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How to Date the Book of Jeremiah: Combining and Modifying Linguistic- and Profile-based Approaches¹

Konrad Schmid (Zürich)

Abstract: It is impossible to deny the validity of a linguistic approach to dating biblical texts. But at the same time, it is necessary to caution against using a linguistic approach as a clear-cut tool. It should be employed in conjunction with other data and perspectives, such as theological profiles, intertextual links, as well as geographical and archaeological information. But what should one do if linguistic and alternative approaches to dating biblical texts yield seriously conflicting results, as is often the case? This question shall be discussed with some case studies from Jeremiah, doing so in discussion with Aaron Hornkohl's recent work on the date of the book Jeremiah.

Hebrew Bible studies are, among other issues, concerned with dating biblical texts. Anyone who is even slightly acquainted with the field is aware that nearly no critical consensuses exist regarding the dates of specific texts. Even the traditional cornerstones of biblical exegesis – the Josianic setting of the Deuteronomic code and the late Babylonian or early Persian Priestly document – remain contested as to their historical setting. Some scholars assign the core of Deuteronomy to the Babylonian

¹ This paper was delivered on February 3, 2016, as the 2016 Tyrwhitt Lecture at the University of Cambridge. My thanks go to Dr. Nathan Macdonald for being my host in Cambridge and to Phillip Lasater for his help in preparing this article for publication.

exile,² and in Israel and North America, it is quite common to date the Priestly document to the monarchic period.³

What we can say for sure is that the Hebrew Bible is a body of texts written in the 1st millennium BCE, though even this point is contested by some scholars who, for

² See e.g. R. G. Kratz, “Der literarische Ort des Deuteronomiums”, in idem and H. Spieckermann (eds.), *Liebe und Gebot. Studien zum Deuteronomium. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Lothar Perlitt (FRLANT 190; Göttingen, 2000)*, pp. 101–120; J. Pakkala, “The Date of the Oldest Edition of Deuteronomy”, *ZAW* 121 (2009), pp. 388–401. A critical response is provided by N. MacDonald, “Issues in the Dating of Deuteronomy: A Response to Juha Pakkala”, *ZAW* 122 (2010), pp. 431–435.

³ See J. Milgrom, “The Antiquity of the Priestly Source: A Reply to Joseph Blenkinsopp”, *ZAW* 111 (1999), pp. 10–22; A. Hurvitz, “Once Again: The Linguistic Profile of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch and its Historical Age: A Response to J. Blenkinsopp”, *ZAW* 112 (2000), pp. 180–191. I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence* (Minneapolis, 1995; repr. Winona Lake, 2007); J. Stackert, *A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* (New York, 2014), pp. 31–35. Differently, e.g., J. Blenkinsopp, “An Assessment of the Alleged Pre-Exilic Date of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch”, *ZAW* 108 (1996), pp. 495–518; B. A. Levine, *Numbers 1–20 (AB 4A; New York, 1993)*.

example, assign a late Bronze Age date to Deuteronomy because of its parallels with Hittite treaties.⁴

The main difficulty that hampers our effort to date biblical texts is the absence of empirical biblical texts from biblical times. For instance, there is no edition of Jeremiah dating to the 4th century BCE. But it goes without saying that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. We can safely assume that the book of Jeremiah is older than its earliest albeit fragmentary attestations among the Dead Sea Scrolls from the late 2nd century or early 1st century BCE.⁵

In addition, in Jeremiah there seems to be no theological reflection on the Maccabean crisis as we see in Daniel, so we may say the book of Jeremiah – even in its longer Masoretic version – was already finished in pre-Maccabean times, that is at least by the early 2nd century BCE.

What would be a reasonable *terminus a quo* for the texts in Jeremiah? Usually, scholars do not go beyond the late 7th century, the lifetime of the alleged historical prophet Jeremiah, though for some texts such as Jeremiah 30–31, an anonymous earlier provenance has been suggested,⁶ but unsuccessfully so.

⁴ See J. Berman, “Histories Twice Told. Deuteronomy 1–3 and the Hittite Treaty Prologue Tradition”, *JBL* 132 (2013), pp. 229–250; idem, “CTH 133 and the Hittite Provenance of Deuteronomy 13”, *JBL* 130 (2011), pp. 25–44.

⁵ See E. Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls (VT.S; Leiden, 2010)*, pp. 558–583.

⁶ E.g. S. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania, 1914), pp. 47, 65. For arguments by other scholars arguing in this vein, see K. Schmid, *Buchgestalten*

We are thus left with a lengthy time span of about 450 years – between the late 7th and the early 2nd century BCE. So when exactly was the book of Jeremiah written? Before proceeding, an elementary yet important aspect needs to be introduced here: “the” book of Jeremiah cannot be dated as a whole to a specific time or period, since only individual texts of the book are available for dating. The book apparently grew over time, as is evident, on the one hand, from the differences between the Masoretic and Greek versions for its last stages of textual growth. On the other hand, this gradual literary growth can be inferred from the book’s own testimony in Jer 36:32, which explicitly states that it includes many literary additions.

