

ותפשי התורה לא ידעוני

The Relationship of the Book of Jeremiah to the Torah

Georg Fischer

This article will investigate the theme of the conference – “The Pentateuch within Biblical Literature: Formation and Interaction”¹ – with respect to a very specific area, namely the connections between the Torah and the book of Jeremiah. I will first deal with the use of תורה in the book of Jeremiah, then present some examples of intertextual relationships between the books of the Torah and the book of Jeremiah (hereafter abbreviated Jer), and, finally, sum up the results.

1 The Use of תורה in the Book of Jeremiah

The word תורה occurs eleven times in Jer.² This is a relatively small number in comparison to other words in Jer, like “to hear,” “prophet,” and “deceit.”³ Nevertheless, תורה in Jer is of considerable importance, as it is nearly always connected with God and as some passages contain unique ideas. I will present briefly all the occurrences,⁴ in three steps.

1.1 The Beginning

The title of this article is a quote of one stich of Jer 2:8:

¹ I thank Jan Christian Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, the organizers of the conference in Jerusalem in May 2014. The presentation here is an extended version of a paper read there.

² These eleven occurrences constitute 5 percent of the 223 occurrences within the Hebrew Bible; it is thus less than what might be expected, as Jer contains more than 7 percent of the words in the Hebrew Bible.

³ Respectively 158, 135, and 37 occurrences; in all cases, Jer has the highest number of these words within the books of the Hebrew Bible. The most frequent word in Jer is the tetragrammaton (YHWH), which occurs 726 times.

⁴ The main investigation of תורה in Jer is C. MAIER, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora: Soziale Gebote des Deuteronomiums in Fortschreibungen des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 196: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), esp. 282–352.

The priests have not asked: "Where is YHWH?,"
 and those handling/grasping the Torah don't know me,
 and the shepherds rebelled against me,
 and the prophets prophesied in (the name of?) Baal,
 and they went after what is useless.

This is the first instance of the use of תורה in Jer. It mentions four responsible groups in the community, three of which have religious functions.⁵ All are blamed for serious deviations from their relationship with the biblical God.

The second group is named תופשי התורה. The verb תפש indicates normally a forceful action,⁶ to be translated by "to seize, capture, snatch." It may also be used with weapons, like a bow, swords, or a shield,⁷ as well as with a sickle, the oar of a ship, and even musical instruments.⁸ In these cases, the meaning seems to be close to "to handle, to use."

The NRSV therefore also translates Jer 2:8 as "Those who handle the law did not know me," and the NIV as "Those who deal with the law did not know me." Thus both translations render the Hebrew verb in a neutral, mild way, which does not bring out its underlying force. This is also true for several German translations.⁹

Within the Hebrew Bible this combination of the verb תפש with תורה is unique. Yet it occurs again in Sir 15:1, attested to, in identical form, by the two manuscripts A and B of the Cairo Geniza.¹⁰ The first stich reads, "For (who) fears YHWH, will do this," and is continued by תופש תורה ידריכנה, "and (the one)

⁵ The identification of the "shepherds" remains open. This term seems to refer, in Jer, mostly to political leaders, but other responsible groups are not excluded.

⁶ A. EVEN-SHOSHAN, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1980), 2299, gives as equivalences for the *qal* stem אָחַז בְּחֹקֶה and לָכַד. For Jer 2:8 (listed as number 26), he attributes the first meaning, "to seize with force."

⁷ Connected with "bow" is Amos 2:15, "he who handles the bow," and probably also Jer 46:9, where the two participles תופשי תפשׁי דרכי precede the bow. Earlier in the same verse, תופשי precedes "shield." Ezek 38:4 mentions those "wielding swords" within the army of Gog. Jer seems to have a preference for this expression. It contains five out of the ten occurrences of the *qal* participle. All translations in the footnotes are from the NRSV except where otherwise noted.

⁸ In Jer 50:16, Babylon shall be deprived of "the one who handles the sickle," and "all who handle the oar" wail about the sinking ship of Tyre in Ezek 27:29. Gen 4:21 names Jubal as "the father of all those who play the lyre and the pipe."

