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A new understanding of the Book of Jeremiah

Research on Jeremiah has flourished enormously in the past 30 years.[1] Since the mid-eighties numerous articles, monographs and commentaries on the Book of Jeremiah[2] have appeared. The conference in Ascona in 2014 on Jeremiah's Scriptures was therefore a welcome occasion for Jer scholars to meet, to discuss recent developments and results, and to *arrive at a new basis for the interpretation of Jer*, nearly three decades after a significant change.[3] In the following I intend to mention some of the major insights of the past years (1.). Against this background, I will address several disputed issues (2.).

1. Achievements in Jer research

1.1 The 'liberation' brought about by Robert P. Carroll

Carroll's commentary[4] and his other publications on Jer[5] *substantially changed Jer research*. He succeeded in showing that Jer is a kind of 'mixture', with a multitude of ideas and intentions, mostly presented in very short units. Because of their orientation and language, many of them can neither be attributed to the prophet himself, nor can they be grouped together into 'layers' or 'redactions', as they are too disparate.
Carroll's impact can hardly be overestimated. He 'liberated' the interpretation of Jer from a too close connection with the historical Jeremiah, as becomes evident, for example, in the commentaries of William L. Holladay, and even more so, of Jack R. Lundbom,[6] but also in other studies.[7] Carroll's critical analyses *allow for the separation of prophet and book*, thus enabling the perception of Jer, more accurately, as the product of a later time.
Carroll's second major contribution lies in his *skepticism regarding our ability to reconstruct the compositional process* of Jer. To quote him: "The story of the growth of the book of Jeremiah 'is impossible to tell' …".[8] Carroll rightly points out that we have no safe access to the literary development behind the genesis of Jer. What is adduced to explain the coming

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[1] A decisive turning point was the year 1986, with the publication of – in the three cases mentioned last – at least the initial volumes of the four commentaries of Robert P. Carroll (Old Testament Library; entirely), Siegfried Herrmann (Biblischer Kommentar), William L. Holladay (Hermeneia), and William McKane (International Critical Commentary); for this see the review of Helga Weippert, Hieremias quadruplex. Already earlier on, in 1980, the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, was dedicated to the Book of Jeremiah; the conference proceedings have been edited by Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Le Livre de Jérémie*.
[2] Henceforth I refer to it by "Jer", whereas "Jeremiah" refers to the – historical or literary – figure of the prophet.
[3] I am grateful to Hindy Najman and Konrad Schmid who took the initiative in organizing this conference at such a beautiful location and who invited me to it. – This contribution here was originally a response to Robert Wilson's introductory lecture on "Exegesis, Expansion and Tradition Making in the Book of Jeremiah" on the first evening of the conference. As his paper was very long and mixed various aspects, I preferred to present first how I perceive the state of Jer research, and react to some of his views, for the most part, only in an indirect way.
[4] Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*.
[5] Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, and many articles, also penetrating and pioneering overviews on research (cf. note 8 below for one example).
[6] William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*; and idem, *Jeremiah 2*; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*; idem, *Jeremiah 21–36*; and idem, *Jeremiah 37–52*.
[7] An example of the 'lasting desire' to find 'authentic' prophetic words is Gianni Barbiero, *«Tu mi hai sedotto, Signore»*.
[8] Robert P. Carroll, Century's End, 23. Earlier on, in: Intertextuality, esp. 62, Carroll had already stated that "Our knowledge of the processes leading to the Book of Jeremiah … is absolutely nil."

into being of Jer belongs to the realm of speculation and, sometimes, phantasy. Herein, Carroll's clear words call for caution and should be taken seriously. If we can in no way verify hypotheses about the development of Jer, then they are methodologically unsound and should be left aside.

Carroll, in his 'razor' approach,[9] has helped Jer research a great deal. Jer scholars can enjoy a *new freedom* and be open to the study of Jer as what it is, and in an appropriate way: a book, to be analyzed with respect to its literary characteristics.

1.2 The internal cohesion of Jer

A balance of *centripetal and centrifugal forces* enables life on our planet. Similarly, larger literary works are a mixture of 'binding' and 'diverging' motifs. This is also true for what is by far the longest single book of the Bible, Jer.[10] It contains many different elements, whose arrangement, connections and insertion into the book are often far from clear. On the macro-level, we find various genres, the interchange of poetry and prose, reports about the prophet and seemingly 'autobiographical' passages,[11] etc. On the micro-level, communication, imagery, view-points, vocabulary and orientation frequently switch so rapidly that the text resembles an apparently random mosaic and readers have to struggle to detect and follow its logic.

To balance these dispersing effects, Jer employs a number of *devices to hold the book together*. Right at the start, the *Incipit*[12] interrelates God's and the prophet's words in 1:1–2 in such a way that they can hardly be separated.[13] This interlacing of *divine and human speaking* is further enhanced in later parts of the book[14] and is central to its understanding. It also stands in the background of the motif of the false prophets, a theme developed in Jer more than in any other book of the Bible.

In addition, the *Incipit* likewise starts the '*chronology*' of Jer, one of the main structuring devices of the book. Jer 1:2–3 give an overview of the time span of Jeremiah's prophetic activity covering approximately 627–587 BCE.[15] The kings and dates mentioned are based on the accounts in 2 Kings which serve as a source throughout the book up to and including its very last chapter, Jer 52, which is almost entirely taken up from 2 Kings 24:18–25:30. The announced final date, the fifth month of King Zedekiah's eleventh year (1:3), only occurs

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[9] Jurie le Roux, In search, gives an excellent description of Carroll's contribution and at the same time a profound and critical characterization of his approach, driven by a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (p. 89).

[10] Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles would be longer, but have been separated. Jer has 21819 words in Hebrew, corresponding to 7.26% of the Hebrew Bible, according to the appendix of Ernst Jenni / Claus Westermann (eds.), *THAT II*, 540. The next longest books are Genesis, Psalms, Ezekiel and Isaiah, with respectively 20611, 19531, 18731 and 16930 words.

[11] Referring to Jeremiah by first person singular, as in Jer 1:4 "The Word of Yhwh came to *me* …", and often elsewhere.

[12] Rüdiger Liwak, *Der Prophet*, 102, first applied this term to Jer 1:1–3.

