CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH IN LIGHT
OF ITS TEXTUAL HISTORY

1. The two editions of Jeremiah

The LXX of Jeremiah often differs from MT of that book in major
details. It is shorter than MT by one-seventh and it differs from MT in
its arrangement of the material. Since the LXX's translation technique
in Jeremiah is relatively literal where the two texts overlap, it is
unlikely that the translator would have abridged his Hebrew Vorlage.
This implies that the brevity of the LXX reflects a short Hebrew text.

The existence of a short Hebrew text of Jeremiah has been confirmed
by 4QJerb containing parts of chapters 9–10, 43, and 50 (see DJD XV).
These manuscripts, dated to the first half of the second century BCE,
resemble the LXX of Jeremiah in the two major features in which the
reconstructed Vorlage of that translation differs from MT, namely,
the arrangement of the text and its shortness. 4QJerb share seven minuses
with the LXX, two of which are long (10:6–8, 10), and five short
(mainly names). In addition, two minuses of the LXX are not shared
with 4QJerb, while ten short minuses cannot be compared with
4QJerb because of their fragmentary nature. The reconstructed text of
4QJerb also agrees with the LXX (against MT) in the sequence of the
verses in chapter 10, where the verses appear in the order 1–5a, 9, 5b,
11–12.

At the same time, 4QJerb are not identical to the reconstructed
Vorlage of the LXX. In addition to the three minuses of LXX which are

1 This situation is most clearly visible in the different location of the oracles against the
foreign nations. In MT they constitute chapters 46–51, but in the LXX they follow 25:13
and are arranged in a different order.

2 For a description, see Min, Minuses and Pluses, and, more briefly, A. Scholz, Der
Masorethische Text und die LXX Übersetzung des Buches Jeremia (Regensburg 1875) and F.
Giesebrecht, Das Buch Jeremia (HAT III 2.1; Göttingen 1894) xix–xxxiv. See also p. 348 above.

3 43:4, 5, ‘Son of Kareah’; 43:5, ‘from all the countries to which they had been scattered’;
43:6, ‘chief of the guards’ (דִּבְרֵי מְדִינָה); 43:6, ‘son of Shaphan.’

4 43:7, ‘land’; 43:9, ‘in mortar in the brick structure which’ (בָּמָלֶךְ בָּמֶלֶךְ אֶשֶׁר).
not shared with 4QJer\(^{b,d}\), the scrolls agree with MT against the LXX in five details, and they also contain some unique readings found in neither the LXX nor MT. While 4QJer\(^{b,d}\) are thus not identical to the Vorlage of the LXX, the existence of such a short and differently ordered Hebrew version of Jeremiah, coupled with the fact that the translator of Jeremiah was relatively literal and not likely to have made such changes himself, confirms the assumption that the LXX of Jeremiah was based on a short Hebrew Vorlage, similar to 4QJer\(^{b,d}\).

The question of whether the short or the long version of Jeremiah is the earlier of the two has been discussed by Janzen, Jeremiah; Min, Minuses and Pluses; and Tov, "Exegetical Notes."* Each of these studies suggested that the short version is earlier than the long one. It has been suggested further, especially by the present writer and by P.-M. Bogaert,\(^5\) that the common text of the LXX and 4QJer\(^{b,d}\), that is, the short version, does not reflect a different text of Jeremiah but an earlier edition of that book (edition I; by the same token, MT is called edition II).\(^6\) The two editions differed from each other not only in length but also in the arrangement of the material. The first, short edition was expanded to the form now found in ed. II during one of the stages of the literary growth of the book. Edition II contains many pluses over against ed. I, not only in words, phrases, and sentences, but also in complete sections, the largest of which are 33:14–26 and 39:4–13. The date of the textual witnesses of the first edition does not bear on the date of the edition itself, because presumably ed. I was written long before the time of the LXX, and it was not destroyed even when ed. II was created on the basis of ed. I. It was still known in the second century BCE in Egypt, when it served as the Vorlage for the LXX translation, and was present (along with manuscripts close to ed. II) at Qumran in the first half of the second century BCE.

The description of ed. II that follows is based on the premise that the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX and 4QJer\(^{b,d}\) represent an early edition of Jeremiah which was expanded by the editor of MT into ed. II.

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\(^5\) Tov, "L'incidence" and "Exegetical Notes"; Bogaert, "De Baruch à Jérémie" and "Mécanismes."

\(^6\) The terms edition/editor and text/scribe describe different stages in the development of the book as well as the persons involved. Editions belong to the stages of the growth of the book, up to and including its final formulation, and they involve major changes, additions, and transpositions; the writers who produced them are termed editors. The textual transmission, performed by scribes for each edition, starts after that edition was completed. Scribes involved in this process did insert changes into the text, but to a much smaller degree than editors did.