⁹ I mention only two examples: *Die Bibel: Altes und Neues Testament, Einheitsübersetzung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), renders it as "Die Hüter des Gesetzes kannten mich nicht," suggesting a group taking care of (*hüten*) and being responsible for the law, thus already interpreting it in one direction. *Die Heilige Schrift: Aus dem Grundtext übersetzt; Elberfelder Bibel revidierte Fassung* (4th ed.; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1995), translates, "Und die das Gesetz handhabten, kannten mich nicht," in a similar vein to the English versions quoted above.

¹⁰ P. BOCCACCIO and G. BERARDI, *Ecclesiasticus: Textus Hebraeus secundum fragmenta reperta* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986).

handling/grasping *tôrâ* will get/achieve her.” The referent of “her” is ambiguous in the various versions; in Hebrew, the next referent is תורה, but “her” could also refer to “wisdom” mentioned before, as in the Greek manuscripts. In this text, the context and the connotations of the verb are positive.¹¹ Having dealings with תורה leads to good results, and this is equally true for Sir 15:1 in the Septuagint.¹²

The negative background of the reproaches in Jer 2:8, however, impels us to reflect on the meaning of the verb תפש there. As a designation of the group, it may be neutral; this option cannot be totally excluded. Yet, the unique use of a verb normally associated with force and often combined with weapons may also indicate a similar powerful action with regard to God’s instruction/law.¹³

The translation of התורה must be discussed, too. It could be simply “the law, the instruction.” However, “the Torah,” namely the first five books of the Bible, could also be in view, or at least one scroll of it.¹⁴ The noun is used with the definite article here and has no preceding referent that could explain it. For the moment we must leave open the exact meaning of תורה in Jer 2:8 and come back to this question at the end (see 1.4). Yet the position of this passage close to the beginning of Jer, the gravity of the accusations, and the important groups mentioned in the context already allow us to surmise that we are dealing with something more than simply a normal instruction.

Another ambiguity of Jer 2:8 regards the translation of the tense of the verb ידע. It is in the *qatal* form, like the verbs for the three other groups in v. 8, and could also be rendered by the perfect tense: “(they) have not known me.” However, the usual meaning of this verb ידע in the *qatal* is present tense: “(they) don’t know me.”¹⁵ This would result also in maintaining the reproach of not knowing God for the actual moment. The “me” refers to God, who is introduced in v. 5 as the speaker.

Jer 2:8 raises harsh accusations early in the book. One of them is connected with a group associated with instruction/law or the Torah and denominated in a unique way. Their identity remains open and poses the question of whether further on we will find a hint pointing to their identity. The introduction of the theme תורה in Jer is thus rather negative.

¹¹ In this sense, P.W. SKEHAN and A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 264, who offer an alternative rendering, “he who *grasps*, or *is practiced in*” (the Law), where the expression refers to the scribe.

¹² J. MARBÖCK, *Jesus Sirach 1–23* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2010), 188, translates the Greek version “wird sie erlangen,” where the female *sie* refers back to wisdom in Sir 14:20.

¹³ A modern equivalent to Jer 2:8 might be the title of the book by J.S. DUVAL and J.D. HAYS, *Grasping God’s Word* (3rd ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), which also uses *grasp* in connection with God’s revelation.

¹⁴ MAIER, *Jeremia als Lehrer* (see n. 4), 293–294, and similarly 310, thinks of a written scroll of the Torah.

¹⁵ P. JOÜON, *Grammaire de l’Hébreu Biblique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), §112a.

1.2 Further Reproaches Referring to Instruction or Torah in the Book of Jeremiah

The next passages about תורה in Jer continue on this line. I will deal with the next five texts together, picking out only some of the main aspects.

(a) Jeremiah 6:19 says at the end: “because they didn’t pay attention to my words, and my instruction/law/Torah – they despised it.”¹⁶ This accusation of despising/rejecting divine תורה also occurs in Amos 2:4 and Isa 5:24, and Jer could be dependent on either passage.¹⁷ The book of Jeremiah quotes God’s speech, introduced in Jer 6:16, which parallels “my words” and תורתִי and announces evil as a consequence of the negative reaction of the people toward what he says and commands.

