to us from no earlier than 550 to 538 B.C.E. because this voice is familiar with the body of the Book of Jeremiah and knows that what follows comes from someone else. With this realization, second and third worlds appear before us.

Though the voice in 51:64b speaks to us about Jeremiah's words, that voice is separated from, and looking back on, Jeremiah's time at a remove of several decades, if not a couple of generations.

What does this tell us about the process that led to the production of the Book of Jeremiah and, specifically, the use of sources in the production of that book? How did the book develop from any early drafts up through its final form?

Having long realized that 2 Kings 24:18-25:30 stands as a source for Jeremiah 52, 20th-century scholars have spilt much ink over the question of additional sources. Scholars recognize that the text of the Book of Jeremiah as we have it seems to fall into two or three general categories.³ First, there is a set of poetic oracles concentrated in the first half of the book. Second, there is a set of biographical stories in prose concentrated in the second half of the book. Third, some of the prose materials seem to have a distinctive vocabulary, style and perspective that set them apart.⁴ Earlier this century, many argued that these variations reflected discrete sources or, perhaps, "layers in the Jeremiah tradition." The poetic materials were identified as the authentic prophetic oracles of Jeremiah himself; the bulk of the prose accounts of Jeremiah's life and ministry were thought to have been, perhaps, the work of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. These documents were brought together by a school whose thinking and writing style had been fashioned within the same circles that produced the Book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History; this group introduced the subset of prose materials with its more distinctive vocabulary.

This rather wooden view of the sources has since given way to a more nuanced model, in which Jeremiah's materials became intertwined with third-person narratives by other hands and the whole was reworked several times by an ongoing tradition of preachers and theologians functioning as editors, copyists and tradents.*

Speculation about the sources and the literary development of biblical books is common. But in the case of Jeremiah, this speculation has been fueled all the more by the book's own account of how its first two drafts came to be.

The description, found in Jeremiah 36 (quoted in the box on p. 37), is unparalleled in biblical literature for the detailed view it presents of the early stages of the development of a biblical book.⁵ In Jeremiah 36:1, we are told the date of the undertaking—605 B.C.E., a momentous year on the international stage of the ancient Near East, when the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, routed the Egyptian army at the Battle of Carchemish. We are given an idea of the first draft's content ("all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations") and scope ("from the days of Josiah until today"). The working relationship between the prophet and the scribe Baruch is detailed,⁶ as is the promulgation of the first draft through multiple public readings. Then we read of the king's destruction of the first draft, column by column,⁷ and the production of a revised and extended second draft. What's more, the

*The term *tradent*, meaning "preserver of tradition," is a common word among scholarly biblical critics, although it does not appear even in unabridged dictionaries.

rest of the Book of Jeremiah makes it clear that this second version was not the final draft of the book. According to the story, both of the first two drafts were produced in 605 B.C.E. But the Book of Jeremiah details several later events, including the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C.E.

Amazingly, whatever the process was that sustained the development of the Book of Jeremiah through various drafts, it led to the finalization of not one, but two forms—or editions—of the Book of Jeremiah. One edition, known to us mainly via its transmission through the Jewish Masoretic tradition,* served the needs of some, but not all, Jewish believing communities up until the end of the first century C.E., when it became the standard and exclusive form for all Jewish communities to this day. For now, we'll refer to this as the MT edition. Another edition, known to us mainly through its transmission among the Greek translations of the Septuagint,** served the needs of other Jewish communities—first in its original Hebrew form and later in a Greek form to serve the needs of Greek-speaking Jewish communities. Eventually this edition became the standard and exclusive edition known to early Christian communities for several centuries into the Christian era. We'll refer to this as the LXX edition.⁸

The differences between these two editions are *not* inconsequential. The LXX edition is fully one-seventh (3,000 words, by one count) shorter than the MT edition, and the order of the materials in the two editions

*The Masoretic text—the traditional Hebrew text—is named for the late-first-millennium C.E. Masoretes (meaning “scribes”), who devised a complex system of vowel marks and annotations to safeguard the text of the Hebrew Bible.