[13] Jer 1:1 "Words of Jeremiah", Jer 1:2 "to whom the word of Yhwh came". Jer LXX, on the contrary, resolves the double origin of the words found in Jer and the tension thus created by passing off everything as divine message. For the question of the relationship between the Hebrew and the Greek text of Jer see my other article in this volume.

[14] Key passages are Jer 1:9 where God touches Jeremiah's mouth and interprets this gesture as the handing over of his words to the prophet, and Jer 15:19 where God offers Jeremiah the opportunity "to be like his mouth".

[15] The period of 40 years seems to have been chosen deliberately, in order to form a contrast to the 40 years of King David's and King Solomon's years at the beginning of the monarchy in Judah: Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* (2005), 128–129.

again in Jer 52:12, with the burning down of the temple and the large houses in Jerusalem, and the exile of a substantial part of the capital's population (52:15). This framing requires that Jer 52 is perceived as integral to the book.

In between, Jer 25:3 picks up the initial indication of King Josiah's thirteenth year (Jer 1:2). The beginning of Jer 25 equates it with *King Jehoiakim's fourth year* as well as with Nebuchadnezzar's first year (25:1; 605 BCE). This double dating offers a clue to the second half of Jer, as it is repeated in corner chapters[16] and, only in its very last occurrence in Jer 46:2, its significance is revealed by identifying it with the date of the Battle of Carchemish. The delay of this disclosure seems to be conscious; it produces for the readers of Jer the effect that Jeremiah, already early on in Jer 25, understood the full impact of the Babylonian crown prince's victory there as an important change in the history of the Ancient Near East, whereas Judah's kings remained ignorant of it.

Jer 26–52 contain several other datings.[17] They do *not* chart a chronological order: Jer 32:1, for example, refers to the tenth year of King Zedekiah (ca. 588 BCE), and Jer 35:1 turns back to the reign of King Jehoiakim (before 598 BCE). Similarly, the events narrated in Jer 40–44 are situated in the time after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE; afterwards Jer 45:1 comes back to 605 BCE. The chronological disarray is clearly intentional; obviously whoever wrote Jer followed a different rationale in the arrangement of the book. The time fractures, therefore, cannot be taken as indications of disparate origins.

Another feature which at first sight might point to Jer having various authors is the *shifting between prose and poetry*. These changes are especially frequent in the first half of Jer. Instead of assigning them to different layers,[18] Louis Stulman has suggested seeing them as mutually related.[19] Prose texts serve as 'guides' to interpreting poetic passages, to relating them to 'history', and thus enable the readers to understand the meaning of the 'chaotic' dialogues and imagery of the poetry in Jer. A year later, Robert Wilson proffered a similar explanation.[20] Far from tearing apart the book or being a sign of its development at different stages, the combination of prose and poetry gives coherence to Jer and is an excellent medium for conveying its message more poignantly.

The unchronological order of Jer and its mix of prose and poetry appear at first sight as 'dispersing' forces; however, there is strong evidence that they are planned and therefore belong to a deliberate scheme behind the organization of Jer. There are still other 'binding' elements to hold the divergent aspects and pieces of Jer together. The high number of *repetitions* provides a kind of 'glue' for the book, on various levels. No other biblical book makes such frequent use of formulas introducing God's speech, as Jer.[21] The effect is to constantly remind the readers of the divine origin of these words and, therefore, their

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[16] It occurs again in Jer 36:1 and 45:1, which frame the last block of narratives in Jer, and in Jer 46:2, the opener for the section of the "Oracles against foreign nations".

[17] For an overview see Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* (2005), 80.

[18] This was the solution of Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition*, and many others who followed his lead. However, Mowinckel later distanced himself from his own theory.

[19] Louis Stulman, *Order amid Chaos* (1998) 18, and various times throughout the book till 186.

[20] Robert R. Wilson, Poetry and Prose (1999), 413–427. He recognizes the link between prose and "didactic passages" (p. 420); prose in Jer often "summarizes and simplifies the preceding poetic material" (p. 423). – In his paper in Ascona, he also focused on the fact that the (poetic) laments are often "surrounded by larger literary units" in prose.

[21] The main ones are: "uttering of Yhwh" (166x), "thus says Yhwh" (154x), and "the word of Yhwh came …" (36x).

heightened authority. Other forms of repetition in Jer are to be found in the recurring longer expressions,[22] or the so-called "doublets", texts with a length of one to several verses occurring twice within the book.[23] The latter are like 'clamps' connecting the various parts of Jer. The same holds true even more for longer texts containing similar events, as in the case of the two temple sermons in Jer 7 and 26, and of the account of Jerusalem's fall in Jer 39 and 52. All these forms of repetition contribute to the cohesion of Jer.

Dominant motifs also play a key role in Jer. Some of them show a continuous development throughout the book. This can be illustrated by looking at the references to the two main foreign nations. "*Egypt*"[24] is mentioned first in Jer 2:6, as the country of the Exodus; however, this divine liberation is no longer remembered. In the same chapter two other nuances come to the fore. Jer 2:18 alludes to intentions to go there, as will happen later in Jer 42–44, and Jer 2:36–37 speaks of being put to shame by Egypt; the delusional trust placed in the country at the Nile reaches its final destiny in Jer 46, where Egypt is utterly defeated but nevertheless promised survival at the end.[25]

The other prominent nation in Jer is *Babylon*.[26] Its first occurrence comes late, in Jer 20:4. Before that, the motif of a 'foe from the North' had announced an unidentified fierce nation attacking Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 1:15; 4:6; 6:1, 22–24, etc.); in Jer 20, immediately after the torturing of Jeremiah upon his first reported commissioning of God's message of doom in the book (Jer 19:14–20:3), the identity of this enemy is revealed, and Babylon will continue to play a decisive role throughout, up to and including the very last chapters. Similar to Egypt in Jer 46, but still much more, Babylon undergoes divine judgment in Jer 50–51. Twice it is related to the "retribution for [the destruction of] his temple",[27] which will not be narrated until later, in Jer 52:13.

The motifs Egypt and Babylon are spread over the whole book and display a *development*, leading in both cases to their final judgment by God. Furthermore, they are intertwined in various ways.[28] These are indications of a complex, yet well-planned composition of the entire book. Similarly, the different accents and orientations of the first and the second half of Jer can be seen as a kind of drama in two parts.[29]

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[22] E.g. the contrasting verbs "to pluck up and to tear down, … to build and to plant", the triad "sword, hunger, pestilence", and many others; Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Deuterojeremianische Konkordanz*, is a very helpful tool for investigating them.