(b) The next passage, Jer 8:8, is complex. A group’s words are quoted: “We are wise, and YHWH’s instruction/law/Torah is with us!” This statement suggests a positive attitude toward God’s instruction. However, the introduction to it already questions this conviction when it says, “How can you [in the plural] say [. . .]?” And the continuation casts still more doubt on the self-perception of this group, so firmly related to God’s תורה: “Really, behold, for/to deceit the pen of deceit of (the) scribes has made (it?).”¹⁸ Twice שקר is repeated, first as the outcome of their actions, set in front of the phrase after the two demands for attention, and second as designation of the scribes’ instrument, to underline the complete perversion of God’s just words to the contrary, to treachery and deceit. The repetition stresses that the acts as well as the results are corrupted. If Jer 8:8 is linked to 2:8, this would further enhance the negative tone in 2:8. It might also suggest a possible identification of the תופשי התורה as scribes.

(c) In Jer 9:12 (v. 13 in English versions), God himself answers the preceding question of v. 11 asking why the country perishes: “because they have abandoned my instruction/law/Torah, which I gave before them, and didn’t listen to my voice, and didn’t walk in it.” The combination עזב תורה, “abandon the instruction/law/torah,” with reference to God’s teaching is relatively rare in the Bible. It is found also in 2 Chron 12:1; Pss 89:31; 119:53; and Prov

¹⁶ Instead of “despised,” the Hebrew verb מאס could also be translated as “rejected.”

¹⁷ Amos 2:4 and Isa 5:24 are addressed to Judah, and both texts are with high probability earlier than Jer. On the relationship between Amos and Jer, generally, see J. PSCHIBILLE, *Hat der Löwe erneut gebrüllt? Sprachliche, formale und inhaltliche Gemeinsamkeiten in der Verkündigung Jeremias und Amos* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001). For the relationship between Isaiah and Jer, see U. WENDEL, *Jesaja und Jeremia: Worte, Motive und Einsichten Jesajas in der Verkündigung Jeremias* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 25; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1995).

¹⁸ The Hebrew phrase lacks a direct object, so that one can only guess what the scribes falsify and pervert in this way. The translation above follows the Masoretic accentuation, but MAIER, *Jeremia als Lehrer* (see n. 4), 298 and 300, reads in another way, taking scribes as the direct object: “Ja, siehe, zur Lüge macht der Lügengriffel Schreiber.”

28:4.¹⁹ The first three texts, in all likelihood, are later than Jer; this is probably also true for Prov 28:4. It is possible that Jer stands at the origin of this expression. As early as Jer 1:16, God started to denounce the people for “having abandoned me.”²⁰ This is picked up and further specified in 9:12, where, in addition to God himself, his instruction is set aside, too. The disdain of divine תורה logically follows the defiance of God, continuing and completing it.

(d) Another instance of the question-answer scheme encountered in 9:11–12 can be found in Jer 16:10–11. The people ask why God has pronounced such great evil upon them (v. 10), and God tells Jeremiah to communicate to them: “Because your fathers have abandoned me – utterance of YHWH – and have gone after other ‘gods,’ and they have served them, and they have worshiped them, but me – they have abandoned; and my instruction/law/Torah – they have not preserved/kept.”²¹ The exact wording of this reproach is unique, and the front position of תורתי underlines the weight of God’s instruction and therefore also of the accusation. Other combinations of שמר, “to keep,” with God’s תורה are found elsewhere. The closest passages are:

- Exod 16:28, where God asks, with מאן, “to refuse”: “How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and תורתי?”
- Deut 17:19: The king should learn “to keep all the words of this תורה.”
- Deut 28:58, in a warning: “if you do not preserve/keep to do all the words of this תורה (which) are written on this scroll [. . .].” In a similar way, Deut 31:12; 32:46 are also expanded with “to do all the words” as commands for the people.
- In 1 Chr 22:12, David instructs Solomon “to keep YHWH’s תורה.”
- Ps 119:34, 44, 55: Three times the prayer states the speaker’s intention to stick to God’s law; in v. 136 he is afflicted because others do not do so: “Streams of water flow down (from) my eyes, for they do not keep your instruction/law/Torah.”
- Participles in Prov 28:4 (in the plural; see above in example c) and 29:18 (in the singular) speak of an attitude of “keeping תורה.”