**The name Septuagint, from the Latin for 70, and its abbreviation LXX refer to the legendary 72 Jewish translators brought to Egypt in the third century B.C.E. to translate the Torah for the Greek-speaking Jewish community.

differs significantly.⁹ This is particularly evident with that complex of chapters referred to as the Oracles Against the Nations. In this series of oracles, Jeremiah lists the punishments that God will inflict on nine nations, including Egypt, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon. In the LXX edition, the oracles appear in the middle of the book, just after chapter 25:12-13, which speaks of the vengeance God ultimately intends to take on the nation that destroys Judah.

In the MT edition, however, the Oracles Against the Nations appear late in the book, just before chapter 52.¹⁰

The relationship between these two editions has been debated for some time. Saint Jerome, the fifth-century C.E. biblical translator, suggested that the Greek version of Jeremiah in the LXX was an abridgment of the original Hebrew. Modern textual critics, however, usually give preference to the shorter of two variants. The shorter text, they argue, is more likely the original, since it makes more sense that copyists and editors would start with a shorter text and add to it than that they would delete material from a longer text. In spite of this general truth, many scholars were not willing to accept that the shorter LXX edition was more original than the MT. The biblical text received via the Masoretic tradition has proved itself time and again to be the more reliable of the two traditions. In addition, one can show many places where the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek apparently became the occasion for making all sorts of revisions to the text—including some cases of abbreviation.

And so a debate raged for centuries about which of the two Jeremiah editions was the older one. Then came the Dead Sea Scrolls.

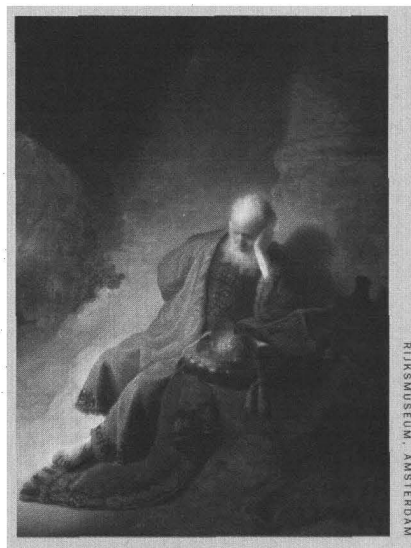
The caves of Qumran, where the scrolls were found, contained the preserved remnants of five Hebrew copies of Jeremiah.¹¹ Three of these Dead Sea

Jeremiah Revisited

“Woe is me, my mother, that you ever bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! ... Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?” (Jeremiah 15:10,18).

The pain and sorrow of the prophet are recorded in the deep lines that crease Jeremiah's brow in contemporary American artist Doug Johnson's painting “Lamentation for the Ages” (opposite). Johnson based the figure of the prophet on Rembrandt's 1630 oil painting “Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem” (near right) but added a contemporary twist. According to Johnson, the background of his painting, with its translucent multidimensional grid superimposed by a cross, reflects the order of the heavenly or spiritual realm; the shattered gridlines that gyrate about Jeremiah's head represent the earthly chaos that followed the destruction of Jerusalem.

Just as each artist has reinterpreted the biblical text, so did the earliest editors of the Book of Jeremiah rework the text in order to make it understandable and relevant to their contemporaries. Their efforts have left us with two editions of the Book of Jeremiah: the first, which highlights the role of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch, and the second, which minimizes Baruch in order to present Jeremiah as the sole authority in this prophetic tradition.





COURTESY OF THE BILLY GRAHAM CENTER MUSEUM AND DOUG JOHNSON

Which Says What? A Thumbnail Guide to the Two Editions of Jeremiah

First Edition

Versions: The Septuagint (LXX),
Dead Sea Scrolls 4QJer^b and 4QJer^d

Length: shorter (3,000 fewer words than
the Second Edition)

Textual Does not include the passage
Variations: "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah"

Order: The Oracles Against the Nations appear in the
middle of the book, after chapter 25:12-13;
Jeremiah's oracle to Baruch appears at the
end of the book, in chapter 51, where it
emphasizes the scribe's role

Second Edition

Versions: The Masoretic Text (MT),
other Dead Sea Scrolls

Length: longer (3,000 more words
than the First Edition)