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| <p>וַיִּרְמֵהוּ לְקַח מִגִּלָּה אַחֶרֶת וַיִּתְּנֶהָ אֶל-בָּרוּךְ בֶּן-נְרִיָּה הַסֹּפֵר וַיִּכְתֹּב עָלֶיהָ מִפִּי יְרֵמְיָהוּ אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַסֹּפֵר אֲשֶׁר שָׁרַף יְהוֹיָקִים מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה בְּאֵשׁ וְעוֹד נוֹסְף עֲלֵיהֶם דְּבָרִים רַבִּים כְּהֵמָּה:</p> | <p>Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and it was added to them many similar words.</p> |
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The niph'al form נוֹסְף (“were added”) is conspicuous,⁷ since it does not explicitly identify Baruch or Jeremiah as the author of these additions, but is rather open towards positing anonymous expansions of the book, quite like current scholarship sees the formation of the book.

des Jeremiabuches: Untersuchungen zur Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Jer 30–33 im Kontext des Buches (WMANT 72; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1996), p. 187f.

⁷ The sg. is noteworthy. LXX has: καὶ ἔτι προσετέθησαν αὐτῷ λόγοι πλείονες ὡς οὗτοι.

But how can we date biblical texts without external evidence? The answer is simple and, at the same time, somewhat disappointing: We can date them only on the basis of internal evidence. Nevertheless, scholarship has developed useful tools that may be roughly divided into what may be called linguistic-based⁸ and profile-based approaches (the latter of which tries to date biblical texts according to their ideological or theological profile).⁹ The most striking observation regarding these two sets of methods is that they usually are not combined, which, to some extent, is understandable for reasons which will be addressed later on. But their separation is unhealthy for both linguistic and biblical studies.

⁸ See the recent overviews by D.-H. Kim, *Early Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew, and Linguistic Variability: A Sociolinguistic Evaluation of the Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (VTSup 156; Leiden, 2013); C. Miller-Naudé and Z. Zevit (eds.), *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8; Winona Lake, 2012); A. Hornkohl, “Biblical Hebrew: Periodization”, in G. Khan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden, 2014), 1:315–325; R. Rezetko and I. Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach* (SBL.ANEM 9; Atlanta, 2014).

⁹ For example, see the methodological overview of O. H. Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology* (2nd ed.; Atlanta, 1998), pp. 143–150; and the sketch by R. G. Kratz, *Historisches und biblisches Israel: Drei Überblicke zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen, 2013). For the English translation, see idem, *Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah* (Oxford, 2015).

1. The Great Divides Between Linguistic- and Profile-Based Approaches in Hebrew Bible Studies

Generally speaking, the ideal situation for assigning dates to biblical texts would be to employ different methodological approaches and for these approaches to suggest more or less the same date for a given text, with each method corroborating the other. But this ideal scenario is not the case. The discussion is impaired by many quarrels and points of division. Moreover, these divides and quarrels occur not only between the camps of the Hebraists and the biblicists, but also within each camp. Of course, among the early daters,¹⁰ there is some agreement across the divide of Hebraists and biblicists, with a corresponding yet inverted agreement among the late daters.¹¹ But this

¹⁰ See G. A. Rendsburg, “Pentateuch, Linguistic Layers in the”, in G. Khan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden, 2014), 2:60–63, here 63: “In sum, the main body of the Torah is written in Standard Biblical Hebrew, which represents the language of Judah during the monarchy (both early and late). A few chapters employ the technique known as style-switching, in order to create an Aramean environment. Some poems within the prose text reflect an older stratum of Hebrew and may hark back to a poetic epic tradition. And a few passages, especially those concerning the northern tribes, contain elements of Israelian Hebrew. Most importantly, there are no indications of Late Biblical Hebrew in the Pentateuch.”

¹¹ For example, see R. F. Person, “Linguistic Variation Emphasized, Linguistic variation denied”, in D. R. Edwards and T. C. McCollough (eds.), *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric*

observation needs no special explanation, because it is not difficult to agree with views that support one's own position.

To begin with the biblical scholars: Benjamin Sommer has recently denied altogether the possibility of dating texts on the basis of their ideological profile.¹² But he advocates linguistic dating as a viable method. Nevertheless, Sommer's position does not represent the mainstream among biblical scholars, the majority of whom would find such a statement reductionist, even simplistic. Many scholars still maintain, and rightly so, the overall possibility of dating texts based on their congruency with specific developments in the intellectual history of ancient Israel which—to be sure—is nowadays based not only on reconstructions from the Bible itself, but also on external evidence from archeology and epigraphy.¹³

M. Meyers (Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 60/61; Boston, 2007), pp. 119–125.

¹² B. D. Sommer, "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism", in T. B. Dozeman *et al.* (eds.), *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research (FAT 78; Tübingen, 2011)*, pp. 85–108, 85: "Scholars in our field frequently support a speculative dating of a text by asserting that, since the text's ideas match a particular time period especially well, the text was most likely composed then. [...] According to this approach, a scholar ascertains the themes of a passage, then thinks about when that theme would be relevant, crucial, or meaningful to ancient Israelites, then dates the text to that time-period. It should be immediately clear that this method of dating holds no validity whatsoever."

¹³ See K. Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (Minneapolis, 2012).

In addition, a well-accepted methodological principle for a historical and critical approach to the Bible was formulated some 100 years ago by Ernst Troeltsch, one of the champions of 19th and early 20th century historical scholarship.¹⁴ In his seminal article “Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,” (1900) Troeltsch claimed that three methodological steps are required for assessing biblical texts historically. In his language, the steps are “critique,” “analogy,” and “correlation.” And broadly speaking, this is indeed how biblical scholarship operates: It evaluates biblical texts critically, tries to find analogies to them, and seeks to correlate these findings with each other. The results of such work are neither arbitrary nor meaningless.