[23] For a list of them see Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation*. Examples are Jer 6:12–15 // 8:10–12; 10:12–16 // 51:15–19; 15:13–14 // 17:3–4, etc.

[24] For its various roles in Jer see Michael P. Maier, *Ägypten – Israels Herkunft und Geschick*. "Egypt" occurs 62 times in Jer, the most occurrences to be found in Biblical books after Exodus (175x) and Genesis (88x).

[25] The last phrase of Jer 46:26 indicates hope for Egypt, after Nebuchadnezzar's attack. – The other arrangement of the Greek text of Jer brings Jer 46 MT, the culmination in God's judgment of Egypt, already as chapter 26 (LXX). Jer 42–45 MT, the Judeans' emigration to Egypt, correspond to Jer 49–51 LXX. Thus the Septuagint version of Jer does not follow the dynamic of the Hebrew text of Jer, and presents a logic of its own.

[26] For its function in Jer cf. John Hill, *Friend or Foe?*, and Walter Brueggemann, At the mercy. – "Babylon" has 169 occurrences in Jer, nearly two thirds of all instances in the Hebrew Bible (262x).

[27] Jer 50:28; 51:11. – The "Babylon" motif, too, demands from a logical point of view the Book of Jeremiah in the arrangement of the MT, as Jer LXX already brings in Babylon's judgment as chapters 27–28, long before its actions against Judah are described (mainly from Jer 39 LXX onwards, up to and including Jer 47 LXX).

[28] The fear of Babylonian vengeance, e.g., incites the Judean military leaders to seek escape in Egypt, starting in Jer 41:17; the King of Babylon and his forces defeat and conquer Egypt in Jer 46.

[29] In this regard, too, the book of Stulman, *Order*, is illuminating. He apprehends Jer 1–25 as "death and dismantling of Judah's sacred world," and Jer 26–52 as "New beginnings emerging from a shattered world," responding to the first part (pages 18, 23 and 56).

Another sign of the cohesion of Jer are *question-answer schemes*, where the question is not answered until much later in the text. Jer 8:22 asks, literally: "Why has not arisen [עלה in the *qal* stem] the healing of the daughter–my people?" This question remains open, and is only[30] answered by God's address to Zion in Jer 30:17: "I will make arise [עלה in the *hiphil* stem] healing for you." In Jer 14:19 the people had asked: "Have you completely rejected Judah?"—once again, an answer is found later on, in Jer 31:37 and 33:26, with God vowing not to do so.[31]

Looking back at these illustrations of some 'binding' devices in Jer, it suggests that the *entire book is linked on various levels*. Several types of repetition, important motifs, literary techniques, time indications, etc. form multiple grids permeating Jer. Robert Carroll was right in distinguishing the individual small unities and their peculiarities; however, it is also necessary to perceive the connections among them and over the whole book, and, taken overall, these produce the impression that Jer, despite its diversity, is astonishingly coherent.

1.3 The intertextual relationships of Jer

Maybe the most important 'discovery' of the past decades in Jer research was the perception of its *numerous, and obviously systematic links* with other biblical books. Certainly, such connections have always been seen, for instance in the interpretation of the Church Fathers;[32] the new finding is that these relationships pervade the whole book and display some regular features, and are interpreted as a sign of intent.[33]

The most obvious example is the *final chapter of Jer*, which almost completely depends on 2 Kings 24:18–25:30. Jer 52, in addition, expands some features of its source text, e.g. the description of the columns of the temple, and the numbers of those exiled.[34] Furthermore, Jer heavily enlarges the "Gedaliah episode" (2 Kings 25:22–26) in Jer 40:7–43:7,[35] attributing to it a key function for the entire book, as it shows in an exemplary way the disobedience of Judeans even after the fall of Jerusalem. Their behavior demonstrates their continuing unwillingness to listen to God and his prophet and reaches the pinnacle of perversion in the vow of idolatry mentioned in Jer 44:25.

The example of 2 Kings 25, the last chapter of the "Former Prophets," strongly suggests that Jer could have *known them all*[36] and must have been written after 561 BCE, because it refers

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[30] Later on, in Jer 33:6, God will again promise such a healing. עלה in combination with ארכה, applied to people, is exclusively used in Jer; the other instances of this phrase in Neh 4:1 and 2 Chron 24:13 refer to buildings.

[31] For further examples of this device, especially with the scroll of consolation, see Georg Fischer, *Das Trostbüchlein* (1993), 155–158.

[32] The homilies of Origen on Jer, the Jer commentaries of St. Jerome and Theodoret, for example, often adduce biblical parallels to explain Jer texts.

[33] The first one to draw attention to this fact and to list systematically in detail these relationships was William Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 35–95.

[34] See especially Jer 52:21–23, 28–30.

[35] This is the best example of "expansion" in Jer, the second aspect of the title of Wilson's presentation (cf. note 3). What originally had been five verses, Jer has extended into three chapters, or even more, as the sequel in 43:8–44:30 is its necessary completion. "Expansion", in this case, does not happen 'within' Jer, but describes what happens, on a diachronic level, as a process from the short note in 2 Kings to the narrative in Jer 40–43.

[36] Other links with the Books of the "Deuteronomistic History" can be seen in "the Kingdoms of Hazor" (Jos 11:10; Jer 49:28), the exhortation to invoke other Gods (Judg 10:14; Jer 11:12), God's promise to David (2 Sam 7:14; Jer 31:9), etc. For the intensive connections between 2 Kings 17 and Jer see Georg Fischer, The Relationship (2004).

at the end to the grace given to King Jehoiachin in that year, mentioned also in Jer 52:31–34. It is not possible to list here even a small representative selection of Jer's connections with these and other books; so I will only briefly present the results of various investigations.[37] The *Torah*, above all the Books of Exodus[38] and of Deuteronomy,[39] has been a main source for Jer. The creation narrative of Gen 1 is presupposed in its reversal in Jer 4:23–26. God's bringing out of the exiled ones from the countries of the North and their dispersion overrides the old exodus out of Egypt (Jer 16:14–15 // 23:7–8). Various expressions of Lev 26 form exclusive links with Jer.[40] Moab texts and place names from Num 21:32-33 serve as a source for the Moab oracles in Jer 48.[41]

With respect to *Deuteronomy*, William Holladay distinguished between passages which he took as being prior to Jer, and others which he regarded as being dependent on Jer.[42] In my estimation, Deut, as a whole, precedes Jer and is taken up the most by it. Jer uses Deut more than any other book of the Bible, and therein specifically Deut 28, the chapter with the blessings and the curses.[43] Jer is familiar with the final chapters of Deut[44] as well as with seemingly 'late' texts like Gen 1 and Lev 26, an indication that the entire Torah, with high probability, is prior to Jer.

