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Fischer, Georg

Jeremiah: Septuagint

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Jeremiah Septuagint
(section 7.3 in *THB* 1B)

1. General Background

a) Origin and Time: The Letter of Aristeas claims that Alexandria was the place where the Torah's translation was done from Hebrew to Greek in the 3rd century BCE. Likewise LXX-Jer seems to have originated in Egypt, as many adaptations to the Alexandrian Ptolemaic milieu would suggest.¹ The presumable date is the early 2nd century BCE.²

b) Special features: LXX-Jer differs extremely from the Hebrew text of Jer, in three respects: (i) Length: It is approximately one sixth shorter than MT-Jer.³ There are more than 20 contexts in which at least one verse is missing in the LXX. The following verses are not represented in LXX-Jer: MT 2:1; 7:1, 27; 8:10b-12; 10:6-8, 10; 11:7, 8a; 17:1-5a; 29:16-20; 30:10-11, 15, 22; 33:14-26; 39:4-13; 46:26; 48:45-47; 49:6; 51:44b-49a; 52:2-3, 15, 27b-30 – all of which exclude many other cases where singular words are missing. As for minuses in MT-Jer, although they are much fewer, LXX-Jer occasionally has some expressions not found in MT-Jer, e.g. in 3:19 Γένοιτο κύριε “Be it (so), Lord!”.

(ii) Order: The primary difference is that of the position of the “Oracles against the Foreign Nations” in the middle of LXX-Jer's structure (25:14-31:44),⁴ whereas MT, in a manner untypical for the prophetic books, places them towards the end (chapters 46-51). LXX-Jer, moreover, then followed the oracles with the narration of “The Drinking of the Cup” (LXX 32:1-24). In addition, minor sequence differences also exist, e.g. MT-Jer 23:7-8, occurring in the LXX at the end of the chapter after v. 40, and MT-Jer 31:35-37, represented in LXX-Jer with the order of 38:37, 35, 36.

Consequently, the Hebrew and the Greek of Jeremiah display contrasting profiles. Whereas LXX-Jer is closer to the usual arrangement of prophetic books with a sequence of “judgment for Israel – judgment for the nations – salvation for Israel”,⁵ MT brings the most hopeful moments near to the middle of the book – i.e. chapters 29-33. The end of both versions of Jer is identical: Jer 52 describes the downfall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE along with the destruction of its temple. The simplified table below presents the differences:

MT-Jer	LXX-Jer
1:1-25:13	1:1-25:13
25:15-38	32:15-38
26-44	33-51
45	51:31-35
46-51	25:14-31:44
52	52

¹ Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2696.

² Siegert, *Bibel*, 42; van der Kooij, “Zum Verhältnis”, 198-200.

³ The original count of Min, *Jeremiah* had LXX-Jer being shorter by a seventh; however, Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 287, estimates the difference in length higher, with a sixth of MT-Jer.

⁴ As a result, the LXX counting in all the following chapters is higher by seven; here indicated e.g. as 31 (38), the first number giving the MT reference, the second one the LXX numbering. Besides the different position of the Oracles against the Foreign Nations, as a whole, their internal order differs significantly in LXX-Jer – which is that of: Elam – Egypt – Babylon – Philistians – Idumea / Edom – Ammonites – Kedar – Damascus – Moab, which is then followed by a summarizing scene in LXX-Jer 32. The banquet of God's cup of wrath corresponds to MT-Jer 25:15-38, but there serves as an announcement of divine judgment at the beginning.

⁵ The last thematic element is very limited, as the final chapters of LXX-Jer 33-51 return thematically to disaster for Israel.

(iii) Content: see 4. and 5. below, nature of the translation and translation technique.

These differences make LXX-Jer one of the most irregular of translations within the LXX, along with Job, Proverbs, Esther, Daniel, and Ben Sira. The contrasting organization of the material (ii) can only be the product of a deliberate reshaping, and the amount of the quantitative differences (i) is beyond what may be attributed to negligence of translators or scribes. These observations point to editorial⁶ or redactional⁷ activities within the process of creating and transmitting Jer (cf. 3. below).

2. Editions and Tools

a) Editions:

(i) The *editio critica*, prepared by Joseph Ziegler, in the Göttingen series⁸ is indispensable for LXX-Jer studies, yet has to be used with caution. There are problems with his edition, as several scholars have noted:⁹ The choice of readings given in the main text is sometimes hardly justified,¹⁰ as is the selection of the variants included in the critical apparatus. Ziegler's inclination for emendations poses another problem.¹¹

(ii) The edition of Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, first published in 1935:¹² Given the limitations of Ziegler's edition, it ought to be consulted as well. On various occasions it offers more acceptable readings than Ziegler.¹³

b) Tools:

(i) *Das Buch Jeremia Griechisch und Hebräisch*, edited by E. Nestle. This old synopsis was for a long time helpful to compare side by side the Greek and Hebrew versions of Jer;¹⁴ now the comparison can be easier done with the aid of the *CATSS* computer program.

(ii) The *Critique Textuelle 1986*, edited by D. Barthélemy, discusses the more important variants and is of great value for an evaluation of text-critical issues. He provides the results of the discussions of a committee of specialists, mostly involving LXX readings.

(iii) Modern translations of the LXX, like *NETS* or *Septuaginta Deutsch*, are a great help, since the Greek language used by the translator(s) is sometimes very idiosyncratic. These translations include copious notes and background information.

(iv) The *Deuteroterjemianische Konkordanz* of H.-J. Stipp, published in 1998, is a useful tool in particular for researching the repetitions of Jeremian stock phrases in the Hebrew and Greek texts.