Still, Sommer’s *innuendo* indeed identifies a critical point about biblical scholarship, and it must be admitted that especially German-speaking scholars have on occasion been too confident in the dates assigned to specific text portions of the Bible. At any rate, the field seems to be completely open. Regarding the book of Jeremiah, for instance, we see in current scholarship a very large array of positions regarding its dating: For example, in William Holladay’s *Hermeneia* commentary, the author ascribed the vast majority of texts to the historical prophet Jeremiah himself.¹⁵ On the other end of the spectrum, Georg Fischer’s massive two volume commentary in the

¹⁴ E. Troeltsch, “Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie”, in idem (ed.), *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik: Gesammelte Schriften* (Vol. 2; Tübingen, 1913), pp. 728–753. DOI: <http://faculty.tcu.edu/grant/hhit/>.

¹⁵ W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (2 vols.; *Hermeneia*; Minneapolis, 1986; 1989).

Herders Theologische Kommentar series holds Jeremiah to be a pseudepigraphic book stemming from one author who was active in the 4th century BCE.¹⁶

The situation among the Hebraists is not terribly different.¹⁷ Today's mainstream Hebraists dealing with the Hebrew Bible are in general concordance with linguists from Jerusalem, especially Avi Hurvitz and his students. This approach provides the main framework for the entries on Biblical Hebrew in Brill's *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, edited by Geoffrey Khan. The scholars in this tradition argue for a basic differentiation between Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), allowing for an intermediary stage called Transitional Biblical Hebrew (TBH) and basically assigning CBH to the First Temple Period and LBH to the Second Temple Period. The basic tenets of this approach were already formulated as early as 1815 by Wilhelm Gesenius.¹⁸ Samuel Rolles Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of*

¹⁶ G. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25; Jeremia 26–52* (2 vol.; *Herders Theologischer Kommentar*; Freiburg et al., 2005)

¹⁷ And apt overview is provided by S. Gesundheit, "Introduction – The Strengths and Weaknesses of Linguistic Dating" in: J. Gertz et al. (eds.), *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures Between Europe, Israel, and North America* (FAT 111; Tübingen, 2016), pp. 295–302. Gesundheit identifies a certain asymmetry in Hurvitz' approach: "It is difficult to escape the impression that we are dealing here with a philosophy according to which all biblical texts are *early until proven late*."

¹⁸ W. Gesenius, *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift: Eine philologisch-historische Einleitung in die Sprachlehren und Wörterbücher der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1815).

the Old Testament from 1891 collected many additional supporting observations.¹⁹ In 1909, Arno Kropat and Rebecca Corwin entertained a similar approach for comparing Chronicles with Samuel-Kings, coming to comparable results from different angles.²⁰ But as Jan Joosten rightly notes:

„[T]he study of the Hebrew language in diachronic perspective was never geared primarily towards the dating of texts. Scholars were content to observe that books widely considered to be of pre-exilic origin (such as in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets) exhibited a different form of Hebrew – estimated to be purer and more elegant – than did books of postexilic date such as Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles or Esther. When epigraphic texts from the monarchic period, such as the Siloam inscription came to light, scholars felt vindicated in associating the ‘classical’ Hebrew of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets with the pre-exilic period. But this was not considered a polemical or controversial inference.”²¹

¹⁹ S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1891).

²⁰ See A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik* (Giessen, 1909); R. Corwin, *The Verb and the Sentence in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah* (Borna, 1909).

²¹ J. Joosten, “Review of Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, with the assistance of Martin Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts. An Introduction to Approaches and Problems*, 2 vols., Equinox, London–Oakville, 2009”, in L. Kagan (ed.), *Babel und Bibel 6: Annual of Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, and Semitic Studies* (Winona Lake,

The current controversy basically arose in the last decades of the 20th century when many seemingly well-established scholarly consensus on the date of biblical writings broke down and, especially in German-speaking and Scandinavian scholarship, it became common to date traditional pieces of biblical literature late or even very late.²² These biblical scholars usually did not care about the evolution of the Hebrew language. They saw Biblical Hebrew as a *Bildungssprache* that was not subject to significant changes, if any at all. Of course, the late Hebrew of texts such as Qohelet was often described and taken into account, but Qohelet was considered a late text and a theological outsider anyway. Therefore, these observations had no significant impact.

Of course, there are some dissenters to this mainstream approach of Avi Hurvitz and others. The antipathy of the mainstream against the dissenters is so pronounced that Hurvitz in his new book²³ does not even dignify his opponents by mentioning their name. Yet it is clear who they are: Hurvitz is targeting scholars such as Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensverd, the authors of the two-volume work *Linguistic*

2012), pp. 536–542. DOI: www.premiumorange.com/theologie.protestante/enseignants/joosten/rc_Joosten.pdf.

²² For example, see C. Levin, *Das Alte Testament* (4th ed.; Munich, 2010). For the English translation, see idem, *The Old Testament: A Brief Introduction* (Princeton, 2005); N. P. Lemche, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?”, *SJOT* 7 (1993), pp. 163–193; repr. in L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period* (JSOTSup 317; Sheffield, 2001), pp. 287–318.

²³ A. Hurvitz, *A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Innovations in the Writings of the Second Temple Period* (VT.S 160; Leiden, 2014).