Jer's relationships with the "*Latter Prophets*" go in two directions. There are undisputed cases, like the Books of Amos and Hosea which generally are taken to predate Jer. Similarly, most exegetes perceive Micah and 'First Isaiah' as being sources for Jer; this clearly seems to be the case for Mic 3:12 which is quoted in Jer 26:18.

There are close connections between Ob 1–5 and Jer 49:9, 14–16, between Nah 3:5, 19 and Jer 13:22, 26; 30:12, and between Hab 2:13 and Jer 51:58. In all these cases it is likely that the smaller books of the Twelve Prophets were earlier and that *Jer incorporated* some of their marked phrases and images into his vast work.

Debate is going on with respect to *Isaiah and Ezekiel*. There are close links between the idolatrous worship in Isa 44 and Jer 10:3–4. Angelika Berlejung interpreted them as Jer being dependent on Isa.[45] God's criticism of "incense coming from Sheba" in Jer 6:20 seems to presuppose Isa 60:6.[46] These are signs that even texts of the so-called Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah may predate Jer. — For Ezekiel, Henk Leene has offered convincing evidence that Jer uses it as a source.[47]

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[37] They have been summarized in Georg Fischer, *Jeremia. Der Stand* (2007), 131–147; idem, *Jeremia. Prophet* (2015), 95–121, and, newly, idem, Lebendige Erinnerung (2019), 167–171.

[38] See Georg Fischer, Zurück nach Ägypten (2014), 73–92.

[39] For a systematic summary cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 53–63, and Georg Fischer, Der Einfluss des Deuteronomiums auf das Jeremiabuch (2011), 247–269.

[40] E.g. the phrases "to give rain showers" (Lev 26:4; Jer 5:24) and "the soul abhors" (Lev 26:30; Jer 14:19).

[41] Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52* (2005), 528. See also the parallel endings of Num 24:17 and Jer 48:45.

[42] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*. He assumes that Deut 32 is prior to Jer (p. 53–56), and that Deut 12–26 serve as a background for Jeremiah's poetry and prose (p. 56–59). Inversely, Deut 28:49, 51–52 "is evidently dependent on Jer 5:15, 17" for him (p. 62, and further examples till p. 63).

[43] Georg Fischer, Fulfilment and Reversal (2012), 43–49. – The intensity of the relationship to Deut is specific for Jer, as no other biblical book picks up Deut more than Jer does.

[44] Georg Fischer, Das Ende von Deuteronomium (2010), 281–292; idem, *Der Prophet wie Mose* (2011), 170–262, contains several other articles on the intertextual relationships of Jer.

[45] Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder*, 391.

[46] Another exclusive link between these chapters is the expression "violence and destruction" (Isa 60:18; Jer 6:7). For further relationships between Isa and Jer and their different orientations see Georg Fischer, Partner oder Gegner? (2007), 69–79.

[47] See Henk Leene, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and idem, Blowing the Same Shofar.

Summing up this overview on the intertextual relationships, it can be concluded that *Jer draws on more than half of the Hebrew Bible*.[48] This indicates not only a relatively late stage for the date of its composition, but also a highly sophisticated working technique, which is visible throughout the entire book. Whoever wrote Jer must have been acquainted with all these scrolls, able to grasp their different orientations, capable of discerning their specific, distinctive phrases, and bringing all these aspects together in his own book, with a wealth of allusions and re-use of material from the previous books.[49]

Dealing with the intertextual links of Jer, I want to mention at the end also those scrolls where the *direction of dependence is reversed* and which draw on Jer.[50] This is obviously the case with Esra (1:1) and 2 Chron (35–36) which several times refer to the prophet by name. The Book of Zechariah uses Jer,[51] and similarly the Psalter.[52]

Jer is an example of *tradition making*[53] in two directions. Firstly, it has become very clear that Jer is establishing 'tradition'. It takes up earlier scripture which—at least partially—was already regarded or came to be authoritative, and forms it into a scroll of its own, on a highly reflective and complex literary level; thus Jer itself is a model for the molding of tradition in the process of its composition. On the other hand, Jer became a source for other authors who, on their part, used it to build upon their new ideas and messages, as the examples mentioned in the paragraph above, and the various writings dealt with in the further course of the conference in Ascona, prove.[54]

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In the last three decades, a new understanding of Jer has emerged, and it is spreading. Thanks also to Robert Carroll, researchers have been freed from an all-too-close connection between 'original' prophet and book, and can now perceive in a fresh way its peculiarities: an *'unorthodox' composition and literary presentation, and an enormous wealth of dialogue with other scrolls* of the Hebrew Bible.

The admittedly complex nature of Jer thus does not appear as the product of a series of different, disconnected interventions, but rather as a *deliberate scribal attempt to incorporate various motifs, ideas, and positions, to enter into a discussion with them, and to present a rich synthesis of them*, probably in late Persian times, and oriented towards a renewed, more personal form of piety.[55]

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[48] In the usual arrangement of its scriptures, Jer's familiarity with other scrolls covers all the books from Gen through Isaiah, and also from Ezekiel to Zephaniah, with the possible exceptions of Joel and Jonah. Counting the pages in the fourth edition of the BHS, this corresponds to approximately 930 pages out of a total of 1574, of which the 116 pages for Jer have to be deducted; the percentage (ca. 930 : 1460) is thus more than 63 %.

[49] The first word of the title of Wilson's paper was "Exegesis". What becomes visible in Jer's intertextual connections points to a deliberate interpretative activity, picking up older texts, combining and sometimes even contrasting them (e.g. in the promise of the New Covenant, Jer 31:31–34). Jer, however, goes beyond "egexesis" (as explaining scripture) in that it claims to actually convey divine messages and thus to be in the same way as authoritative as the works it takes up and refers to.