Textual Includes the passage "Thus far are the words
Variations: of Jeremiah" (Jeremiah 51:64b)
Includes more personal names and titles;
clarifications and introductions to materials
found in the First Edition; and whole
passages absent from the First Edition

Order: The Oracles Against the Nations appear near
the end of the book, just before chapter 52;
Jeremiah's oracle to Baruch is in chapter 45,
just before the Oracles Against the Nations,
so as to minimize his role

Scrolls (2QJer, 4QJer^a and 4QJer^c)* reflect essentially the same edition that we have in the MT. But 4QJer^b and the very fragmentary 4QJer^d—also Hebrew texts, mind you—have the shorter text and different order that characterize the Greek LXX. These texts, then, prove that the edition preserved in the Greek tradition did not originate with a bad translation of a good Hebrew text but, rather, from a good translation of a *different* Hebrew text. With this additional evidence, it seems clear that the shorter text of Jeremiah preserved in the LXX and now in 4QJer^b and 4QJer^d (hereafter, the First Edition) is indeed earlier than that preserved in the MT and the other texts from Qumran (hereafter, the Second Edition). Each edition's users were fully convinced that their edition of Jeremiah faithfully delivered God's word to them.

So what does all this have to with the voice that states "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah" at the end of chapter 51?

This voice speaks only in the Second (MT) Edition of Jeremiah. There is no corresponding notice in the First Edition, even though both editions conclude with the large section borrowed from 2 Kings 24-25.

By examining the other additions made to the Second Edition, we may be better equipped to hear what the voice is telling us. The Second Edition, as we mentioned above, is significantly longer than the first. Much of the supplementary material comes in the form of brief explanatory insertions, of which there are dozens and dozens.¹² The single most frequent insertion is the inclusion of more complete

and specific personal names, titles ("king" or "prophet") and the like. Pronouns are replaced with full names. In addition, the Second Edition reiterates in the same context information given earlier in the episode so that details in the story are perfectly clear. Formulas used in the First Edition are repeated many additional times in the Second Edition. For instance, the First Edition employs the phrase "oracle of the Lord" 109 times; the Second Edition includes all of these occurrences plus 65 more. Several prophetic episodes are given narrative introductions (Jeremiah 2:1-2, 7:1-2, 16:1, 27:1) that were not present in the First Edition. Further, the Second Edition has completely new passages, as well as many facts, that are lacking in the First Edition (for instance, Jeremiah 33:14-26, 39:4-13).¹³

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of the Second Edition was its rearrangement of the contents of the Book of Jeremiah. Determining why the First Edition needed to be rearranged will help us understand why our editor raised his voice at the end of chapter 51.

Let's look at one telling example.

Both editions include Jeremiah's oracle to his scribe Baruch:

The word that the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, "Woe is me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest." Thus you shall say to him, "Thus says the Lord: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted—that is, the

*The names of the Dead Sea Scrolls incorporate the number of the cave in which they were discovered. 2QJer is the only copy of Jeremiah found in Cave 2 (the second scroll cave to be discovered); 4QJer^a, 4QJer^b, 4QJer^c, and 4QJer^d are the first through fourth copies of Jeremiah from Cave 4.

whole land. And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the Lord; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go."

But although the wording of the oracle is virtually identical in both editions, it appears in two very different places. In the First Edition, this oracle appears in chapter 51, immediately preceding the final chapter (which was borrowed from 2 Kings 24-25). It is the last oracle in the book and is separated from the Oracles Against the Nations, which appear in the middle of the book. In the Second Edition, however, this oracle appears six chapters earlier (in chapter 45), just before the Oracles Against the Nations.

As French scholar Pierre-Maurice Bogaert has argued, when the Oracle to Baruch is left in the final position of the book, as it is in the First Edition, it makes Baruch "the notary and guarantor of the conservation and fulfillment of the Jeremianic prophecy."¹⁴ In other words, when the body of the Jeremiah

Edition is also trying systematically to reduce Baruch's role in order to elevate the prophet as the sole authority behind the Jeremiah traditions.