Dating of Biblical Texts (2008).²⁴ They contest the validity of distinguishing CBH and LBH and consider the respective variations as stylistic, and thus basically irrelevant for historical evaluations.

It might be the case that the positions at both ends of the spectrum are overdoing their case. On the one hand, it seems unwarranted and even impossible that all CBH texts would date to the time before the 6th century BCE.²⁵ On the other hand, in terms of historical linguistics, it seems to be inconclusive to deny the basic validity of distinguishing between CBH and LBH.

Precisely these two points are in dire need of being corrected among biblicalists and Hebraists. Correcting the first point – namely, that CBH is not possible after the

²⁴ See I. Young and R. Rezetko, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts, Volume 1: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems* (London, 2008); I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts, Volume 2: A Survey of Scholarship, a New Synthesis and a Comprehensive Bibliography* (London, 2008). See for Jeremiah R. Rezetko, “The (Dis)Connection between Textual and Linguistic Developments in the Book of Jeremiah”, in R. Person / Rezetko (eds.), *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism* (SBL.AIL 25; Atlanta, 2016), pp. 239–270.

²⁵ Different social and geographical locations have to be taken into account as well for the question of a possible persistence of CBH also in later times. For instance, CBH might have been preserved better outside the land in diaspora locations among elitist groups than in the land of Israel itself among a population with increasing abilities to read and write, see W. Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins Through the Rabbinic Period* (New Haven, 2013).

exile – mainly addresses the Hebraists. Correcting the second point – that any distinction between CBH and LBH is historically negligible – mainly addresses the biblicists.

It does not seem to be impossible to define some common ground in that respect, especially for the first point. In fact, many linguists or linguistically trained biblicists today allow for some flexibility regarding the extension of CBH into the 6th century BCE and of TBH into the Persian Period in order to secure results in dating biblical texts that do not immediately conflict with redaction-critical studies. The following three arguments explain why this is justified.

Firstly, there is a significant gap in the external, non-biblical corpora for Hebrew from the 6th to 2nd centuries BCE:²⁶ There are many inscriptions from that period, but they are in Aramaic, not in Hebrew. Therefore, we are not able to define a clear *terminus ante quem* for CBH on the basis of external evidence. This *terminus ante quem* for CBH *could* be in the 6th century, but it could also be later.

Secondly, there is a basic asymmetry between the methods used by traditional linguists to date CBH texts on the one hand and LBH texts on the other. According to such linguists, biblical texts written in CBH belong to the timeframe of the 8th to 6th

²⁶ For the sake of methodological clarity, one must set aside at this point the biblical writings that are usually assigned to the 5th and/or 4th century constituting the LBH corpus (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel and Esther), as it is precisely their dating that is in question. One cannot date them according to their biblical self-presentations to the era of their narrative scenery and at the same time use their linguistic peculiarities as methodological basis for identifying other LBH texts that then are assigned to that era as well. This would be a circular argument.

centuries because the external evidence dates to that period. The external evidence for LBH is mainly found in the texts from the Dead Sea from the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, but the biblical texts and books written in LBH, like Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel and Esther, are dated by linguists much earlier because they are, at least in part and for a variety of reasons, obviously older than the 2nd or 1st century. Therefore, the arguments regarding LBH show at minimum that a multitude of arguments need to be considered when dating biblical texts, and what seems fair for LBH should also be accepted for CBH.

A third argument by Hebraists for an early (i.e., preexilic) dating of CBH texts is the idea that it should be impossible to reproduce real CBH in later times without slip-ups. The problem with this argument is a very fundamental methodological one: It is *a priori* and therefore not falsifiable.²⁷ With this reasoning, if a biblical text is written in clear and flawless CBH, then it is by definition preexilic because otherwise it would not be in correct CBH. In such an argument, the possibility of a late text in correct CBH is excluded as impossible from the outset. Determining CBH as copy-safe is therefore begging the question. Of course, languages evolve over time, but in a learned elite idiom like CBH, a certain degree of inertness is likely as well.

Taken together, it is reasonable to maintain, against Young, Rezetko and others, that one cannot deny the validity of a linguistic approach to dating biblical texts. But at the same time, it is necessary to caution against using a linguistic approach as a clear-

²⁷ See in more detail E. Blum, “The Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts – An Approach with Methodological Limitations”, in: J. Gertz et al. (eds.), *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures Between Europe, Israel, and North America* (FAT 111; Tübingen, 2016), pp. 303–326, especially p. 312.

cut tool. It should be employed in conjunction with other data and perspectives, such as theological profiles, intertextual links, as well as geographical and archaeological information.²⁸

The general problem is that there is either only a very selective or, more often, insufficient interaction between Hebraists and biblical scholars and that different, even conflicting, methods and results about how to date biblical texts end up somewhat isolated from each other.

But what should one do if linguistic and alternative approaches to dating biblical texts yield seriously conflicting results, as is so often the case? This question shall be discussed with some case studies from Jeremiah, doing so in discussion with Aaron Hornkohl's seminal study on Jeremiah.²⁹

2. Are There Hellenistic Texts in the Book of Jeremiah?

Are there any portions in the book of Jeremiah that can be dated to the Hellenistic period, i.e. the 3rd century? Based on Hornkohl's linguistic inquiries, he is quite adamant that this is not the case:

“Overall the language of Jeremiah shows much greater affinity to CBH than to LBH and the characteristically late linguistic elements that do appear here and there in the

²⁸ See Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis*, pp. 143–150.