⁶ Tov, "Aspects", 149, posits two editions of Jer, an earlier one (edition I), being preserved in the LXX and 4QJer^{b, d}, and an expanded one (edition II), which later became MT-Jer and 4QJer^{a, c}.

⁷ Bogaert, "Baruch", 168–173, ascribes the differences to redactional processes. He sees the shorter "rédaction A" linked with the figure of Baruch, whereas the longer "rédaction B" (corresponding to Tov's edition II, included in what became MT-Jer) accentuates the person of Jeremiah, as "prophète canonisé".

⁸ Ziegler, *Jeremias*.

⁹ Soderlund, *Text*, 97–152; Shead, *Book*, 169–173; 244–245; Vonach, "Jeremias", 2697; *NETS* 876.

¹⁰ An example is Jer 1:16, where Ziegler proposes ἐθυμίασαν without support in the manuscripts. For further examples of this nature, cf. Vonach, "Jeremias", 2697, note 8.

¹¹ E.g. in 38:21 the conjecture τιμωριμ.

¹² Attention must be given to the sometimes different numbering of certain verses, as Ziegler, 22 years later, employed a new system. So, for example, the oracle against Idumea / Edom, referred to in Rahlfs' edition as 30:1–16, is recorded by Ziegler as 29:8–23. *NETS* 881, offers a table of the differences.

¹³ In the case of Ziegler's proposal for 1:16 mentioned in note 10, Rahlfs has, with all manuscripts, ἔθυσαν. In 38:21 Rahlfs offers with the same textual support τιμωρίαν (contra Ziegler's conjecture for this word, cf. note 11).

¹⁴ Nestle, *Buch*. H.-J. Stipp has arranged a newer, more sophisticated version which includes the Greek variants in the Hebrew text (private circulation).

(v) The editions of *Qumran texts* are relevant, too, as they have changed the evaluation of LXX-Jer. 2Q13, edited by M. Baillet, consisting of fragments from Jer 42:7 to 48:35, testifies to the MT order of the book with the oracles against the foreign nations at the end.¹⁵ More important and longer manuscripts have been found in cave 4.¹⁶ All five scrolls have been edited by E. Tov: 4Q70, with fragments of Jer 7:1 to 22:16; 4Q71 which contains parts of Jer 9:22–10:21; 4Q72 as the longest extant manuscript, covering fragments from Jer 4:5 to 33:16–20, confirming the MT order like 2Q13; 4Q72a and 4Q72b, two small fragments of Jer 43:2–10 and 50:4–6. Especially the interpretation of 4Q71, formerly named 4QJer^b, has aroused an ongoing discussion (see below 7.3.3, d).

3. Analysis of the differences between MT and LXX

The amount and character of the differences between MT-Jer and LXX (see above 1. b) require an explanation that goes beyond normal processes of textual transmission. They point to a deliberate reshaping of the book of Jeremiah.

a) A brief historical survey

St. Jerome noted the change in order, and omissions in the Greek version, and intended to “order and complete” (*digerere ac complere*) the original form of the text in Latin from Hebrew sources.¹⁷ A shift in approach occurred first at the end of the 18th century with J.D. Michaelis who gave preference to the text of the LXX.¹⁸ He was followed more than 40 years later by F.C. Movers,¹⁹ whose work became influential, but also came under criticism.²⁰ In the second half of the twentieth century the discussion has been kindled anew by the manuscripts of Qumran. A preliminary publication of these texts by J.G. Janzen²¹ in 1973 interpreted 4QJer^b (4Q71) as confirming the Greek text. Since then many scholars have followed his lead and given priority to LXX-Jer.

b) Two main options

How the character of the translation of LXX-Jer is defined depends on one’s view of its text-critical value. A majority (= position I) today sees the manuscripts 4Q71 and 4Q72a as a confirmation of the LXX’s shorter text. They frequently hypothesize a different Hebrew ‘Vorlage’ of the Greek translation of Jer, and consider the MT version of Jer as the result of a later, expansionist reworking and literary edition.²² At the same time LXX-Jer is perceived as a mostly faithful rendering of a Hebrew original, thus enabling one to go back to a redactional stage before what has been preserved in MT-Jer.

Other scholars have arrived at the opposite conclusion, namely that LXX-Jer shortened, interpreted and rearranged the Hebrew text of Jer (= position II).²³ Those who represent the intermediate positions decide in each case to which version they would give priority.²⁴ The overall stance taken towards LXX-Jer leads to differing, and contrasting interpretations of the nature of its evidence. What in the view of position I is ‘original’, is taken as a secondary development from the other side. Position II sees MT-Jer closer to the beginning of the textual

¹⁵ Baillet, *Textes*.

¹⁶ Tov, “4QJer^{a-c}”.

¹⁷ Hieronymus, *In Hieremiam Prophetam*, Prologus 2. Still earlier, Origenes, *Epistola ad Africanum* [PG 11], 56B, had pointed to differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts.

¹⁸ Michaelis, *Observationes*.

¹⁹ Movers, *Commentatio*.

²⁰ For these discussions and their background see Hubmann, “Bemerkungen”.

²¹ Janzen, *Studies*.

²² The main representatives of this position are P.-M. Bogaert, E. Tov, A. Schenker, H.-J. Stipp.

²³ This view is favored in some cases e.g. by K. Schmid, A. van der Kooij, and generally by G. Fischer.