Of these twelve passages, only three have a negative background, thus coming close to the reproach of Jer 16:11: Exod 16:28; Deut 28:58; and Ps 119:136. As Jer often picks up Deut 28,²² Jer 16:11 might be an actualization of the condi-

¹⁹ In Prov 4:2, עֵיב תורה refers to the instruction of the father, so it is excluded from the list here. M. V. FOX, *Proverbs 10–31* (AB 18B; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 821 understands Prov 28:4 as “ignoring” (עֵיב) “wisdom instruction” (תורה).

²⁰ This is often repeated with variations; examples include Jer 2:13, 17, 19; Jer has twenty-five occurrences of the verb “abandon,” more than any other book of the Bible.

²¹ The Hebrew verb is שמר, “to preserve”; “kept” is the rendering for it in NRSV and NIV.

²² G. FISCHER, “Fulfillment and Reversal: The Curses of Deuteronomy 28 as a Foil for the Book of Jeremiah,” *Semitica et Classica* 5 (2012), 43–49.

tional threat there, implying that the curses following in Deut 28:59–68 will come into effect here.

(e) Jeremiah 18:18 is not actually a direct reproach. This opening of the fourth confession, however, characterizes the false attitude in the community that attacks the prophet Jeremiah, thinking: “because תורה does not perish from the priest, and council from the wise, and word from the prophet.” The quote presents the illusional confidence placed in the religious leaders and their divine inspiration or access to revelation.

This last passage is interesting because it has very close ties with Jer 2:8. Common elements are priests, prophets, and the תורה. In Jer 2:8 the priests were mentioned separately, as well as those “handling/grasping התורה.” Jeremiah 18:18, however, links תורה with the “priest.” This group, too, seems to have a close relationship with Torah – at least on the level of the people’s persuasion. Jeremiah 18:18 might indicate that תופשי התורה in 2:8 may be a section of the priests. Taking into consideration Jer 8:8 as well, it could refer to a group of scribes among them.

Looking back at these five passages, three instances (a, c, and d) are explicitly very negative, using verbs like *despise/reject*, *abandon*, and *not keep* for the community’s attitude toward God’s תורה. The book of Jeremiah describes, sometimes in a unique manner, the people’s complete distance from it. In contrast to this remoteness, they themselves are convinced of having it as a kind of possession (b and e) and of being strongly bonded with it.

1.3 The Other Texts

Five out of the overall eleven passages in Jer remain to be dealt with. Four of them draw on a concept already mentioned, namely “to walk” in God’s תורה;²³ one, however, develops a new idea (Jer 31:33).

(a) Walking in God’s תורה

This phrase occurs first in Jer 9:12, albeit separated by a distance of several words. There, “in it” refers back to תורתי in the previous context. The expression combines the verb הלך, “to go, to walk,” with the preposition בְּ, “in,” and תורה. This wording is encountered four more times in Jer:

- i. In Jer 26:4, God renews²⁴ his warning in the temple: “if you do not listen to me, to walk in my instruction/law/תורה which I gave before you [. . .].”

²³ The first instance is Jer 9:12 (see above 1.2, c): “and did not walk in it.”

²⁴ The setting and the general orientation of Jer 26 are similar to the first temple sermon that Jeremiah is commanded to communicate in Jer 7, but the contents and wording are quite different. See T. SEIDL, “Jeremias Tempelrede: Polemik gegen die joschijanische Reform? Die Paralleltraditionen Jer 7 und 26 auf ihre Effizienz für das Deuteronomismusproblem in

- ii. Jeremiah prays in Jer 32:23, after the purchase of the land in Anathoth, and confesses the people's guilt: "and they did not listen to your voice, and in your תורה they did not go."
- iii. Jer 44:10 expresses God's reproach of those who immigrated to Egypt: "and they did not fear, and they did not walk in my תורה and in my statutes which I had given before you."
- iv. A few verses later, in Jer 44:23, Jeremiah addresses the same audience, picking up God's accusation: "and you did not listen to YHWH's voice, and in his תורה and in his statutes and in his 'testimonies'²⁵ you did not walk."