²⁹ A. Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization and the Language of the Book of Jeremiah: The Case for a Sixth-Century Date of Composition* (SLL 74; Leiden, 2014), p. 366.

book constitute a distinct minority relative to its size. Furthermore, these tend to be distributed throughout the book, rather than being confined to a single literary stratum.”³⁰

Regarding the pluses in the Hebrew text over against the shorter *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, Hornkohl holds:

“These longer additions account for well over half of the total supplementary material. Again, on the assumption that this material postdates the Restoration period, there is no basis for the claim that it should not exhibit the sort of accumulation of late linguistic features typical of every other composition securely datable on non-linguistic grounds to this period and beyond. The fact that it does not bear such a linguistic profile is persuasive evidence that the supplementary material is, in point of fact, not a late post-exilic composition, but, like the rest of Jeremiah, a product of the transitional period.”³¹

Or, in other words:

“However, based on a comparison with the rest of Jeremiah and the core LBH books, the composition of the supplementary material found in the MT and unparalleled in the Greek is to be dated not to the post-Restoration period with LBH proper, but, like the rest of Jeremiah, to the transitional period. In other words, the short edition of Jeremiah

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 369.

and the supplementary material both appear to be products of the transitional phase between the classical and post-classical periods.”³²

In order to assess this argument’s validity, an important sample text in the book of Jeremiah that Hornkohl addresses in detail shall be discussed: Jer 33:14–26.³³ This passage contains the longest addition to the shorter Greek text of Jeremiah, consisting of no less than 185 words in the Hebrew version of the book of Jeremiah. Already the fact that this passage is missing from the Greek makes it very likely that Jer 33:14–26 entered into the Hebrew text either slightly before or slightly after the Greek translation

³² Ibid., p. 372.

³³ See C. Karrer-Grube, “Von der Rezeption zur Redaktion: Eine intertextuelle Analyse von Jeremia 33,14-26”, in eadem *et al.* (eds.), *Sprachen – Bilder – Klänge: Dimensionen der Theologie im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld. Festschrift für Rüdiger Bartelmus zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (AOAT 359; Münster, 2009), pp. 105–121; P. Piovanelli, “JrB 33,14–26, ou la continuité des institutions à l’époque maccabéenne”, in A. Curtis and T. Römer (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah and its Reception. Le livre de Jérémie et sa réception* (BETL 128; Peeters, 1997), pp. 255–276; A. van der Kooij, “Zum Verhältnis von Textkritik und Literarkritik: Überlegungen anhand einiger Beispiele”, in J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume Cambridge 1995* (VT.S 66; Leiden, 1997), pp. 185–202; J. Lust, “The diverse text forms of Jeremiah and history writing with Jer 33 as a Test Case”, *JNSL* 20 (1994), pp. 31–48; Y. Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté au retour de l’exil: Les origines littéraires de la forme massorétique du livre de Jérémie* (OBO 118; Fribourg, 1992).

was completed. The Hebrew *Vorlage* of the shorter Greek text of Jeremiah is earlier than the Greek translation, but, in my opinion, it does not predate the Hellenistic period, since it also includes very late additions and supplements, such as the notion of a worldwide cosmic judgment in Jer 25:27–31 that expands and integrates this same chapter’s earlier prophecies of doom against Jerusalem, Judah, Babylon, and the nations.³⁴ Nevertheless, scholars like Emanuel Tov³⁵ and others have tried to secure a much earlier date for Jer 33:14–16 by assuming that it was transmitted for several centuries on a separate leaflet and only found its way into the book after being translated into Greek. The argument had to do mainly with its thematic proximity to other texts in Jeremiah, especially Jer 23:5–6. If Jer 23:5–6 is Jeremianic, then, according to this argument, Jer 33:14–16 needs to be as well.

However, the leaflet hypothesis is a complicated assumption largely motivated by its capacity to save the piece for Jeremiah himself or at least his time. Ironically, this proposal is untenable precisely because of the inner-Jeremianic affiliations of Jer 33:14–

³⁴ See K. Schmid, “Das kosmische Weltgericht in den Prophetenbüchern und seine historischen Kontexte,” in: Hanna Jenni et al. (eds.), *Nächstenliebe und Gottesfurcht. Beiträge aus alttestamentlicher, semitistischer und altorientalischer Wissenschaft für Hans-Peter Mathys zum 65. Geburtstag* (AOAT 439, Münster: Ugarit, 2016), pp. 409–434.

³⁵ In Tov’s *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis, 2012), he considers 33:14–26 as late, but not “as late as the end of the 3rd or the beginning of the 2nd century BCE” (here p. 288 n. 12). Rather, for “several centuries, the two editions co-existed in ancient Israel.” Unfortunately, he gives no arguments for this claim.

26 that Tov and others have observed and that will be discussed below: This passage has not been written for a leaflet, but as a re-interpretive piece for the book of Jeremiah and, therefore, it cannot have existed separately. Jeremiah 33:14–16 reinterprets Jer 23:5–6, and the subsequent verses contain additional extensive textual borrowings. For the sake of this paper, only the first three verses 33:14–16 shall be considered:³⁶

Jer 23:5–6

The days are surely coming, says YHWH,

when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

(6) In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “YHWH is our righteousness.”

Jer 33:14–16

The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

(15) In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

(16) In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which she will be called: “YHWH is our righteousness.”