²⁴ An example is W. McKane’s commentary.

history of Jer and LXX-Jer as an abbreviation and change, stemming out of a later time and in another context. The explanations of the textual differences between MT-Jer and LXX are thus opposed like a mirror-image. This requires searching for independent criteria as a solid foundation for the interpretation of the differences.

c) Methodological procedure to escape an impasse

Exegetes adhering to position I argue that in the case of differences between MT and LXX the LXX translator of Jer often had a different Hebrew ‘Vorlage’. The best way to assess this reasoning is external evidence. Herein, Jer provides a good amount of material, because of its rich use of other biblical texts.²⁵ The many parallels in other books of the Bible allow for an independent comparison, the best and longest example being Jeremiah 52, as a parallel to 2 Kings 24:18–25:30. This chapter may serve as a ‘test case’, and has been investigated in detail by several scholars:

- A. Rofé observes that only the LXX version of Jer 52 does not mention the Exile.²⁶
- R.F. Person²⁷ gives priority to LXX-Jer, but admits that the texts of Kings-MT, Kings-LXX and MT-Jer have been reworked later than LXX-Jer which seems rather implausible for the Book of Kings.
- G. Fischer²⁸ points to the ‘isolated’ character of LXX-Jer compared with all the other texts reporting the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE (2 Kings-MT and LXX; Jeremiah 52 MT, and even 2 Chronicles 36 MT and LXX). This isolation indicates deliberate changes on the side of LXX-Jer. Furthermore, the differences between the LXX and MT versions of this chapter suggest a shortened text and abbreviation tendencies with respect to content similar to what can be observed in the rest of the book of Jer.
- This latter result is confirmed by J. Smith²⁹ who upon a detailed analysis of the translation technique in Jer 52 arrives at the result that this chapter reflects the same technique as LXX-Jer 1–51.³⁰
- E. Abate takes Jer 52 LXX as the text which preserves the oldest text form accessible today,³¹ yet fails to take into account its dependence on a Hebrew version and on the previous text of 2 Kings 24–25.

Rofé, Fischer, and Smith indicate that LXX-Jer 52 has been heavily reworked, whereas Person’s and Abate’s positions are based on the unproven assumption that, as it is the shortest, it also has to be the ‘oldest’ text. The importance of Jeremiah 52 lies in the fact that in this case we have in 2 Kings 24:18–25:30 a real, still extant, and long ‘Vorlage’ which offers an independent basis for an objective evaluation of the differences. Chapter 52 thus provides an excellent model to assess the relationship between MT-Jer and LXX. The comparison shows the closeness of MT-Jer to the ‘source’ text, and LXX-Jer as largely deviating from all other text forms, including even the versions of MT and LXX 2 Chronicles 36, they themselves

²⁵ Jeremiah contains many intertextual connections with other books, as the commentaries of W.L. Holladay, J.R. Lundbom, and G. Fischer indicate.

²⁶ Rofé, “Exile”. The parallel texts of 2 Kings and Jer 52 MT refer various times to the Babylonian exile. Earlier (in 1991), P.-M. Bogaert, “Formes”, had tried to argue for the priority of the *Vetus Latina*, still shorter than the LXX version of Jer 52; yet it is difficult to assume that a Latin version, preserved only in manuscripts of the 9th century and later, might have preserved the most original text.

²⁷ Person, *Recensions*.

²⁸ Fischer, “Jeremia 52” (1998), republished in: *Prophet* (2011), 42–63.

²⁹ Smith, “Jeremiah 52”.

³⁰ Thus Thackeray’s theory of two translators for LXX-Jer (chapters 1–28 and 29–52) seems improbable. It has been convincingly refuted by Tov, *Translation*, Stipp, “Fragen”, and Smith, “Jeremiah 52”. Yet it is difficult to say whether only one individual has worked on the translation of Jer into Greek.

³¹ Abate, *Fine* 157.

being dependent on 2 Kings 24–25. This does not allow another conclusion as to see LXX-Jer in this chapter heavily shortening and changing the underlying source³² for its translation. This result is confirmed by further cases in Jer which quote passages from other biblical books. The quotations of Deut 5:33 in Jer 7:23, of Isa 15:5 in Jer 48 (31):5, of Hab 2:13 in Jer 51 (28):58, and of similar cases show that MT-Jer often represents the presumed original text more faithfully than LXX-Jer.

This article reflects position II and describes the nature and technique of the LXX translation of Jer from this point of view. Most differences between MT-Jer and LXX-Jer derive from the translation process. It also allowed rearranging the book and adapting it to the needs of the new Greek-speaking Jewish environment in Egypt centuries later.³³

d) 4Q71 (and 4Q72a)

The main argument adduced in favour of argument I is usually based on the Qumran manuscripts, 4Q71 and 4Q72a. E. Tov argues that "... the reconstructed text of 4QJer^b agrees with G in lacking vv. 6–8 and 10 and in the sequence 4, 5a, 9, 5b".³⁴ However, there are problems with taking 4Q71 as an argument for the superiority of LXX-Jer:³⁵

(i) This interpretation of 4Q71 is based on a reconstruction. The extant text of the manuscript does only show parts of 10:4, 9, 11, 13 in the lines 5–8. What is visible in 4Q71 neither shows the lack of vv. 6–8, nor the changed sequence.

(ii) It is true that line 6 cannot contain the whole text of vv. 6–8 of MT. Yet even in the reconstruction according to the LXX, line 6 deviates markedly from the regular line length.³⁶

(iii) Although there are some further agreements between 4Q71 and LXX-Jer with regard to certain expressions, 4Q71 also sides in a few instances with MT-Jer.

(iv) Generally speaking, it is not sound to deduce the 'superiority' of a textual tradition on the basis of one manuscript, all the more when it is debatable as in the case of the small fragment 4Q71.