Both passages in Jer 44 are at the end of subunits, summarizing the main accusation and stressing it through repetition. Jeremiah 44 itself, too, is an end: it concludes the discourses of God and Jeremiah to the people within the book. Thus it is a kind of final statement on the people in Jer. This also underlines the weight of "walking in God's תורה" and the gravity of not doing it, as here.

Of the five passages with this expression, four are preceded by "not listen to . . . voice/me."²⁶ This seems to indicate that attention to God's speaking ("to listen") is a first step, like a precondition, after which concrete acts of obedience ("to walk in his תורה") should follow. Out of the five passages, four are negated and accuse the people of past disobedience. Only Jer 26:4, as a conditional warning for the future, remains open.

(b) *A New Hope*

The "scroll of consolation" in Jer 30–31 contains many divine promises. The most famous among them is probably the announcement of a "new covenant" in Jer 31:31–34. There, in v. 33, God pledges: "because this will be the covenant which I will conclude with the house of Israel after those days – uttering of YHWH – I will give תורתי in their midst, and on their heart I will write it." This stands in contrast to the passages quoted above in (a), as it is a positive assurance granted by God and touching the core of the believers.

The combination "to give (with נתן) . . . תורה" appears in Jer 9:12 and 26:4. There it is set "before them/you." Here it is no longer external to the people but gets right into their interior being and is inscribed on their hearts. The problem of the community's not listening to God²⁷ is thus overcome by an inward con-

Jeremia befragt," in *Jeremia und die "deuteronomistische Bewegung"* (ed. W. Groß; BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz, 1995), 141–179, here 174–175.

²⁵ NIV clarifies the expression by rendering it as "stipulations."

²⁶ Starting with 9:12, the only exception being 44:10.

²⁷ See above, in subsection a, the fourfold repetition of "not listen" in Jer 9:12; 26:4; 32:23; 44:23, all of which mention (indirectly, in the negative mode) listening as a precondition for following God's תורה.

cordance with his will and intentions. The inscription of his תורה on the heart “overwrites” the sin engravings of Jer 17:1, and it also signifies that God goes beyond the writing of his commandments on scrolls or stones on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:4; 31:18).

1.4 Results

The overview of the eleven passages with תורה in Jer reveals some interesting features:

- a. Nine times it explicitly refers to God. The only exceptions are Jer 2:8 and 18:18; there priests and another religious group are associated with it.
- b. There are eight different constructions, which points to a varied and creative use throughout the book.
- c. Most of them are negative, with verbs like *despise/reject*, *abandon*, (*not*) *keep*, (*not*) *walk*. This might indicate that there is a problem in the relationship of the people to God’s תורה and that Jer 2:8 has also to be understood in an adverse way.
- d. The first two negative verbs, “despise” and “abandon,” are also used for YHWH. This underlines the close connection of תורה and Israel’s God. The people’s behavior toward both is, to a large extent, nearly identical.
- e. Repeated combinations are “to walk in the תורה” (5×)²⁸ and נתן תורה (3×). The latter shows a progression toward the divine promise in Jer 31:33, bringing a positive solution to the theme of God’s תורה in the book of Jeremiah. It is to be regarded as the *high point* of Jer’s message about it.
- f. The exact denotation of תורה in Jer cannot be determined with certainty. It may refer to divine instruction in general or to (one of) the first five scrolls of the Bible. However, the difference between those two options might not be that great, as God’s instructions are mainly found in these books.²⁹

An argument for a written תורה might be taken from Jer 8:8. There the response to the people’s affirmation mentions the “pen of scribes” as false and falsifying, maybe alluding to an already existing (“has made,” in the perfect tense) written document³⁰ and to a group producing written documents. Eventually, the use of the verb תפש, referring to something that can be “handled” like an instrument or

²⁸ Jer 9:12 is included here, referring to תורה by preposition and suffix.

