CHAPTER 1

From Rewritten Bible to Reputation: A Fresh Methodological Approach to Appropriating Jeremiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls

There are six copies of scriptural Jeremiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with a loosely defined inventory of quotations, allusions and echoes of Jeremiah in the sectarian literature. However, in the absence of any Jeremiah pesharim, and given the paucity of direct citations of scriptural Jeremiah in the scrolls—especially compared with widely cited Isaiah, the Psalms, or Deuteronomy—the process for both analysing and situating the Jeremianic traditions becomes complicated. The *Apocryphon of Jeremiah c* (4Q385a, 4Q387, 4Q387a, 4Q388a, 4Q389) is well represented within the Qumran scrolls, but this presents a bit of a contradiction with the comparatively sparse manuscript evidence and a seemingly lower interest in scriptural Jeremiah within the same collection. Because of this apparent inconsistency it becomes at the outset difficult if not impossible to locate any sort of meaningful continuity with regard to the Jeremianic traditions, when considered at a conventionally, primary textual level. Attempts to uncover the purpose and function of these traditions ultimately fail when Jeremianic authority is constrained in a purely literary analysis, without much consideration for how the prophet’s persona, or reputation, might have served as a galvanising feature for these traditions. I submit that part of the problem with understanding Jeremiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls in the past is largely a generic one: because the primary witnesses in the *Apocryphon of Jeremiah c* have been classified as “parabiblical” there is a tendency

---


2 Dimant, *DJD* 30, 93 includes 4Q390 as another copy of the *Apocryphon of Jeremiah c*, but this designation has been challenged by a number of scholars on the basis of the absence of any textual overlaps with any of the other copies. Cf. discussion in Chapter Two, section 2.2.3.

3 According to the ambitious taxonomic inventory of Qumran scrolls in A. Lange with U. Mittmann-Richert, “Annotated List of the Texts from the Judaean Desert Classified by Content and
to appreciate them exclusively in terms of how they functioned exegetically, in their treatment and relationship to other texts. Ironically, perhaps this concentration on the writtenness of so-called “rewritten Bible” actually serves to diminish the value and purpose of many of these compositions that stems from their connexion to important events and figures from Israel’s memory. Despite efforts to distinguish certain texts by virtue of their dependency upon prominent biblical themes, significant events or characters, careful study of most of these so-called “parabiblical” compositions rarely escape textualised, exegetical treatments. In what follows, I shall consider the appropriateness of the designation “rewritten Bible” to describe the Apocryphon c, and will proceed to discuss alternative methods for reading the Apocryphon c that focus more attention on the prophet Jeremiah’s persona, his distinction as a renowned “founder,” and as a revered prophet.

1.1 Is the Apocryphon of Jeremiah c a “Rewritten Bible” Text?

The Apocryphon of Jeremiah c has been commonly referred to as a type of “rewritten Bible” composition, similar to other elaborate and expansive scripturally based narratives. George J. Brooke, for one, saw the Apocryphon c to fit his definition of rewritten Bible as “any representation of an authoritative scriptural text that implicitly incorporates interpretive elements, large or small, in the retelling itself.” On the basis of this definition, Brooke has classified the Apocryphon c as a sort of “parabiblical prophetic narrative”: a composition that drew from the life and times of Jeremiah preserved in scripture, and which seemed to indicate for the Qumran sectarians an on-going interest in older

---