4Q72a presents parts of Jer 43 (50):2–10 and agrees in vv. 4–6 with the LXX, having shorter forms. However, in v. 5, vv. 6–7 and v. 9 it confirms expressions of MT, and thus displays an ambiguous character.³⁷

An evaluation of the evidence adduced by the Qumran findings also has to take into account important manuscripts like 4Q70 and 72 which belong to the premasoretic tradition and largely confirm MT-Jer.

4. Nature of the Translation

a) Overall assessment

Generally LXX-Jer tries to render exactly its Hebrew *Vorlage*.³⁸ It translates often very precisely,³⁹ sometimes closely following the sequence of words, while creating Hebraisms

³² It is often argued that the Hebrew 'Vorlage' used for the rendering of Jer in Greek was different from MT-Jer, and it is supposed to have been close to LXX-Jer. Such an argumentation is highly speculative, and the observations with Jer 52 and in other passages of Jer speak against it.

³³ At the time of the translation of LXX-Jer, the Babylonian Exile lay centuries back, and some persons (like Johanan the son of Kareah, and even King Nebuchadnezzar, significantly less present in it) mentioned in the book of Jeremiah had practically no present relevance for its audience any more.

³⁴ Tov, "4QJer^{a-c}" 174.

³⁵ Fischer, *Stand*, 21–22, 24.

³⁶ 4Q71 is exceptionally long with 112 to 147 letter spaces. Line 6, according to the reconstruction following the LXX, would have only approximately 109 spaces, and would therefore be still shorter than the minimum of the other lines of the fragment.

³⁷ Fischer, *Stand*, 23.

³⁸ Fischer, *Trostbüchlein*, 34–36; *NETS* 876, mentions as „most basic norm of the translator ... isomorphism”.

³⁹ Stipp, *Sondergut*, 20, 57; Vonach, "Jeremias", 2718f; Walser, *Jeremiah*, 14.

(see below 5. a). On the other hand, the translation is also free in its renditions, for various reasons, and thus displays a ‘mixed’, ambiguous character:⁴⁰

- 31 (38):2 in MT reads עם שרידי חרב “the people (of those who) escaped the sword” – LXX μετὰ ὀλωλότων ἐν μαχαίρα changes the tripartite Hebrew phrase into a simpler construction.
- V. 3 in MT starts with the quote יהוה נראה לי מרחוק “Yhwh has appeared to me from afar.” – LXX has a statement in 3rd person “The Lord appeared to him (αὐτῷ) from afar”, fitting better into the context, and in this way easing the complex Hebrew communication structure.
- V. 4 in MT offers the singular expression תעדי תפוך “you will adorn yourself with tambourines”. – LXX “take the tambourines”, with the verb λαμβάνειν, is a frequent, general expression and less poetic.
- V. 5b in MT repeats the root “to plant”, as subject in the participle plural, and as verb: נטעו נטעים. – LXX has it only once.
- In v. 6 LXX eases the tension between 2nd and 1st person plural in the final quote by adhering to the 2nd person.⁴¹

These differences between MT-Jer and LXX are typical of this translation and can be supplemented by numerous other examples. Free tendencies of LXX-Jer are to make the text to be understood more easily, by adopting more common language, shortening longer phrases, and simplifying intricate structures of the original. As an overall impression, LXX-Jer can be perceived as more ‘polished’, less rough than the difficult and complicated Hebrew text.⁴²

b) Representation of God

The ambiguous picture of the character of LXX-Jer shows up in still other features. The translator tends to avoid anthropomorphic language in speaking about God and to present a ‘mild’ portrayal of him,⁴³ though sometimes, it accentuates and even portrays God’s actions and words more violently.⁴⁴

c) A heightened emphasis on ethical and religious issues

Other characteristic features of LXX-Jer are moralizing tendencies⁴⁵ and a liturgical inclination.⁴⁶ They indicate a special orientation towards the intended audience which is also visible in the adjustments due to the translation’s time and context. The Hellenistic background of the Jewish diaspora in Egypt, especially in Alexandria, provides clues to understand many changes of LXX-Jer with respect to MT-Jer.⁴⁷ Such a milieu explains the

⁴⁰ As an example I take some renditions of the fourth poem of the ‘Booklet of Consolation’, Jer 31 (38):2–6; for a longer exposition see: Fischer, *Trostbüchlein*, 28–78 *passim*. For other differences between MT and LXX in this text see below 7.3.5.

⁴¹ Cf. also the example in v. 3; for a detailed investigation of such changes of referent in LXX-Jer see Glanz, *Shifts*. In the same v. 6 MT speaks of נצרים “watchmen”, crying and exhorting for a pilgrimage to Sion; LXX translates as “defenders” (with a participle plural of ἀπολογεομαι), which is a possible rendition of the Hebrew word, but is not suitable within the context.

⁴² Fischer, “Text”, 323–328. This is another indication that MT deserves priority. It is improbable that a complicated, more sophisticated text with a lot of tensions (= MT-Jer) derives from a simpler one (= LXX-Jer). Rather, one would think that the latter is the result of processes that smooth out the difficulties of the original Hebrew.

⁴³ Fischer, *Trostbüchlein*, 74–77; Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2725f.

⁴⁴ Stipp, “Diskussion”, 652; for a comprehensive view of this issue see Stipp, “Gottesbildfragen”. Already LXX-Jer 1:1 changes MT’s introduction with “The words of Jeremiah” by prefixing “The saying of God”. Thus it emphasizes the divine origin of the following words in Jeremiah’s book and conveys a heightened authority to it; cf. also 51 (28):59.