At first glance, Jer 33:14–16 may seem like a repetition of Jer 23:5–6, and in fact the two texts overlap over long stretches. But despite its affinity with 23:5–6, 33:14–16 has a very specific theological intention that becomes quite clear from the addition,

³⁶ See in more detail K. Schmid, “Die Verheißung eines kommenden Davididen und die Heimkehr der Diapsora. Die innerbiblische Aktualisierung von Jer 23,5f in Jer 33,14–26,” in: idem, *Schriftgelehrte Traditionsliteratur: Fallstudien zur innerbiblischen Schriftauslegung im Alten Testament (FAT 77; Tübingen, 2011)*, pp. 207–221.

“when I will fulfill the promise (הדבר הטוב) I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah” in 33:14. In 23:5 the days that are surely coming pertain to the raising up of a righteous branch for David. In 33:14 they concern the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel and Judah. *Only once this promise is fulfilled*, will the righteous branch for David then arise.

What is the promise mentioned in 33:14? The wording הדבר הטוב points back to Jer 29:10 – namely, the only other instance in the book of Jeremiah where the phrase a “good word” (denoting a promise) is used – and here this “good word / promise” (דברי הטוב) is made explicit: “For thus says YHWH: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise [LXX: my words] *and bring you back to this place.*”

This reference from Jer 33:14–16 back to Jer 29:10 is plausible not only because of the statistics of shared vocabulary like the twice occurring expression הדבר הטוב in the book of Jeremiah. There is also another remarkable feature in the relationship between Jer 33:14–16 and 29:10 that can be recognized when returning to the Greek translation, which has already proven important for interpreting Jer 33:14–26 – a text that, it bears repeating, is completely missing in the LXX.

In Jer 29:10, there is indeed an interesting observation when one looks at the Septuagint version of this verse. The end of the verse contains a minor difference, where the LXX translates “to bring your people back” instead of “to bring you back.” This is a very understandable update because after seventy years, it is no longer “you” who are able to be brought back, but the descendants of the addresses. But given the nature of this alteration as an obvious correction, the Greek rendering here is in all probability secondary to the Hebrew. More important for our purpose is

the first difference in the verse: In the place of **והקמתי עליכם את־דברי הטוב**, LXX has **καὶ ἐπιστήσω τοὺς λόγους μου ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς**. This point suggests, firstly, that LXX did not have the adjective **הטוב** in its *Vorlage* and, secondly, that it interpreted **דברי** (*d^ebari*) as a plural form (*d^ebarai*).

What do these points entail for our interpretation of Jer 33:14–16? If Jer 33:14 is a text which is only attested in the Hebrew version of the book of Jeremiah, then it is important that it presupposes an inner-biblical link to another text in the book of Jeremiah – namely, Jer 29:10, which, as a link, only works in the Hebrew version of the book. Therefore, one may conclude that the minimal changes in 29:10 (especially the change from **הטוב** to **דברי הטוב**) belong to the same hand that composed 33:14–16. Both interventions apparently took place at a time when the book had already been translated into Greek (or slightly beforehand). At any rate, they are not attested in the Greek book of Jeremiah.

Seen together, then, Jer 33:14–16 reinterprets Jer 23:5–6 in combination with Jer 29:10 in order to highlight the point that the coming of the messiah presupposes the return from the diaspora. The promised branch for David will only come later, at a time when Israel lives united in its land.

Another interpretive element in Jer 33:14–16 is the fact that the messiah is not conceived as a person. Instead—apparently adopting motifs from Isaiah 60–61—Zion itself is assigned messianic dignity. The future title “YHWH is our righteousness” is assigned in Jer 33:16 to a feminine entity. The reference is clearly to the city of Jerusalem, which is named immediately before and conceived of as a woman. It is quite likely that Jer 33:16 draws on texts like Isaiah 60–61, the closest parallels in the Hebrew Bible for a messianic notion of Jerusalem.

In sum, Jer 33:14–26 is best explained as a revision of Jer 23:5–6, which was probably a 6th century prophecy that apparently went unfulfilled for a very long time. The post-exilic editors of the Jeremiah tradition added Jer 33:14–26 in order to provide an explanation for this delay. Their answer was that the promise of a branch for David is still valid, but first, the diaspora needs to return to the land.

Already the specific textual evidence suggests a Hellenistic date for Jer 33:14–26 which rests upon a broad scholarly consensus. Furthermore, the specific theological profile of how the Messiah is understood – as coming only after the return of the diaspora and as sharing duties and honors with the city of Jerusalem – supports this dating. At minimum, it is compatible with this dating: Jer 33:14–26 is the scribal result of the experience of a so-called eschatological delay. The promises of Jeremiah 23 and 29 seem to have been read for centuries, raising the questions of why the Davidic kingdom was not yet restored and why the diaspora had not ended. Jeremiah 33 offers a theological explanation for the delay by combining the two perspectives.