²⁹ The Septuagint of Jer shows a tendency toward interpreting תורה as “law.” Its standard equivalent in the first half of the book is νόμος in the singular, whereas the second half always has plural forms and displays a variety of terms, employing νόμματα in 33:4, νόμοι in 38:33, and προστάγματα in the three other instances (39:23; 51:10, 23). For the peculiarities of Jer-LXX, see G. A. WALSER, *Jeremiah: A Commentary based on Jeremias in Codex Vaticanus* (Septuagint; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

³⁰ Similarly MAIER, *Jeremia als Lehrer* (see n. 4), 304: “dass es sich [. . .] um eine schriftliche Größe handelt.”

a weapon, may also point to a written form of the תורה. Finally, the use of תורה with the definite article in Jer 2:8 – the only time within the whole book – might still add some weight to the consideration that “the Torah” is being referred to. Whether this is a realistic option will be investigated in part 2.

1.5 The Motif “To Know (God)” in the Book of Jeremiah

As God in Jer 2:8 accuses the group “grasping/handling הַתּוֹרָה” of not knowing him, this introduces a second motif connected with what we have dealt with so far, and it might also offer some clues to understanding what תורה in Jer could mean. ידע occurs seventy-five times in Jer. Use of this motif is varied, starting in Jer 1:5 with God knowing Jeremiah. After Jer 2:8, the same reproach of not knowing God is found again in 9:2 and is intensified further in 9:5 by “they have refused to know me.” God encounters a deliberate rejection by his people.

In contrast to this, there are passages in Jer that highlight the possibility and the importance of knowing God. In 9:23, God himself proposes that whoever wants to boast may do it by virtue of knowing him. Jeremiah 24:7 offers a divine promise to those exiled in 597 BCE: “And I will give them a heart to know me.” Finally, God announces in 31:34, “they all will know me, from their small (ones) to their great (ones).” The pervading knowledge of God in the whole community presents a kind of healing for the absence of knowing and its refusal earlier in 9:5.

The scroll of consolation and therein especially the small unit with the new covenant in Jer 31:31–34 thus furnishes two important reversals for faults within the people:

- i. The inscription of divine תורה on the hearts of the people counters its disregard in the past (v. 33).
- ii. The promise of the knowledge of God,³¹ granted by him personally and to all (v. 34), overcomes the previous widespread refusal to know him.

These two divine assurances belong to the same explanation of what is new in this covenant, starting in v. 33 and continuing in v. 34, in opposition to the old one (v. 32). תורה and “to know God” are connected here as well and (ii) can be regarded either as a kind of intensifying of (i) or as the highest fulfilment of it. Jeremiah 2:8, which brought together the two themes for the first time, shows their deficiencies and failures at the beginning of the book, thus providing a dark foil for what is to follow. Jeremiah 31:33–34 is the only other passage in Jer that again contains both topics, and it constitutes their focal point,³² in it, their negative dynamic is turned around and receives a good and lasting solution.

³¹ To know YHWH, the real God, contrasts with other passages where Israel’s worship of “other Gods whom they/you did not know” (Jer 7:9; 19:4; 44:3) is mentioned.

³² For the knowledge of YHWH, Jer 31:34 is also the final point, although 44:3 also touches on this theme from the negative side (see n. 31). תורה, however, occurs more often still later

The motif of “knowing God” in Jer shows that the mishandling of the תורה, seen above in 1:1–4, is only part of a much broader defect, namely, the absence or even rejection of an intense relationship with God himself. To “know” in Hebrew can include an intimate relationship; thus the accusations in Jer 2:8 and the other passages with תורה in Jer reveal a fault deeper than mishandling of the תורה: the lack of knowledge of God is at the root of the disastrous developments described in Jer. There is hope for the future, however, as the texts in Jer 24 and 31 show, a future which will even surpass what went before.

2 The Relationship of the Book of Jeremiah to the Torah

The investigation of the use of תורה in the book of Jeremiah resulted, at least, in the possibility that תורה in Jer may already refer to (one of) the first five books of the Bible. This leads us further, to check whether other observations, on a literary level, may confirm that a connection between Jer and the Torah is not only possible but indeed real. I contend that the whole Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy, in a form very close to the Masoretic Text) predates Jer and serves as a source for it. In order to show this, I will proceed in several steps. First, I will present several expressions that link the books of the Torah with Jer (2.1). An evaluation of these connections will follow (2.2), before the differences between the two literary corpora are dealt with (2.3). Finally, I will reflect on the significance of these observations (2.4).