⁴⁵ Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2724; e.g. in LXX-Jer 6:16 “purification”, instead of MT’s “rest, repose”, and in 22:3 “act godlessly”, for “being violent” in MT.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Prophet*, 70–71; as in the rendering of the lament “Alas, Lord Yhwh!” in LXX-Jer 1:6 and 4:10 by the invocation “Oh, (the) Being One, Lord Yhwh!”, or in Jer 2:2, where MT reads “holy was Israel”, and LXX has “you followed the Holy One of Israel”. See also the example of Jer 3:19 (in 7.3.1b (i) above).

⁴⁷ For this see Goldman, *Prophétie*, 57–62. A typical example is the difference in ‘dancing’ in Jer 31 (38):13.

reduced role of Babylon and its king in LXX-Jer, and the ‘softened’ stance towards God’s people.⁴⁸

d) Theological interpretations and actualizations

Repeated features of LXX-Jer demonstrate the theological intentions of the translator. The constant translation of אָחַז “Alas!” by ὁ ὄν “the being / existing one” is one of these,⁴⁹ connected with God’s revelation in Exod 3:14. Yet another feature is the increased use of θεός “God”, with no equivalent in Hebrew.⁵⁰ An interesting case is offered by the translator’s dealing with God’s weeping in Jer 9:9 MT “I will lift up weeping and lament” and in 14:17 “My eyes go down (in) tears”. LXX-Jer addresses in both passages⁵¹ others: “Lift up lament ...!”, respectively “Let tears flow down from your eyes ...!”, thus avoiding the image of a God moved by such strong emotions.

There are a number of adaptations in LXX-Jer to the Hellenistic background of the Jewish community in Egypt in the 2nd century BCE.⁵² Among them the increased use of the feminine designation for Baal, ἡ Βααλ, is noteworthy;⁵³ the prominence of the adoration of Isis in Egypt seems to serve as background for it and thus offers an example for actualization.⁵⁴

As c) and d) show, the Hebrew text of Jer, originally intended for a Judean audience in earlier centuries, has been reshaped by the translator so as to conform the needs, expectations, and circumstances of his time. LXX-Jer therefore presents an adaptation and actualization for Greek readers of a later time in Egypt. From the viewpoint of position II, these features are mainly responsible for the different profile of LXX-Jer with regard to MT.

5. Translation technique

LXX-Jer combines seemingly contrasting features. On the one hand, and for large parts of Jeremiah, it follows the Hebrew text closely, and tries to render it precisely in Greek (see a). On the other hand, every translator must make choices, while also selecting possible meanings, struggling with difficult expressions and passages, and is innately guided by his own intentions. Moreover, he is free for new interpretations and changes in the composition. LXX-Jer, too, displays the consequences of such processes and influences.

a) Closeness to the original

(i) Equivalences on various levels: Large parts of LXX-Jer adhere closely to the Hebrew *Vorlage* with regard to the ‘denotative’ equivalence, and quite often even for the sequence of words, e.g. nearly completely in Jer 31 (38):2–6. Furthermore, in a few cases ‘phonetic’ equivalences show the closeness to the Hebrew,⁵⁵ as in Jer 31 (38):9, where אָוֹלֵיכֶם “I will make them go” is rendered by ἀὐλιζών,⁵⁶ or in Jer 31:35 (38:36), where κραυγή “shouting, noise” corresponds to Hebrew רָגַע (vocalized by MT as *roga* ‘, “stirring up”).

⁴⁸ Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2726–2727; Jer 5:4 and 6:15 are some of his examples. – Whereas MT-Jer portrays Nebuchadnezzar three times as God’s “servant” (25:9; 27:6; 43:10), LXX-Jer never designates him so.

⁴⁹ Jer 1:6; 14:13; 32 (39):17; in these instances Rahlfs resorts to conjectures, only bringing the vocative ὦ “Oh (Lord)”. In the case of 4:10 the manuscript evidence favors the vocative rendering ὦ “Oh (Lord)”, against Ziegler, who also here renders ὁ ὄν.

⁵⁰ Stipp, *Sondergut* 54. Examples are Jer 4:2; 5:18; 12:4; 23:30, 37–38, etc.

⁵¹ In Ziegler’s edition the first one is counted as 9:10. In 14:17 “my (eyes)” stays within Yhwh’s command to the prophet to announce his word, and thus it has to be primarily referred to God: Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 484.

⁵² Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2728–2731.

⁵³ There are twelve occurrences of this usage in Jer, three times more than in any other book of the Bible (Judges, and 4 Kingdoms, with 4 cases each).

⁵⁴ Vonach, “H Βααλ”, especially 66–68.

⁵⁵ Ziegler, *Beiträge*, 32.

⁵⁶ Tov, “Loan-words” 172, counts this word as “homophony”.

(ii) Hebraisms:⁵⁷ LXX-Jer uses a number of stereotyped renderings of Hebrew expressions. Thus the phrase *נתן ל-*, meaning “to make, to render”, is translated by the uncommon Greek phrase *δίδωμι εἰς* “(to) give to”, e.g. in Jer 12:10; 33 (26):6, hardly understandable unless one resorts to the original phrase standing behind it. The idiomatic Hebrew combination of *הנני* “behold, I” with a verbal form is 49 times rendered faithfully by *ἰδοὺ ἐγώ* and the verb in the first person singular, a construction which is not familiar in Greek.

(iii) Literal rendering, but against the context and therefore misleading: In some cases, as in Jer 30 (37):18, the Greek literal translation of *משפט*, here used in the sense of “(right) place” for the rebuilding of the palace at the same location as before, by *κρίμα* “decision, verdict”⁵⁸ can only correctly be understood by somebody who conjectures the Hebrew word being at the origin of this rendering; otherwise the meaning of the Greek phrase is completely different and hardly intelligible.