[50] Fischer, *Jeremia. Der Stand* (2007) 141–142 and 144–147.

[51] This has been shown by Konrad R. Schaefer, Zechariah 14, Risto Nurmela, *Prophets*, and Michael R. Stead, The Three Shepherds.

[52] Georg Fischer, Jeremia und die Psalmen (2010).

[53] This is the third and last aspect of Wilson's title; it also aptly refers to processes with reference to the scroll attributed to the prophet Jeremiah.

[54] For these, see the articles collected in this volume [H. Najman / K. Schmid (eds.), *Jeremiah's Scriptures. Production, Reception, Interaction, and Transformation* (JSJS 173), Leiden 2017] on Enochic Traditions, Baruch, 2 Baruch, 4 Baruch, etc.

[55] Cf. the changes which Moshe Weinfeld, Jeremiah and the spiritual metamorphosis, has pointed out.

2. Disputed issues

Against the background of the recent developments in Jer research delineated above, I now want *to address problems* which are still being discussed, and respond more directly[56] to Robert Wilson's paper, too. As it was the first main presentation, he was invited to provide something of an account of the current state of research.[57] This was not easy, yet he did manage to give an impression of the complicated situation. I will pick out for discussion (1) the issue of Jer's genesis and composition, then (2) the question of the methodology applied in Jer studies, and finally (3) Jer's links with the prophet Jeremiah and with history.

2.1 How did Jer come into being?

Undoubtedly, Jer is *highly complex*. Its variations, fractures, tensions, erratic quotes, and other strange features call for an explanation. The most common solution in recent historical-critical exegesis has been to assume a process of "Fortschreibung,"[58] starting with some original words of the prophet Jeremiah, and evolving gradually into what is now regarded as the Book of Jeremiah.[59]

Certainly, nobody can exclude such a development over a longer period of time. On the other hand, it is nearly impossible to prove it with the means accessible to us nowadays. We have no texts or manuscripts of Jer that would show an earlier stage of its composition or allow us to detect with certainty expansions which happened prior to the final shape of the book. All that has been adduced for such processes of textual development in Jer belongs to the categories of hypotheses and theories, and we have to ask *how probable they are*. In what follows, I list some aspects to be considered in attempting to answer this question.

a) Jer mentions *scribal activities* more than any other prophetic book.[60] This probably mirrors a time when writing became more prominent; however, it remained restricted to an 'elite', a few persons with a special formation and training, and it was "both time consuming and expensive."[61] Any larger change in the composition, or addition of comments "would have

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[56] Partially that has happened already in the first part; however, the focus there was more on bringing out the gains, made over the last few decades of Jer studies, which aid our understanding of it.

[57] His introductory paper concentrated very much on publications written in English. For an overview of additional literature, cf. the four articles on the status of Jer research of Rüdiger Liwak, Vierzig Jahre Forschung zum Jeremiabuch, the last part dealing with intertextuality and reception, besides the research summaries in the books of Siegfried Herrmann, *Jeremia. Der Prophet und das Buch*, and Fischer, *Jeremia. Der Stand* (2007).

[58] This is also a presupposition of Robert Wilson, Exegesis, 11: "However that may be, the process of *Fortschreibung* suggests that the book of Jeremiah as a whole grew slowly over time through numerous changes and additions and through the work of numerous authors and editors concerned with the meaning of Jeremiah's prophetic activity for their own time." He does not question this assumption, but takes it as solid ground.

[59] The problems are starting already with what is regarded as "the Book of Jeremiah", as Jer exists in two very different forms: a longer version in Hebrew, accessible largely in the manuscripts of Qumran and in the tradition of MT, and a shorter in Greek, extant in the various manuscripts of the LXX. I deal with this problem in the second article.

[60] Cf. Robert P. Carroll, Inscribing the Covenant, and Georg Fischer, Das Jeremiabuch als Spiegel (2010), esp. 40–42.

[61] Thus Robert Wilson, Exegesis, 13, referring to Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 109–141 and 173–204.

required the recopying of the entire scroll."[62] Considering the difficulties and costs of rewriting a whole book of the extent of Jer, it is rather implausible that Jer "grew slowly over time through numerous changes and additions and through the work of numerous authors and editors," and this implies that the number of such "Fortschreibungen," if at all necessary, be reduced to an absolute minimum.[63]

b) A second argument against a long-lasting process of Jer's genesis comes from the observations above with respect to the book's cohesion. There are many, sometimes even very special, *links on various levels*. Dates like "the thirteenth year of King Josiah" connect Jer 1:2 with 25:3, "the fifth month" of King Zedekiah's eleventh year Jer 1:3 with 52:12, and "the fourth year of King Jehoiakim" Jer 25 through 46. Key motifs like the roles of the two potent foreign nations Egypt and Babylon pervade the book, displaying a twofold dynamic of reversal.[64] Schemes such as giving answers to open questions, or responding to exhortations earlier in the book[65] tie widely separated passages and form bonds throughout the whole of Jer. These observations suggest that it is unlikely that we can separate parts of Jer and attribute other, different origins to them.

c) Furthermore, there are *many progressions* throughout the book, e.g. the increase of threat from the ambiguous poetic announcements in the first part of Jer to the narrated events from Jer 21 onwards, or the steadily growing emphasis on the fall of Jerusalem.[66] The people's rejection of Yhwh is first mentioned in Jer 1:16, heavily stressed in Jer 2, developed in the following chapters and reaches its negative climax in the vow to venerate the "Queen of Heaven" in Jer 44:25, 'historically' the very last reported scene of the book.[67] This, too, speaks in favor of a unified composition.

d) An argument often adduced against such a position refers to *mutual dependence* of Jer and other biblical books. Holladay's work provides an example of this, as he assumes borrowing

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[62] Wilson, Exegesis, 13.

[63] Rainer Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 236–242, assumes three different deuteronomistic redactions for Jer, and still "spätdeuteronomistische" and "nachdeuteronomistische Ergänzungen" in the 5th and 4th –3rd centuries – on the background of van Toorn's observations this seems rather improbable. Konrad Schmid, *Buchgestalten*, 434–436, counts on a similar time span, for ten succeeding book concepts / stages of Jer. The thesis of a "rolling corpus," fostered by William McKane, *Jeremiah. Volume I*, l–lxxxiii, is mainly based on speculations and thus also remains dubious.

