PATTERNS OF MUTUAL INFLUENCE
IN THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF THE ORACLES
CONCERNING MOAB IN ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH

Richard D. Weis*

1. Introduction

It has long been remarked that the oracles concerning Moab in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah have a substantial amount of text in common, especially in Jer 48:29–38 and Isa 15:2–7 and 16:6–11. The oracle in Jeremiah also shares substantial text with verses from two passages related to Moab in Numbers (Num 21:27–28 and 24:17 with Jer 48:45–46) and with Isa 24:17–18 (Jer 48:43–44). The similarities between Jeremiah 48 and Isaiah 15–16 have often been interpreted quite reasonably as evidence that an earlier form of the Jeremiah oracle was expanded through the importation of text from the Isaiah oracle.1 While much effort has been expended on tracing the influence of the Isaiah oracle on the Jeremian one in the course of the literary development of the Book of Jeremiah, rather less effort has been expended on considering whether there was influence between the two speeches during the textual transmission of the completed books.2 This study will consider systematically

---

* I am delighted to offer this study in honour of Professor Arie van der Kooij, who through a long career has contributed so much to the study of the Book of Isaiah, especially its text and reception history. I offer it with deep appreciation for his friendship and colleagueship in our common work on Biblia Hebraica Quinta, in which—in addition to our duties as general editors—he is responsible for the Book of Isaiah and I for the Book of Jeremiah.


2 Of course, the possibility of such influence has been remarked in individual textual studies and in commentaries on the two oracles. However, it has not received systematic study as a phenomenon in itself except for a study by Emanuel Tov ("The Nature and
the possibility of such influence. Moreover, the focus will be on patterns of influence with the aim of discerning what that tells us about the way ancient readers saw the relations between these texts. In essence, by attending to the text of the Book of Jeremiah, we hope to be able to learn something about the reception history of the Book of Isaiah.

As we consider the possibilities for influence of one text on another in the transmission of the oracles concerning Moab, we may hope to find answers to several questions. First, are there signs of influence between the Isaiah and Jeremiah texts? Second, in which direction(s) does the influence flow—from Isaiah to Jeremiah, vice-versa, or in both directions? Third, is the influence between the Isaiah and Jeremiah texts part of a larger picture of mutual influence among all the Moab oracles/texts, simply because they refer to Moab, or is it particular to the Isaiah and Jeremiah speeches, or only to specific verses? Fourth, does the influence appear in particular witnesses, and if so, which ones?

This essay seeks to answer these questions through consideration of cases in Isaiah 15–16 and Jeremiah 48 of assimilation of these texts to other specific verses in the Bible, including those in these two passages. The total picture of assimilation between Jeremiah 48 and Isaiah 15–16 will be covered case by case. Likewise, all cases of assimilation between one of these passages and other Moab texts will be considered. Finally, cases of assimilation in Jeremiah 48 to ‘non-Moab’ texts will be considered as well. At the end we will draw the conclusions the evidence suggests in relation to our questions, and consider what this says more broadly about the phenomenon of assimilation in the transmission of the biblical text, the reception of the text, and modern understandings of these phenomena.

Before examining the textual evidence an important methodological point needs clarification. The portions of Isaiah 15–16 and Jeremiah

Background of Harmonizations in Biblical Manuscripts’, *JSOT* 31 (1985), pp. 3–29), which treats the phenomenon generally, without reference to Isaiah 15–16 and Jeremiah 48. Nevertheless, if one takes seriously Karel van der Toorn’s point about the centrality of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms to the scribal curriculum under the Second Temple (Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* [Cambridge, Mass., 2007], p. 102), the possibility merits investigation.

3 The definition of assimilation used in this discussion is that of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* project: “This characterization suggests that a particular force in generating the reading of a witness in the case has been an impulse to create or increase a degree of similarity with a text or contextual element with which a certain degree of similarity may already exist”. See Adrian Schenker et al., *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* 18. *General Introduction and Megilloth* (Stuttgart, 2004), p. lxxxix.