(iv) Transliterations are a very special case of ‘closeness’ to the original. Besides their normal use for names of places and individuals, in LXX-Jer they can also be found for regular Hebrew words,⁵⁹ as these examples demonstrate: The Ketiv *השרמות* in Jer 31 (38):40 is represented by *ασαρημωθ*. Similarly the mock name given to the Pharaoh in 46 (26):17 *שאון העביר המועד* “noise / roar / racket which let pass the (appointed) time” is transcribed as *Σαων εσβη εμοσηδ*, not understandable in Greek.

b) Reductions, simplifications and explanations

(i) The book of Jeremiah contains many repetitions that LXX-Jer tends to reduce,⁶⁰ thus alleviating a seemingly redundant text. The analyses of Stulman, dealing with the differences in length between MT-Jer and LXX,⁶¹ confirm this observation from another point of view: What MT offers more than LXX, consists mainly of conventional language, which is common to both text forms of Jer, and was mostly already used in other parts of the book.

(ii) The formulaic expressions and titles of MT-Jer, e.g. “thus says the Lord”, “Yhwh of hosts”, or “oracle of Yhwh” have been reduced by LXX-Jer.⁶² Position I explains the higher number of MT as ‘repetitive’ expansions and replenishments in the so-called edition II; position II interprets this fact as a sign of reducing ‘unnecessary’ elements in the long text of MT in the translation. Especially the Hebrew term *צבאות* “Zebaoth” is drastically reduced in LXX-Jer.⁶³ This goes together with the tendency to shorten the text, present in LXX-Jer to an extremely high degree (see above 7.3.1, b), and has consequences for its coherence, as may be seen in the fact that key words of MT are missing in the LXX.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2718–2719. Walser, *Jeremiah*, 14–16, lists a series of “ungreek” expressions, reflecting their Hebrew background. Claiming that “[c]ertainly the Greek of Jeremiah was not perceived as ordinary Hellenistic Greek by the ancient reader,” he provides as further evidence clause syntax and word order (pp. 6–7).

⁵⁸ The whole phrase reads: “and the temple will be seated according to its / his verdict”. – A similar case is mentioned in note 41, referring to Jer 31 (38):6.

⁵⁹ The two words *צִינִים* and *תַּמְרוֹרִים* in Jer 31:21, designating “sign-posts”, are represented in LXX-Jer (38:21) by the transliterations *στωστυ* and *τυμωρίαν* (sounding similarly, the first expression being unintelligible, the latter meaning “revenge, help”), respectively by the transliteration *τυμωρητι* (thus Ziegler’s conjecture, see note 11). This may indicate that the significance of the underlying Hebrew words was unfamiliar to the translator. Tov, “Loan-words”, 174–179, Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2718, and *NETS* 880 give some examples in addition to those mentioned here.

⁶⁰ Hubmann, *Untersuchungen*, 217–244. Mostly the second doublet is suppressed, e.g. in Jer 17:3–4 (a doublet to 15:13–14), or in LXX-Jer 37:10–11 (parallel to MT 30:10–11, a doublet to LXX 26:27–28 corresponding to MT 46:27–28). Hubmann’s investigation of Jeremian doublets also demonstrates inconsistencies in the renderings of the LXX (p. 242), and *NETS* 879–880, clearly confirms this, taking Jer 10:12–17 // 28 (51):15–19 as example.

⁶¹ Stulman, *Sermons*.

⁶² Stipp, “Messenger Formulas”. 4Q72a, too, displays the same tendency.

⁶³ It is missing 69 times (out of 82) in LXX-Jer: Vonach, “Jeremias”, 2715–2716, and Rofé, “Name”.

⁶⁴ Stipp, *Sondergut*, 43–44, shows this feature for 27 (34):12–15, where the referent “prophets” is absent in LXX (see also Tov, “Notes” 327). Problems with the reference are also in Jer LXX 25:12–13: Fischer, *Prophet*, 9.

(iii) The desire to make the text of Jer more accessible and more easily understandable is probably at the root of some simplifications, as in 7:4 (only twice “the temple of the Lord”, instead of a triple repetition in MT). This desire may also be the reason for some explanations: Jer 2:21 MT gives “Sorek” for the type of vine, LXX renders as “vine carrying fruit”. Jer 13:18 MT speaks with the technical term “*gebirah*” of the Queen mother; LXX translates more broadly as “the ruling ones”. Whereas Jer 18:15 MT has the symbolic designation “eternal paths”, LXX talks of “endless miles” – thereby emphasizing the length of the way. Especially the expression ψευδοπροφήτης “false prophet(s)”, used only in LXX to identify some of Jeremiah’s adversaries (Jer 33:7, 8, 11, 16; 35:1 etc.), is a clear exegetical rendering.

c) Inconsistency

The features mentioned here can be observed throughout the book. Whereas (i) considers larger areas of Jer and (ii) seems to point to two different hands,⁶⁵ more likely it is a sign of a change in the translation practices of the same person. The two other phenomena (iii and iv) touch on contextual inconsistencies within short range.

(i) Variations on the word and even on the phrase or clause level are present throughout the whole book of Jer. *NETS* 877-879 lists ten examples (out of many more) and explains them by “a differentiation in the target language due to context” (p. 878). The final example is the doublet Jer 10 // 28 (51) mentioned in note 60; the altered rendering displays “interpretational differences” on the side of LXX-Jer (*NETS*, 880).