[64] Egypt's function is reversed, from a country out of which the Exodus took place, to a country into which an Exodus out of Israel occurs, despite divine warning (Jer 42–44). The final chapter for Egypt, Jer 46, signifies its end as an independent political power. – Babylon, on the other hand, is a mighty instrument in God's hand for his judgment, yet only for a limited time, and suffers at the end (Jer 50–51) a still greater setback than Egypt.

[65] Two examples for this literary device in Jer: God answers the request to be disciplined במשפט (Jer 10:24) in 30:11. The two imperatives of the prayer in Jer 14:21, to remember and not to break the covenant, find a positive response in 31:20 and in the New Covenant of 31:31–34.

[66] The first, chronologically anticipated scene in Jer 21:1–10 is a starter, giving a theological interpretation of what is going to happen, especially in verses 4–6 and 10. Jer 26–39 always concentrate more, with some deviations, on the final phase of the Babylonian siege and Jerusalem's fall in 587 BCE. Jer 52, finally, enhances the first account of Jerusalem's capture in Jer 39 by extending it and providing important supplementary information.

[67] Jer 45 and 51:59–64, as well as Jer 52 (with the exception of verses 31–34; however, these are not to be regarded as "words of Jeremiah", as the final remark in 51:64 shows), are situated prior in time. The oracles against the foreign nations in Jer 46–51 are poetic and not primarily dealing with what Israel did.

in both directions.[68] According to him, a first version of (parts of) Deut influenced Jer; a second stage consisted in the growth of the Jer tradition, which then, in turn, became the source for phrases in the final form of Deut. In my view, Deut as a whole was already extant when the writing of Jer was beginning, and similarly many other scrolls of the Hebrew Bible (see above A, 3); I cannot detect any hints of reciprocal influence with those books mentioned above. It is only with Zech, Psalms, Ezra, Chron, etc. that the direction of dependence changes.

The reasons and observations mentioned above suggest:

i) Jer is a very complex book, uneven, with chronological fractures and other tensions, yet at the same time intensively linked on various levels.[69]

ii) Because of these manifold ties, in genres, motifs, dynamic, etc., it seems nearly impossible to propose previous stages of Jer[70] without tearing apart connections and destroying the thematic development of the book.

The closer analysis of the cohesion of Jer and its intertextual connections thus confirms Carroll's conclusion that at the present time, with the means available to us, we are unable to detect how Jer originated. What we have and what we can investigate is Jer as an obviously well-considered composition, most probably from late Persian times,[71] and eventually by one single author. This does not exclude the possible existence of earlier materials used by him.

2.2 A question of method

a) Why were Carroll's publications perceived as a "razor approach"? His studies laid bare a fundamental division in biblical analyses, namely *where to start*. Whereas most colleagues in his time, and also before in historical critical exegesis,[72] concentrated on trying to find out 'original' words of the prophet Jeremiah and entered into dialogue mainly with others favoring the same approach, Carroll dared to present an entirely different approach to Jer. He focused his attention on the text and was sensitive in perceiving its details, nuances, varied stances and the ideologies behind it. The gain was that he arrived at new results and opened up new, more fruitful avenues to Jer research.

Certainly, it is neither necessary nor useful to start always from scratch; however, research may become risky and unproductive if it is built mainly on what others have said. Carroll's work is a reminder of a *basic option, to start with the text*, and not so much with theories, assumptions, or presuppositions. If exegesis wants to provide serious scholarship, it has to rely on data and arguments, more than on conjectures, guesses, hypotheses, speculations, or

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[68] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 53–63 (cf. also note 42 above).

[69] For further connecting devices throughout Jer, see Benedetta Rossi, *L'intercessione*, for the motif of intercession, and Barbara Green, *Jeremiah and God's Plans of Well-being*, for the overall movement of the book.

[70] All the theories about the origin and the literary growth of Jer suggested so far generate more problems and questions than they solve, as they create several previous textual corpora of an emerging book that are often less coherent than what we have now in Jer, and as they always remain hypothetical, without any proof, in contrast to the extant text.

[71] This is indicated by the many references to other biblical scrolls (see above 1.3). They do not allow positioning Jer earlier than the fourth century BCE.

[72] Examples in German speaking Jer scholarship are Bernhard Duhm and Wilhelm Rudolph.

positions of certain 'schools'. Serious interpretation must be self-critical, aware of its limitations, and open to engagement with alternative explanations, as a counterpoise.

b) "Who is the wise person that he can understand this?" (Jer 9:11)—this question may also be addressed to our community: *Who can fathom Jer?* What became visible above in the various levels of cohesion of Jer, and of its manifold and pervading intertextual connections evokes the impression of a highly condensed, extremely intricate texture where all elements have links in many directions, inside and outside the book, and where every single detail can only be explained in connection with the whole. That means that a knowledge of the entire book and its relationships is a *prerequisite* for its adequate understanding.

Jer is a kind of *meta-text*, reflecting on and interpreting earlier texts on a higher level.[73] I would like to illustrate this with three examples:

(i) Jer 1, the prophet's vocation, takes up Deut 18, God's promise to raise a prophet like Moses in the future.[74] Deut 18:18 announces: "I will put my words into his mouth." The only explicit fulfilment within the Hebrew Bible is Jer 1:9 where God, upon touching Jeremiah's mouth, declares: "Behold, I put my words into your mouth".[75] Without mentioning Moses here,[76] Jeremiah, right from the outset, is portrayed as *his divinely promised successor*, equal to him.

(ii) God's message in Jer 30:18 reads at the end: "… and the city will be built on its tell." Only one who is able to connect this announcement with Deut 13, the law for an apostate city, is able to grasp its full reach. Therein, the verdict on the city had been: "… it shall be a tell forever, and never be built up again" (Deut 13:17), hinting at Jerusalem's fate. The cluster עיר, בנה (niphal), תל forms an exclusive relationship between these two texts within the Hebrew Bible. Jer 30 may therefore be interpreted as a *revocation of God's judgment upon Judah's capital*, and as an *abrogation of his own law* in Deut 13.[77] Without the background of Deut 13, the full meaning of Jer 30:18-21 does not come to the fore.