Let us return to the voice at the end of chapter 51. We now know that this voice is part of a tradition that is engaged in interpreting and modifying the Book of Jeremiah. It is not part of the tradition that borrowed material from 2 Kings 24-25 and added it to the Book of Jeremiah as chapter 52: This was already accomplished in the First Edition. This voice in the Second Edition is aware of the connection between 2 Kings and the Jeremiah material and undoubtedly agrees with it. The presence of Jeremiah 52 in both editions reveals a shared conviction: The truth of the words of Jeremiah can only be fully appreciated in the light of the events that happened in 586 B.C.E. and following.

But the voice in Jeremiah 51:64b wants to make this point even clearer by specifying that two stories have been merged in the Jeremiah materials: the story of Jeremiah's words (recounted in chapters 1-51) and the story of the fulfillment of those words in history (found in chapter 52). But in making this point, the

**"And you, do you seek great things for yourself?
Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster."**

book ends with a blessing on Baruch, it seems to underscore and highlight his role in the production and preservation of the book.

Did the Second Edition move the Oracles Against the Nations to the end of the book in order to deflate Baruch's position? A close look at Baruch's role in both editions supports this idea.

The accounts given of the production of the first and second drafts of the Book of Jeremiah (chapter 43 in the First Edition; chapter 36 in the Second Edition) have some interesting differences.¹⁵ Although in both versions Baruch plays a significant role alongside Jeremiah in the production of the scrolls, and the king finds the prophet and the scribe jointly responsible for the first draft, in the Second Edition Baruch's role is clearly diminished to that of an assistant by the addition of the phrase "the secretary" beside his name (the Second Edition is quoted in the box on p. 37). Further, in the First Edition's description of the making of the second draft, we read that "Baruch took another scroll, and wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation." But in the Second Edition, it is the prophet, not the scribe, who initiates the action: "Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah."¹⁶

It may be that the Second Edition is simply trying to clarify some of the more confusing aspects of the text of Jeremiah 36. Yet it seems clear that the Second

voice in 51:64b may also be telling us something else: One should not make too much of Baruch's role within the Jeremiah tradition.

There is a great deal of evidence that the role of Baruch in relation to the Jeremiah materials would eventually become a major point of division between various groups. In the Greek tradition, the "words of Jeremiah" were circulated not only with the addition of chapter 52, but also with the attachment of an entire book purportedly by Baruch, what we know as the apocryphal or deuterocanonical Book of Baruch. The closeness of the Book of Baruch and the Book of Jeremiah is not obvious in modern published editions of the Apocrypha. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the Book of Baruch was preserved and transmitted within "biblical manuscripts," between the Book of Jeremiah and the Book of Lamentations. (In Catholic Bibles, it follows Lamentations.) In Christian circles, many early church writers even refer to the Book of Baruch as Jeremiah when they quote from it! In addition, several other works were written, attributed to Baruch and circulated in these same circles.¹⁷

Jerome, however, informs us that in his time Jewish communities neither possessed nor used the Book of Baruch or any of the other books attributed to the

continues on page 54

Jeremiah

continued from page 45

scribe.¹⁸ Thus we see that by the fifth century C.E., Christian and Jewish communities had arrived at two very different conclusions about the role of Baruch in connection with the Jeremiah tradition.

Is it possible that when we enter the world of our speaker in Jeremiah 51:64b, we stand near the beginning of a break that would eventually widen into a great chasm, separating those communities who elevated the role of Baruch from those who minimized him? Had this already become an important issue in the days of our speaker in Jeremiah 51:64b? If so, the First Edition of the Book of Jeremiah marks the launch point of an emphasis on Baruch; the Second Edition marks a turning point, leading back to Jeremiah.¹⁹

The same circle that was working on perfecting and finalizing the Book of Jeremiah was also working on perfecting and finalizing the Deuteronomistic History. One final set of observations from Jeremiah 52 will make this point clear.²⁰

The word-for-word connection between Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24-25 stops after Jeremiah 52:27 and only resumes again at 52:31 (see the box on pp. 40-41).