(ii) The most remarkable difference between Jer 1–28 and 29–52 lies in the rendering of the ‘Gottesspruchformel’ נאם יהוה “uttering of Yhwh”, usually is rendered in the first part as λέγει κύριος “says the Lord”,⁶⁶ and in the latter chapters mostly as φήσι κύριος “speaks the Lord”⁶⁷ or as εἶπε κύριος “said the Lord”.⁶⁸ Moreover in several additional words the two parts of Jer show different translations.⁶⁹

(iii) Often the translation uses different words for the same Hebrew expression within a distance of a few verses. So the root שׁוּב “to return” is rendered differently in Jer 8:4–5, the verb דַּבֵּר “to speak” in Jer 30 (37):2, 4, the verb דַּרַשׁ “to seek” in 30 (37):14, 17, etc. Reasons for the varying translations may be the desire to avoid repetition, the focus on a special aspect, or, probably more often, the consideration for the context. This observation points to a translation technique that normally does not take into account earlier renderings, but most of the time, rather intuitively, seeks anew, ad hoc, word per word, verse per verse Greek equivalents for the Hebrew original.⁷⁰

(iv) Contrary to paragraph (iii), LXX-Jer uses often the same root where the Hebrew text varies. Examples are twice φόβος “fear” for חרדה “trembling” and פחד “fright” in 30 (37):5 and thrice ὀργή “wrath” for סערה, סער, both meaning “storm, whirlwind”, and for חרון “embers” in 30 (37):23–24. These cases show that LXX-Jer diminishes the variety of the original and ‘streamlines’ it, making it more uniform.⁷¹

⁶⁵ However, Thackeray’s theory of two translators has been justly criticized by E. Tov, J. Smith and others (see above note 30). Tov, *Translation*, attributes the different renderings to a reviser; yet Stipp, “Fragen”, points to irregularities in the distribution of the relevant words and questions Tov’s theory.

⁶⁶ Starting with Jer 1:8, 15, 19.

⁶⁷ E.g. in LXX-Jer 30:2, 15 (corresponding to MT-Jer 49:2, 26), etc.

⁶⁸ Already in LXX-Jer 27:30, 40 (equivalent to MT-Jer 50:30, 40), and ‘regularly’ from 30:5, 10 (= MT-Jer 49:5, 32) onwards. The ‘mixture’ of different renderings in LXX-Jer chapter 30 displays in itself inconsistency within the immediate context.

⁶⁹ See the listings of Tov, *Translation*, and more extensively in Stipp, “Fragen”.

⁷⁰ Tov, “Translators”, 207, has demonstrated this in an exemplary way with the various renderings of שׁפִּי “hill” in LXX-Jer.

⁷¹ Tov, “Translators”, 215, points to the tendency of LXX-Jer to use “general words” for the rendition of more sophisticated expressions in the Hebrew text.

Both seemingly contradictory techniques (iii and iv) reflect, in most cases, different contextual practices. Within the immediate context the translator sometimes uses the same Greek term for different Hebrew words (iv), possibly reflecting his weariness, or the limitations in his vocabulary, arriving, thus, at repetitions not present in the original. Conversely, the attention and concentration, needed at all times, on the verse to be rendered in Greek, and the difficulties encountered in doing so, account for the changes in the expressions, even within a range of a few verses (iii). – In another area, LXX-Jer is inconsistent with regard to its length: Although generally much shorter, it can also in some cases be longer than MT.⁷²

d) Coping with difficulties

(i) Poetry in general is difficult to render in another language, even more, when unvocalized, and this also pertains to the poetry of Jeremiah.⁷³ One example may serve as an illustration. The end of Jer 31:2 MT reads: הלך להרגיעו ישראל “(to) go, to give rest to it / him, Israel”. LXX 38:2 renders with: βαδίσατε καὶ μὴ ὀλέσητε τὸν Ἰσραηλ “proceed, and do not destroy Israel”. The insertion of a negation and the change of the second verb alter significantly the original sense.

(ii) There are indications that the translator of LXX-Jer consulted other texts and books when rendering difficult passages in his translation. The description of the temple equipment in Jer 52, taken from 2 Kings 25, is an example: In LXX-Jer 52:18 LXX sides, against 2 Kings and MT-Jer, with Exod 27:3, mentioning three pieces of the cultic equipment of the temple, and the following v. 19 seems to depend on 1 Kings 7:50, the base text for the temple vessels.⁷⁴ In a similar vein, Jer 52:21 gives the height of the columns of the temple as “35 cubits”, corresponding to 2 Chron 3:15, but against 2 Kings 25:17 and Jer 52:21 MT (“18 cubits”).

e) Changes of the meaning

The example in d) of Jer 31 (38):2 shows that LXX-Jer introduces negations, in order to render Jer ‘understandable’ to the readers. Two further cases confirm this.

In Jer 2:31 MT reads: “See the word of Yhwh!”. Neither is the unusual combination of ‘seeing a word’ found in the LXX, nor the unique address “o generation!” before; instead, it has at the end of V. 30 “and you did not fear”, switching from Hebrew ראה “to see” to the similar root ירא “to fear” and negating it.⁷⁵

Jer 51:58 MT has “... and people toil for nothing”, echoing Hab 2:13. The corresponding verse in LXX-Jer, 28:58, says: “... and people do not toil in vain”, changing the original by the insertion of a negation and interpreting the fall of Babylon as the positive result of the efforts of (foreign) people.

6. Text-critical and Literary Value

The assessment of the text-critical value of LXX-Jer depends on the general stance one chooses to take in regard to the positions outlined in 3, b.