(iii) In Jer 31:9 God substantiates his consolation with: "… because I will be a father for Israel, and Ephraim, he is my firstborn." This honouring by the use of the term "firstborn" goes back to Exod 4:22, there referring to Israel, and the origin of God's promise to be a father lies in 2 Sam 7:14, there for David's son and successor as king. Jer 31:9 combines both texts and applies, what had been a prerogative of the Davidic dynasty, to all the people. With these source texts in mind, Jer 31:9 can be rightly perceived as a *continuation of God's elective choice* of his people in Egypt and as a *transformation of his promise to David* which is now to be applied to those coming home from exile.[78]

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[73] In my commentary I described this phenomenon as "Wort³" (Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* [2005], 74–75), i.e. as a reflection on and exegesis of other texts ("Wort²") trying to communicate God's original word ("Wort¹"). Mark Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony*, 128, already noted "hypertextuality" as a characteristic of Jer.

[74] Within Deut, this promise builds upon Deut 5:23–33, as the introduction (18:16–17) explicitly refers thereto; for this see Dominik Markl, Moses Prophetenrolle, esp. 56–57 and 62.

[75] Renate Brandscheidt, Bestellt über Völker und Königreiche, at 30, interprets this in the sense that Deut 18 is "in Szene gesetzt und dramatisiert".

[76] Moses is only mentioned once within the book, in Jer 15:1.

[77] Eckart Otto, *Gottes Recht als Menschenrecht*, 76–78, building upon Fischer, *Das Trostbüchlein* (1993), 191–192, and 207–208. There is yet another link between those two chapters, as in Deut 13:14 evildoers "coming out from the midst" ruin the city, whereas in Jer 30:21 its good ruler in the future "comes out from the midst" of the community, indicating a second reversal of the law in Deut.

[78] Jer 31:8 and the initial phrases of verse 9 speak of those returning from there.

There are innumerable further instances of such links that require the knowledge of the corresponding texts for an appropriate understanding of Jer. As this technique is used throughout the book, interpreting Jer becomes a matter of *constantly solving riddles*, or putting puzzles together. It is only after having detected the manifold connections, within Jer and with other scrolls, on the 'micro-level' of expressions and phrases, that one can rightly combine on the 'medium level' the meaning of the single smaller units, or chapters, and finally, on the 'macro-level' of the whole book, come to fathom Jer. This is an unending enterprise.

c) Discussion on Jer research in the last century has largely been dominated by concepts like 'redaction,' 'literary strata,' 'additions,' 'Fortschreibung,' 'rolling corpus,' etc. Viewing the new avenues and observations adduced above, these no longer seem appropriate for describing what characterizes Jer. Exegetes today *need other, more fitting terms, schemes, and 'models'* to explain what is specific for Jer.

The subtitle of Louis Stulman's book uses the expression "symbolic tapestry."[79] Jer can indeed be perceived as a kind of *weaving*, where motifs (like Egypt, Babylon) and repetitions form threads, showing up in various places throughout the book. Given the tensions and fractures present in Jer, one might even in some instances talk of a 'patchwork,'[80] in the sense that several pieces have been arranged in a way that looks sometimes 'chaotic;'[81] however, upon closer investigation, an elaborate design behind the sometimes seemingly disparate elements becomes visible.

Earlier, in the 19th century, Friedrich Giesebrecht used the term '*mosaic*' to describe the literary technique he saw in Jer 30–31.[82] His finding is becoming confirmed for the entire book. Just as '*tesserae*' of the same color appear in various places of a mosaic, so several motifs[83] occur throughout Jer and allow lines of thought to be perceived in it. The many allusions and quotations from other scrolls, on the other hand, function like multi-coloured *tesserae*, giving Jer the texture of a huge, very refined, richly varied, multifaceted image. Another term we might use to help us grasp the peculiarity of Jer may be '*anthological*'. As Jer collects expressions from numerous other passages and scrolls and combines them, it resembles a bouquet of flowers, displaying a selection of beautiful and precious expressions and ideas, to a large extent taken also from other books. Jer thus, with respect to its intertextual connections, presents a kind of '*summary*' of previous scrolls, trying to give, with them as background, an interpretation of the events at the end of the monarchy in Judah. This fits well with the aspect of 'synthesis' that can often be observed within the book itself.[84]

2.3 The prophet and the history

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[79] Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*; cf. above (notes 19 and 29) his contribution to understanding the intertwining of prose and poetry, and the relationship of the first with the second half of Jer.
[80] Thus already Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 171, for the interpretation of Jer 4:27–28: "… the appearance of patchwork quilts."
[81] Stulman's book uses this term in its main title; see also the title of Robert P. Carroll's first main study on Jer: *From Chaos to Covenant* (see note 5).
[82] Friedrich Giesebrecht, *Das Buch Jeremia* (1894), 161: "Mosaikbild."
[83] E.g. the list of verbs with "to tear out … to build and to plant" (between Jer 1:10 and 45:4, with variations), or the triad of plagues "sword, hunger, pestilence" (15 times, starting with Jer 14:12).
[84] Fischer, *Jeremia. Der Stand* (2007), 113, with examples.

We have been discussing so far the book, Jer—can we know anything about *the prophet, Jeremiah*? 2 Kings is the biblical scroll that relates events of his time, yet it does not mention him. All the information about him comes from a book[85] that was obviously composed much later. Nobody can 'scientifically' demonstrate that a word in Jer stems from the prophet himself. This is not to say that no word in Jer may be regarded as coming from the prophet; I only insist that we cannot prove it, and suggest desisting from creating hypotheses we cannot verify in any way.

Interestingly, Jer departs quite substantially from the other prophetic scrolls in that it offers an *extended portrayal of the figure of the prophet*. There is some sporadic information about Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, … in their books, but compared to Jer this is very little. Jer even allows for constructing a kind of 'biography' of Jeremiah, with many details of his life.[86] There are long narrations about the prophet, describing events mainly from 605 BCE onwards till the fall of Jerusalem in 587. Jer also gives insight into the prophet's struggles with God and inside himself, thus creating the image of a true-to-life individual.[87]

How '*historical*' is this portrayal of Jeremiah? Nobody can prove today that what Jer tells us about the prophet is completely false and totally invented—the reality behind the descriptions given in the book cannot be checked. However, there are indications that some features of the prophet's portrayal in Jer might have been constructed. Jeremiah seems to resemble a summary of other important figures, incorporating features of Moses, Amos, the servant of Yhwh, etc.[88] Furthermore, the strong biographical focus—not seen in the other prophetical books—on the one figure of Jeremiah as the center of his book, could be a sign of a shift in literature, as it becomes visible in other biblical scrolls, like Ruth, Esther, Tobit, Judith, which also concentrate on individual figures and their lives.