After informing us that "Judah went into exile out of its land" (52:27), Jeremiah gives us a detailed accounting of the number of persons taken into exile in the three deportations carried out under Nebuchadnezzar. Some scholars believe that this passage represents a more natural direction for the story than the one that is taken in 2 Kings 25.²¹ There the story switches abruptly to an account of the appointment and murder of Gedaliah and of the flight of the remaining Judeans to Egypt. Which of the two directions is more original is difficult to determine. However, note one very revealing thing: The episode in 2 Kings 25:22-26 concerning the appointment of Gedaliah as governor in Judah is based on material in

Jeremiah chapters 40-41, especially 40:5-10 (see the box on pp. 40-41).

The account in 2 Kings is the shorter of the two accounts, but in this case it clearly looks like an abbreviation of the longer story, not all of the details of which were relevant to the Deuteronomistic History. Yet many of the key words and phrases of the longer story in Jeremiah 40-41 were drawn into the summary in 2 Kings 25—thus proving the literary dependence between them. This shows us not only that the editors of the Book of Jeremiah drew on material from the Deuteronomistic History to finalize Jeremiah, but also that the editors of the Deuteronomistic History drew on material in the Book of Jeremiah to finalize the Deuteronomistic History.

One summer day a few years ago, I was swimming in Lake Chelan, a long and deep lake in central Washington State. After floating on my back for some time offshore, I turned over and opened my eyes. I looked at the bank of the shoreline and followed it as it dropped away sharply into a deep and impenetrable abyss. In a moment my view of the world changed. Until that instant, I thought of myself as lying on the surface of something. Now, suddenly, I was hanging over a great nothingness. I was filled with terror, sure that some giant Leviathan was lurking in the hidden deep and was surging upward to devour me. I swam back to shore, where I rested while rethinking my view of the world.

I have a similar experience with the text of Jeremiah 51:64b, though it is an experience filled not with terror, but with wonder and fascination. The "surface of the text," as it were, gives way to a great depth. And in this depth we can see evidence of a fascinating history. It is a history filled with momentous events and people who are wrestling with the application of the prophetic word in a new world—a world that has been changed by new events. It is a history filled with voices, opinions, interpretations and debates. In short, we are catching a glimpse of that history which lies between the *ipsissima verba* (very words) of the prophets and the final canonization of the books that bear their names. During this time, the communities of faith were doing at least two things. First, they were beginning to look to the testimonies of the prophets to help them understand and interpret the world around them, and their own place in that world, following the Babylonian destruction and the Exile. And second, they were involved in the arduous task of shaping and finalizing the books in which they heard the word of God. It was not enough, apparently, simply to pass the words along. They needed to be arranged,

clarified, interpreted and, in certain cases, edited so that subsequent readers would understand them properly.

As one who has spent much of his adult life engaged in a similar sort of labor, I feel a closeness, an affinity with that nameless and faceless voice that speaks in Jeremiah 51:64b. I share his belief: There is something in these words that have the power of God in them. I know his struggle. The newcomer to this book needs some help. Fully appreciating the prophet's words is not as simple as just hearing them. The text needs some framing, some clarification and some interpretation. And as I prepare to bring new students into the world of the Book of Jeremiah, I often choose this as my point of entry. I begin here, with these seven words, "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." **BR**

¹Some of the recent and/or standard works on Jeremiah not specifically mentioned in the endnotes below include John Bright, *Jeremiah*, Anchor Bible 21 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965); Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); R.E. Clements, *Jeremiah, Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988); James L. Crenshaw, "A Living Tradition: The Book of Jeremiah in Current Research," *Interpretation* 37 (1983), pp. 117-129; T.R. Hobbs, "Some Remarks on the Composition and Structure of the Book of Jeremiah," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (CBQ) 34 (1972), pp. 257-275; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, 2 vols., Hermeneia series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986-1989); William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, International Critical Commentary 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986); Kathleen M. O'Connor, *The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (SBLDS) 94 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Leo G. Perdue, "Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues," in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, ed. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), pp. 1-32; Louis Stuhlman, *The Prose Sermons of the Book of Jeremiah: A Redescription of the Correspondences with Deuteronomistic Literature in the Light of Recent Text-critical Research*, SBLDS 83 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1986).

²Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

³See Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, *Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901); and Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania, 1914), and *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study of the Growth and History of the Tradition* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1946).