⁷² A noteworthy example is that of Jer 7:4 (see above b, iii): The threefold repetition of “the temple of the Lord” is reduced and brought just twice, yet immediately before, after “words of deception”, it has in addition to MT “because they aren’t useful for you at all”.

⁷³ These problems are felt especially in the first half of the book, in the Oracles against the Foreign Nations, and in the Booklet of Consolation, Jer 30–31 (37–38). In this context Tov, “Translators”, 212, refers to Jer 2:20. Cf. also Althann, *Analysis*, for Jer 4–6.

⁷⁴ Fischer, *Prophet*, 54; *NETS* 876 even qualifies LXX-Jer 52:19 under the rubric “unintelligibility”.

⁷⁵ Goldman, “Crispations”, 43–44.

a) Position I sees LXX-Jer in many cases as the better text, arguing with a different ‘Vorlage’ for it, closer to the original than MT.⁷⁶ This leads some to postulate and ‘reconstruct’ an earlier stage / edition of Jer than MT, which is said to be the product of an ‘expansionist redaction’. This position is encountered in various forms: For P.-M. Bogaert MT-Jer has been reworked later in a way giving more emphasis to the person of the prophet Jeremiah;⁷⁷ LXX-Jer thus can give access to a more original version of the Book of Jeremiah. E. Tov describes editorial and exegetical aspects of “Edition II” (= MT-Jer), and notices also “peculiar word and expressions” for it.⁷⁸ H.-J. Stipp develops this idea further and proposes a pre-masoretic idiolect, consisting of linguistic idiosyncracies of MT-Jer, not present in the Greek version, forming a kind of “Sondergut” in the Hebrew text.⁷⁹

b) Position II, on the other hand, regards LXX-Jer mainly as secondary in relation to MT, including characteristics of a translation, such as actualizations, intentional changes, rearrangements of the compositional structure, and additions and omissions according to the interests of the new environment in Egypt. The process of transferring into another language includes the necessity to find equivalents within a new cultural surrounding, but it also tends to encourage a freedom to change and add one’s own ideas. From the perspective of position II, LXX-Jer is generally the product of a deliberate reworking of a form of Jer which was very close to what later became MT, although, in a few instances, it might have preserved the original wording.

c) For an appreciation of LXX-Jer’s value for textual criticism three additional aspects are relevant as well:

(i) The transmission of the authoritative Masoretic Hebrew text has been remarkably faithful. This is testified by the high accordance of the best preserved manuscripts found in Qumran (4Q70 and 72), regarded as ‘proto-Masoretic’.⁸⁰ The renowned Masorah codices nearly thousand years later resemble this proto-Masoretic text, and serve as base for the modern critical editions.

The precision of this text is further confirmed by the handling of the Ketiv-passages in MT-Jer. There are approximately 50 relevant instances; in 36 cases LXX-Jer sides with the Qere-readings. This indicates that already LXX-Jer – in the 2nd century BCE – knew the Qere-tradition and gave priority in most cases to them,⁸¹ whereas in MT-Jer the Ketiv-renderings have been maintained and exactly preserved in the main text, against the alternative or suggested Qere-readings, over more than a millennium, until the production of the major Hebrew codices from 895 CE onward. This suggests a very high degree of precision and fidelity in transmitting the Hebrew text of Jer.

(ii) In contrast to the accuracy in the tradition of MT-Jer, the transmission of the Greek text of Jer was more fluid, as the edition of Ziegler, with thousands of divergent readings, often touching significantly the meaning of the text, shows.⁸² The number of variant readings as well as the scope of their discrepancies outweighs by far what can be observed in the comparison of the proto-Masoretic texts of Qumran with the later Masorah codices, whereas

⁷⁶ See above notes 6 and 7. Bogaert, “Rédactions”, 370, speaks even of a “texte reconnu”, suggesting accepted authority, yet it is unclear, by whom. – There is another problem inherent in position I, alluded to already in note 32: to reason with a (different) ‘Vorlage’ which is not accessible any more is hard to prove and therefore equally hard to criticize, giving way to any kind of speculations.

⁷⁷ Bogaert, “Baruch”, 168–170.

⁷⁸ Tov, “Aspects”, 150–167, in particular 165.

⁷⁹ Stipp, especially in the article: “Diskussion”, 632–641, with a definition on p. 633–634.

⁸⁰ Tov, “4QJer^{a-c}”, 151 and 184.

⁸¹ Fischer, *Prophet*, 33–34.

⁸² Even Stipp, *Sondergut*, 64, and idem, “Diskussion”, 249–250, acknowledges problems with the “Textpflege” in LXX-Jer, and that the transmission of the text was not as careful as within the Hebrew tradition.

even the major Greek codices and manuscripts differ largely.⁸³ This is a sign that the care for accuracy in handing down the transmitted text was less within the Greek textual tradition than for MT-Jer.

(iii) Haplographies might also be a possible origin for the much shorter version of LXX-Jer. A sober calculation arrives at approximately 50 cases.⁸⁴ This, too, demonstrates LXX-Jer as being less reliable than MT-Jer.

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⁸³ This is very obvious when one studies the critical apparatus of Ziegler and compares it with editions of the Hebrew Bible.

⁸⁴ Vonach, “Jeremias” 2704, whereas Lundbom, “Haplography” reckons with 330 instances. The haplography may have already occurred within the Hebrew text serving as ‘Vorlage’ for LXX-Jer, as Lundbom suggests; yet it can equally well have happened in the course of the translation. - In my eyes the desire to abbreviate a sometimes lengthy, repetitive original (= MT-Jer) in the course of the translation should not be underestimated; many of these so-called ‘haplographies’ may be intentional omissions, and their number may then be reduced to just a few.

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