2.1 Some Connections between the Torah and the Book of Jeremiah

(a) With the Book of Genesis

“Nations will bless themselves in you”³³ in Jer 4:2 has its closest parallels in Gen 22:18 and 26:4. In Gen 22, the angel of the Lord promises this to Abraham and his descendants.³⁴ In Jer, this motif is applied to the people who return to God, thus continuing and expanding what had been announced. Jeremiah 4:23–25

(see 1.3). The occurrences in Jer 44:10, 23 show that God’s promises, at least within the time span of Jeremiah, have not yet been realized.

³³ The most detailed investigation of this expression is A. FLURY-SCHÖLCH, *Abrahams Segen und die Völker: Synchrone und diachrone Untersuchungen zu Gen 12 1–3 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der intertextuellen Beziehungen zu Gen 18; 22; 26; 28; Sir 44; Jer 4 und Ps 72* (Forschung zur Bibel 115; Würzburg: Echter, 2007), 192. He arrives at the conclusion that בָּרַךְ in the *hithpael* stem has a reflexive meaning (116) and sees this as valid for Jer 4:2 as well.

³⁴ Gen 22:18 is, besides Ps 72:17, “der motivgeschichtliche Ausgangspunkt” for the other texts with this motif of blessing in Abraham’s descendants (FLURY-SCHÖLCH, *Segen* [see n. 33], 239). This would indicate that Jer 4:2, too, is dependent on it.

describes a kind of reversal of the creation. Some words link it exclusively with the narratives in Gen 1–2.³⁵ In Jer 5:1, God offers to spare the whole city if he finds one person “doing justice.” In Gen 18:32, God agrees to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, if ten just people can be found therein. Compared to that, the “price” for the rescue of the community in Jer 5 is tapered from ten to one. To “do justice” and the expression “way of YHWH” (Jer 5:4) further connect with God’s and Abraham’s dialogue in Gen 18:25, 19. Finally, Rachel’s refusal to be consoled in Jer 31:15 comes nearest to Jacob’s behavior in Gen 37:35, where his sons try to console him over the “death” of Joseph.³⁶

(b) With the Book of Exodus

Jeremiah 7:9 mentions various commandments of the Decalogue. It varies the order but nevertheless probably refers to Exod 20.³⁷ In the same chapter (Jer 7), “leading out of Egypt” in v. 22 is connected in v. 23 with “listen to my (i.e., God’s) voice.” This has its source in Exod 19:5, God’s offer of the covenant at Mount Sinai. Several motifs link Jer 16 to the book of Exodus. Verse 14 alludes to the past exodus out of Egypt, and v. 15 surpasses it, referring to a future exodus out of all the countries of exile. In Jer 16:5, God has taken away *החסד* (“solidarity, grace”) and *הרחמים* (“mercy”), in contrast to his self-revelation in Exod 34:6. The writing of God’s *תורה* on tablets of stone and his handing them over to Moses, with *נתן*, in Exod 24:12 forms an exclusive relationship with Jer 31:33, the passage dealt with above in 1.3, where the *תורה* is inscribed on the hearts of the people. This overcomes the impasse of a merely superficial adherence to God’s instructions. Similarly, the next verse (Jer 31:34) seems to draw on the Sinai pericope, particularly Exod 34:9. The expression *סלח לעון*, “to forgive the iniquity,” in connection with *חטאת*, “sin,” is encountered only in these two passages of the Hebrew Bible.

³⁵ B. TRIMPE, “Ich schaue auf die Erde und siehe, sie ist tohu-wabohu (Jer 4.23),” *BK* 53 (1998), 135–139, esp. the table on 137, and still more extended, IDEM, *Von der Schöpfung zur Zerstreuung: Intertextuelle Interpretationen der biblischen Urgeschichte (Gen 1–11)* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2000), 55–84. Another reversal of a motif of Gen 1 can be seen in Jer 16:2: the command not to take a wife and not to have children runs counter to God’s initial advice in Gen 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply.