⁴Scholars are agreed that there are differing genres in the Book of Jeremiah. They are not agreed about what to make of these differences. See John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (JBL) 70 (1951), pp. 15-35; Holladay, "A Fresh Look at 'Source B' and 'Source C' in Jeremiah," *Vetus Testamentum* (VT) 25 (1975), pp. 394-412; and Michael J. Williams, "An Investigation of the Legitimacy of Source Distinctions for the Prose Material in Jeremiah," *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 193-210.

⁵See Carroll, "Inscribing the Covenant: Writing and the Written in Jeremiah," in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (JSOTSup) 152 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 61-76; J. Andrew Dearman, "My Servants the Scribes: Composition and Context in Jeremiah 36," *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 403-421; Yair Hoffman, "Aetiology, Redaction and Historicity in Jeremiah XXXVI," *VT* 46

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⁶The literature specifically on Baruch includes Walter Brueggemann, "The 'Baruch Connection': Reflections on Jer 43:1-7," *JBL* 113:3 (1994), pp. 405-420; and James Muilenburg, "Baruch the Scribe," in *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies*, ed. John I. Durham and J.R. Porter (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), pp. 215-238.

⁷On the evaluation of the actions of Judah's final kings in Jeremiah and later works, see Steve Delamarter, "The Vilification of Jehoiakim (a.k.a. Eliakim and Joiahim) in Early Judaism," in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 154 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 190-205; Hermann-Josef Stipp, "Zedekiah in the Book of Jeremiah: On the Formation of a Biblical Character," *CBQ* 58 (1996), pp. 627-648.

⁸The bibliography on the relationship between the Septuagint and Masoretic editions of the Book of Jeremiah is extensive. Some important and recent works include Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Les mécanismes rédactionnels en Jér 10:1-16 (LXX et MT) et la signification des suppléments," in *Le livre de Jérémie: Le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, ed. Bogaert, rev. ed., *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium* 54 (Leuven: Peeters, 1981), pp. 221-238; A.R. Peter Diamond, "Jeremiah's Confessions in the LXX and MT: A Witness to Developing Canonical Function?" *VT* 40 (1990), pp. 33-50; Bernard Gosse, "La malédiction contre Babylone de Jérémie 51:59-64 et les rédactions du livre de Jérémie," *ZAW* 98 (1986), pp. 383-399; J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, *Harvard Semitic Monographs* 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), and "A Critique of Sven Soderlund's The Greek Text of Jeremiah: A Revised Hypothesis," *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 22 (1989), pp. 16-47; Raymond E. Person, "II Kings 24:18-25:30 and Jeremiah 52: A Text-Critical Case Study in the Redaction History of the Deuteronomistic History," *ZAW* 105 (1993), pp. 174-205; Sven Soderlund, *The Greek Text of Jeremiah: A Revised Hypothesis*, *JSOTSup* 47 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); A.W. Streane, *The Double Text of Jeremiah (Masoretic and Alexandrian) Compared* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1896); Stuhlman, *The Other Text of Jeremiah: A Reconstruction of the Hebrew Text Underlying the Greek Version of the Prose Sections of Jeremiah with English Translation* (New York: University Press of America, 1985); Emanuel Tov, "Some Aspects of the Textual and Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah," in Bogaert, *Le livre de Jérémie*, and "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, ed. Jeffrey Tigay (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 211-237; Eugene Ulrich, "Double Literary Editions of Biblical Narratives and Reflections on Determining the Form to Be Translated," in *Perspectives on the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of Walter J. Harrelson*, ed. by Crenshaw (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 101-116.

⁹On the issue of the structure and arrangement of the editions, see Alexander Rofé, "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989), pp. 390-398.

¹⁰On the placement of the Oracles Against the Nations in the two editions, see James W. Watts, "Text and Redaction in Jeremiah's Oracles against the Nations," *CBQ* 54:3 (1992), pp. 432-447.