What about the linguistic shape of Jer 33:14–26? Hornkohl discusses the passage quite intensely:

“It [sc. Jer 33:14–26] exhibits an impressive array of late linguistic features, some uncharacteristic of the book as a whole, which hint at a later provenance than the rest of the book, including a striking accumulation of *plene* spellings in תשכון ‘you/she will dwell’ (v. 16; §3.1.2), ‘לאמור saying’ (v. 19; also in the short edition at 18.15; §3.1.3), and ‘יעקוב Jacob’ (v. 26; also in the short edition at 30.18; 46.27; 51.19; §3.1.1); the interchange of אָל and עַל (vv. 14, 26 [?]; §7.5); nominal ‘יוֹמָם day’ (vv. 20, 25; §8.5); as well as the non-standard spelling ‘ישחק Isaac’ (v. 26; §3.7) and the unusual syntagm

period. Yet Joosten's argumentation is not entirely convincing, and this for a few reasons. First, as Joosten readily admits (104), not all of the features he identifies as characteristically late have the same diagnostic value. In the present study, only five of the eight features he discusses [...] are considered characteristically late features; the other three [...] are excluded for lack of sufficient evidence that they are indeed characteristically late features. Second, on more than one occasion a feature that Joosten defines as distinctively characteristic of the supplementary material in Jeremiah also arguably occurs in the short version (nominal לְ-יִזְמֶה; with verbs of movement; and possibly the term חֲרִים in reference to the nobles of Judah). Finally, and most importantly, Joosten's study is not comprehensive, concentrating (understandably) on late features especially characteristic of the supplementary material without, however, paying sufficient attention to late features that occur throughout the entire book, i.e., in both layers, or that are found exclusively in the short edition. To be sure, Joosten is not unaware of the relatively late linguistic profile of the book of Jeremiah in general [...]; due to the brevity of his study, though, the comparison between the respective linguistic profiles of the supplementary material and the rest of the book is (of necessity) highly selective, omitting a great deal of relevant data. For these reasons, although Joosten provides highly useful information, his conclusions must be considered tentative and preliminary."³⁹

This is a classic dilemma. A dilemma is defined as a problem offering two possibilities, neither of which is unambiguously acceptable or preferable. On the one

³⁹ Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization*, p. 358 n. 8.

hand, we have the proposal to date Jer 33:14–26 to the Hellenistic period, based on arguments regarding its textual transmission and theological profile. On the other hand, the linguistic evidence, at least in Hornkohl’s evaluation, speaks against such an assumption, since the Hebrew of Jer 33:14–26 still qualifies as transitional, and not simply as late. The linguistic findings are thus not unambiguously in favor of a very late date, but textual and conceptual arguments are.

In this situation three points are sufficiently clear:

First, both proposals of dating cannot possibly be true. Jeremiah 33:14–26 cannot be both Hellenistic and late Babylonian or early Persian.

Second, there is no way to prove *more geometrico* who is right and who is wrong – if, this possibility cannot be ruled out from the outset, anyone here is at all right.

Third, as a consequence, we have to weigh the arguments. The text-critical and profile-based approach for a Hellenistic date has to see whether the date of Jer 33:14–26 can be pushed earlier by some means. By the same token, the linguistic approach needs to consider whether identifying TBH instead of LBH really excludes a date in what Hornkohl calls the post-restoration period.

3. Different Theological Profiles in the Book of Jeremiah

The approach of identifying different theological profiles also applies to the shared texts among the Hebrew and Greek versions of the book of Jeremiah, i.e. also its short version which shall be discussed by means of another example. It pertains to the motive of the “evil” that is coming upon Judah. This motive is quite prominent in the

book of Jeremiah. What is ambiguous, though, is the source of the “evil.” Three short texts, Jer 4:5f; 6:1; and 1:13–14, shall illustrate this.

In Jer 4:5–6, already Duhm observed a remarkable feature which he discussed in his commentary:⁴⁰ The clause כִּי רָעָה אָנֹכִי מִבְּיָא מִצָּפוֹן וְשָׁבֵר גָּדוֹל in 4:6b is not an integral part of the passage, since otherwise in 4:5–7 the prophet rather than God is the speaker. In addition, the wording of this expression in 4:6b is somewhat topical and more prose than poetry. The most probable conclusion is that 4:6b is an addition. If this is true, then one can observe how a basic text in Jer 4:5–7 has been augmented by a theological interpretation: It is not just a foreign power coming from the north and threatening Jerusalem, but *God himself* who leads this nation against Zion.

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| <p>וְאָמְרוּ תִקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּאַרְצֵי קְרָאוּ מִלְאוּ וְאָמְרוּ הֶאֱסָפוּ וְנִבְאוּ אֶל-עָרֵי הַמְּבֻצָּרִים: שָׂאוּ-גִס צִיּוֹן⁶ הֲעִיזוּ אֶל-תַּעֲמִדוֹ כִּי רָעָה אָנֹכִי מִבְּיָא מִצָּפוֹן וְשָׁבֵר גָּדוֹל: עָלָה אַרְיֵה מִסִּבְכוֹ⁷ וּמִשְׁחִית גּוֹיִם נָסַע יָצָא מִמְּקוֹמוֹ לְשׂוּם אֶרֶצְךָ לְשָׁמָּה עָרֶיךָ תִּצְיָנָה מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב:</p> | <p>Jer 4:5 And say: Blow the trumpet through the land; shout aloud and say, “Gather together, and let us go into the fortified cities!” 4:6 Raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, do not delay, <i>for I am bringing evil from the north, and a great destruction.</i> 4:7 A lion has gone up from its thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out; he has gone out from his place to make your land a waste; your cities will be ruins without inhabitant.</p> |
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⁴⁰ B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHC 11; Tübingen, 1901), p. 48.