If Jer originated in late Persian times, why did it choose to talk about a period *200 years earlier*, picking out a figure from then? And how does it connect with the finding that Jer belongs to "trauma"-literature?[89] An answer may lie in the comparison of Jer with the two other large prophetic books, Isa and Ezek.

In contrast to 2 Kings 17, which reflected on the impact and meaning of the fall of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom, 2 Kings 25 offers no interpretation of the significance of Jerusalem's destruction and Judah's loss of independence. *Isa*, although knowing about this important event, *does not relate it*, leaping from the late 8th century[90] in Isa 39 to the restoration after the exile in Isa 40, most probably referring to events in the last third of the 6th

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[85] As it seems, Jer is the oldest and only source of information about the prophet Jeremiah; all the other books dealing with Jeremiah appear to be dependent on Jer. This means that we have no other access to the prophet.
[86] For the most elaborate reconstruction of Jeremiah's life and the dates of his messages, see the appendices X and XI of Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 579–85, for a very short outline Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* (2005), 99.
[87] In narratological terms, a "round character," see Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us"*, 84.
[88] Jer 1:9 presents Jeremiah as the promised successor to Moses, and as equal to him. Jer 1:11–16 attributes visions to Jeremiah, in a similar vein to Amos (cf. Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3). The mention of "womb" and "for the nations" at Jeremiah's vocation in Jer 1:5 is the closest parallel to the second song of God's servant in Isa 49:1, 6. Jer talks of God's love like Hosea (e.g., in Jer 2–3, and 31), announces Jerusalem's destruction with words from Micah (Mic 3:12, quoted in Jer 26:18), and the prophet eats God's words comparably to Ezekiel (Jer 15:16; cf. Ezek 2:8–3:3).
[89] This insight was very much emphasized and developed by Kathleen O'Connor, *Jeremiah. Pain and Promise*.
[90] Isa 36–39 deal with King Hezekiah and his time; one focus is on King Sennacherib's threat to Jerusalem in 701 BCE.

century, and even later. Isa thus omits a crucial incident of Judah's history, and in this way procures a flattering image of Jerusalem in the past.

Ezek is quite different in this regard. It relates the destruction of Jerusalem *from afar*, and indirectly. God announces to the prophet that he will receive a message about it (Ezek 24:25–27), and this happens in Ezek 33:21–22, with a delay of approximately half a year.[91]

The profiles of these two other large prophetic books are the background for *Jer's specific contribution*. Jer mirrors a position that opposes the "rose-tinted spectacles" of Isa in viewing Judah's and Jerusalem's past, demanding an explicit involvement with its darkest era, the last decades of the monarchy and its downfall. With respect to Ezek and its 'distanced perspective,' Jer insists on a closer and more intense impression of this traumatic experience, in order to understand the reasons for the catastrophe and to learn from it for the future. From this viewpoint, a setting of Jer in the late 4th century BC may receive new significance, as a *confrontation among prophets* and their different orientations.[92] Isa projects an image of "inviolable Zion" in Isa 37–38, with a 'falsification' of the historical truth regarding the Assyrian threat in 701 BCE. Ezek channels the movement of the book towards the vastly elaborated description of the new temple in Ezek 40–48. Jer, to the contrary, expands the already disheartening report of the temple's burning and emptying still more,[93] and finishes the book thus on a gloomy note. The events around 600 BCE offered to Jer the opportunity to exemplify what the differences of the various 'prophetical' stances are, and to stress that it is dangerous and improper to pass over the brutal reality of this distant past and its implications. Jer focuses on Jerusalem's destruction, reflects on the reasons for it, tries to show how it could have been avoided, and transmits God's promise of new life for those who have gone through the consequences of his judgment.[94] Jer thus conveys a *specific theological message*, where hope is built upon a penetrating analysis of the biggest disaster described in the Hebrew Bible, and comes from the insight that God can and will turn around even such a seemingly desperate situation.[95] Maybe this is one reason why, in later writings, e.g. 2 Macc, Jer became connected with the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple.

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The new avenues alluded to in part 1. allowed us to gain *fresh insights* into debated issues of Jer research here in part 2. Despite more than a century of trying to understand how Jer originated with the methods of literary historical criticism, all suggestions made so far for a longer development and evolution of the book (2.1) remain problematic as they fail to explain the strong coherence of Jer on various levels.

This raises the question of the methodological approach (2.2); here, the image of an '*ideal reader*' for Jer emerged, as one well-versed in the entire book of Jer, and also in more than half of the Hebrew Bible, as its sources.

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91 Moshe Greenberg, *Ezechiel 21–37*, 375. Jerusalem's walls were breached in the fourth month, its larger houses and the temple burnt in the fifth month of the year in which the fugitive, obviously a captured Judean war prisoner, came to Ezekiel in Babylon in the tenth month.

92 With respect to Isa, see the article mentioned in note 46; for Ezek, Henk Leene has contributed a great deal (cf. note 47).

93 For the negative image of the temple in Jer, cf. Georg Fischer, Zur Relativierung des Tempels (2005).

94 This becomes particularly evident in the setting of Jer 24 and 29, both addressed to those exiled with King Jehoiachin, and in Jer 30–33, envisioning a future after the Babylonian destruction.

95 The phrase שׁוב שׁבות "to restore the fortunes" occurs eleven times in Jer, starting with Jer 29:14, outside only fifteen (or sixteen, if the two attestations in Ez 16:53 are counted separately) times within the Hebrew Bible. For the instances see Stipp, *Konkordanz*, 130.

Finally (2.3), the gap between the (late) composition of Jer, probably at the end of the Persian era, and the prophet Jeremiah at the time of the Babylonian occupation of Judah becomes meaningful when compared with the two other large prophetic books, Isa and Ezek. Jer has a *specific theological message*, of a God who conveys new life to those who have experienced the consequences of his judgment, looked at it, and acknowledged their share in it and their responsibility for it.