¹¹Tov, "The Jeremiah Scrolls from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* (RQ) 14 (1989), pp. 189-206; "Three Fragments of Jeremiah from Qumran Cave 4," *RQ* 15 (1992), pp. 531-541; "4QJERC (4Q72)," in *Tradition and the Text: Studies offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday*, ed. Gerard J. Norton and Stephen Pisano, *Orbis biblicus et orientalis* 109 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), pp. 249-276, and "Some Aspects of the Textual and Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah," in Bogaert, *Le livre de Jérémie*, pp. 145-167. See also George J. Brooke, "The Book of Jeremiah and Its Reception in the Qumran Scrolls," in Curtis and Römer, *Book of Jeremiah*, pp. 183-205. Cave 4 contained an Apocryphon of Jeremiah;

see Deborah Dimant, "An Apocryphon of Jeremiah from Cave 4 (4Q385B = 4Q385 16)," in *New Qumran Texts and Studies: Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies*, Paris, 1992, ed. George Brooke (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 11-30.

¹²Tov studies these phenomena in detail in "Some Aspects," the examples cited here are from this work.

¹³Tov, "Some Aspects," pp. 155-157.

¹⁴Bogaert first noticed these phenomena: "le notaire et le garant de la conservation et de l'accomplissement de la prophétie jérémienne" ("Les trois formes de Jérémie 52 (TM, LXX et VL)," in Norton and Pisano, *Tradition and the Text*, pp. 1-17).

¹⁵Again, see Bogaert, "De Baruch à Jérémie: Les deux rédactions conservées du livre de Jérémie," in *Le livre de Jérémie*, pp. 168-173.

¹⁶For the purposes of this illustration, I have used the NRSV for the MT translation and translated the LXX in harmony with the NRSV, except in those places where it clearly deviates.

¹⁷These include "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch (early Second Century A.D.)," trans. A.F.J. Kiln, and "3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch (First to Third Century A.D.)," trans. H.E. Gaylord Jr., in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 615-652, 653-679. Baruch figures prominently in the opening of *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* (see Robert Kraft and Ann-Elizabeth Purinton, eds., *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* [Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972]). Fourth Baruch, dating from the first to second centuries C.E., was "attributed to Baruch the scribe in the Ethiopic version but to Jeremiah the prophet in the Greek" (S.E. Robinson, "4 Baruch," in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, p. 413).

¹⁸Cited in Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, 2nd ed., rev. Richard Otley (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1914), p. 276. For a recent survey on the topic, see Roger Tones, "The Reception of Jeremiah in Rabbinic Literature and in the Targum," in Curtis and Römer, *Book of Jeremiah*, pp. 233-253.

¹⁹In light of this, the recent discovery of bullae apparently from the very hand of Baruch is ironic; see Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986); and Hershel Shanks, "In Private Hands: The Fingerprint of Jeremiah's Scribe," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1996. On the archaeological study of Jeremiah's time, see Philip J. King, *Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion* (Louisville: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1993).

²⁰Much more has been said about the character of the interpretive tradition in which the voice in Jeremiah 51:64b stands. See Clements, "The Prophet and His Editors," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J.A. Clines et al. (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 203-220; Clements, "Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History," in *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 107-122; Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993); Collins, "Deuteronomist Influence on the Prophetic Books," in Curtis and Römer, *Book of Jeremiah*, pp. 15-26; Diamond, "Portraying Prophecy: Of Doubles, Variants and Analogies in the Narrative Representation of Jeremiah's Oracles—Reconstructing the Hermeneutics of Prophecy," *JSOT* 57 (1993), pp. 99-119; Siegfried Herrmann, "Jeremia—Der Prophet und die Verfasser des Buches Jeremia," in Bogaert, *Le livre de Jérémie*, pp. 197-214; J. Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah and Deuteronomy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1942), pp. 156-173; Hyatt, "The Deuteronomist Edition of Jeremiah," *Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities* 1 (1951), pp. 71-95 (reprinted in Perdue and Kovacs, *Prophet to the Nations*, pp. 247-267); Herbert Gordon May, "Towards an Objective Approach to the Book of Jeremiah: The Biographer," *JBL* 61 (1942), pp. 139-155; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970); Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989), pp. 3-27; Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25*, *Wissenschaft Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* 41 (1973); Walther Zimmerli, "From Prophetic Word to Prophetic Book," trans. Andreas Kostenberger, in *The Place Is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. Robert P. Gordon (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 419-442.

²¹For instance, Bogaert, "Jérémie 52," pp. 3-4.

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