By happy coincidence, we are in the position to trace back the redactional genesis and logic of 4:6b one step further, because the specific wording of 4:6b seems to adapt a slightly older formulation found in 6:1:

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| הָעֲזוּ בְנֵי בִנְיָמִן מִקֶּרֶב יְרוּשָׁלַם וּבְתִקְוֵל תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר וְעַל־בֵּית הַכְּרָם שָׂאוּ מִשְׁאֵת כִּי רָעָה נִשְׁקָפָה מִצָּפוֹן וְשָׂבַר גָּדוֹל: | Jer 6:1 Flee for safety, children of Benjamin, from the midst of Jerusalem! Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and raise a signal on Beth-haccherem; for <i>evil</i> looms out <i>from the north</i> , and great destruction. |
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In Jer 6:1, “evil from the north” (רָעָה מִצָּפוֹן) and “great destruction” (וְשָׂבַר גָּדוֹל) are perceived as autonomous forces, whereas in Jer 4:6b they are clearly connected to God as their origin: God brings the evil upon Judah and Jerusalem. The insertion of Jer 4:6b takes up Jer 6:1, but interprets it in a theologically explicit manner.

The third text to be mentioned here, Jer 1:13–14, seems to combine these two perspectives of the “evil” as an autonomous force or as resulting from an “act of God” in the vision and interpretation of the boiling pot:

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| וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי שְׁנִית לֵאמֹר מַה אַתָּה רֹאֶה וָאֵמַר סִיר נֹפוֹת אֶנֶּה רֹאֶה וַפָּנָיו מִפָּנַי צָפוֹנָה: ¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי מִצָּפוֹן תִּפְתַּח הַרְעָה עַל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ: | Jer 1:13 The word of YHWH came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.” ¹⁴ And YHWH said to me: Out of the north the evil shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land/world. |
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Here, the evil is symbolized as a “boiling pot,” which stresses its autonomous character, but the image is closely related to God, since he is the one to explain its meaning. Nevertheless, the interpretation in Jer 1:14b avoids using God as an explicit subject of the sentence. Jeremiah 1:13–14 thus brings God and “evil” closely together, but seems to show some awareness that this connection was achieved only subsequently through different interpretive stages. Especially noteworthy is the article of הַרְעָה in Jer 1:14: the term רָעָה occurs in that verse for the first time in the book. Apparently, הַרְעָה is a cataphoric determination anticipating the latter instances where רָעָה is mentioned in the book.⁴¹

To sum up, we have quite a conclusive chain of redactional development: Jer 6:1 is older than Jer 4:5–6, and both texts seem to be older than Jer 1:13–14. Can this position be corroborated by linguistic observations? Of course, we are on very thin ice here due to the shortness of the texts and the many verbal connections between them (due to their close thematic proximity). Nevertheless, if one compares Jer 4:6 (כִּי רָעָה) to Jer 1:13 (סִיר נִפְוִיחַ אֶנֶּה רֹאֶה וּפְגִיּוֹ מִפְּגִי צְפוּנָה), there are at least two linguistic features that suggest Jer 1:13 is later than Jer 4:6 (אֶנֶּה versus אֶנְכִּי and צְפוּנָה versus מִצְפוּן). In addition, the specific wording of Jer 6:1 כִּי רָעָה נִשְׁקָפָה מִצְפוּן also uses a verb (שָׁקַף) that is characteristic for CBH (the only instance in the traditional LBH corpus is 1 Chr 15:29, but this verse is a quote from 2Sam 6:16: Michal looks out of the window and sees David dancing: (וּמִכַּל בַּת־שָׂאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחַלּוֹן).

⁴¹ In Jer 1:16, the judgement against Judah and Jerusalem is announced “because of all their evil [deeds]” (עַל כָּל־רָעוּתָם).

Hence, in the cases of Jeremiah 6; Jeremiah 4; and Jeremiah 1, there is some convergence between profile-based and linguistic observations. Again, a great deal of assessment is necessary for reaching conclusions on the dates of these texts, but to a certain extent, the approaches seem to be mutually supportive.

4. Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from these observations and considerations? The following points might serve as starting points for future discussions: Firstly, linguistic dating of biblical text is a very important field. It is to the disadvantage of historically oriented biblical studies that they have not interacted more thoroughly with linguistic tools. Secondly, CBH and LBH including TBH as an intermediary stage are basic distinctions that are very helpful for a diachronic interpretation of biblical Hebrew. Thirdly, there is not much controversy about an early dating for LBH texts: No one wants to do that. But there is much dispute about how late we can possibly date CBH texts. Is 500 BCE a reasonable or even warranted *terminus ad quem*? Some more flexibility is needed here. Fourthly, it seems that a linear approach is mistaken suggesting that the more LBH elements in a text, the later the date. Many other factors, especially genre, scribal character, etc., need to be taken into account. Thus a text like Jer 33:14–26 with some, but not an abundance of, late linguistic features should not necessarily be dated to the 6th century, if other strong observations suggest a considerable later date. Fifthly, different ideologies in biblical texts may in some instances allow a reconstruction of their textual growth. And in some cases, these reconstructions can be supported by linguistic observations such as in the sequence of

Jeremiah 6 – Jeremiah 4 – and Jeremiah 1. Sixthly, academic cultures and habits do not change overnight. But the competition between linguistic and exegetical approaches to the Bible with regard to dating biblical texts still has the chance to yield very promising and interesting results. It need not be just a battlefield.