³⁶ This has been noted by S. E. BROWN-GUTOFF, “The Voice of Rachel in Jeremiah 31: A Calling to ‘Something New,’” *USQR* 45 (1991), 177–190, and K. SCHMID, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches* (WMANT 72; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 133–136. Both have also pointed to further relationships between the Joseph story in Genesis and Jer.

³⁷ There is only a slight indication that Exod 20, and not Deut 5, might be in view: the use of *שקר* occurs only in the Exodus version of the Decalogue.

(c) With the Book of Leviticus

Chapter 26 in particular, with God's promises and threats, has many connections with Jer. God is portrayed as גֹּשֶׁם, "giving rain shower(s)," in Lev 26:4 // Jer 5:24.³⁸ In Lev 26:23, he warns of consequences if the people don't let themselves be disciplined;³⁹ in Jer 6:8 he asks them to accept discipline. The so-called covenant formulas in Lev 26:12 and Jer 7:23 are completely identical. The threat that the "country will become a ruin/desert (הַחֲרָבָה)" occurs in Lev 26:33 and eight times in Jer, from 7:34 onwards.⁴⁰ The phrase גַּעֲלָה נֶפֶשׁ, "the soul abhors," forms an exclusive link between Jer 14:19 and Lev 26, where it is used four times (vv. 11, 15, 30, 43); v. 30 comes closest, as God is also the subject of it there.

(d) With the Book of Numbers

The most intensive connections between Jer and Numbers can be found in the oracles on Moab in Jer 48. Many names of places in vv. 21–24 correspond with locations mentioned in Num 21 as well as Num 32–33 in connection with the desert wanderings of the Israelites; some of them, like Diblathaim, form exclusive links between the two books.⁴¹ Moreover, Jer 48:45–46 concurs to a large extent with Num 21:28–29 and 24:17 and seems to have been taken from there.⁴²

(e) With the Book of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is the main source for Jer, as has been widely recognized.⁴³ Recent research has brought to the fore further aspects. Although the whole book of Deuteronomy has links with Jer, its frame, namely, Deut 1–11 and 26–34, offers the bulk of the relationships. Especially prominent are Deut 4–5; 7; 10; 28;

³⁸ The only other instance for this phrase, Ps 105:32, uses it with another meaning (turning rain showers to hail).

³⁹ יָסָר in the *niphal* is used for "disciplined."

⁴⁰ For a list of the passages where this expression occurs, and also of other recurring phrases in Jer, see H.-J. STIPP, *Deutero-jeremianische Konkordanz* (Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament 63; St. Ottilien: EOS, 1998), 50–51.

⁴¹ It occurs in Jer 48:22 and together with two other place names elsewhere only in the topographical list of Num 33:46–47; see G. FISCHER, *Jeremia 26–52* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 514.

⁴² FISCHER, *Jeremia 26–52* (see n. 41), 525.

⁴³ See, among others, the two volumes on the Deuteronomistic redaction of the book of Jeremiah by W. THIEL, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jer 1–25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973); IDEM, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jer 26–45* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981); and W.L. HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah 2 (Chapters 26–52)* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).

and 31–32.⁴⁴ Among them, Deut 28 forms the peak, providing by far the most connections.⁴⁵

I mention briefly some exclusive links, picking out only the correspondences of the texts:

- Deut 4:29 // Jer 29:13: “and you will seek [. . .] and you will find, because you ask for him/me with all your heart”
- Deut 5:29 // Jer 32:39: “a heart [. . .] to fear me [. . .] all days, for their benefit and that of their children”
- Deut 5:33 // Jer 7:23: “and you shall go the whole way which YHWH has/I have commanded you [. . .], that it may be well with you”
- Deut 28:48 // Jer 28:14: “an iron yoke on the neck”
- Deut 28:49 // Jer 5:15: “a nation from afar above you whose tongue (language) you do not hear/know”
- Deut 32:22 // Jer 15:14: “because a fire is kindled in my anger”

The length of some of these links, their number, the precision of the equivalences and their concentration in some areas (like Deut 5:29–33 or Deut 28) point to a deliberate literary technique, in my view on the side of Jer, of picking up those very special expressions of the last book of the Torah and reusing them throughout Jer.

2.2 Evaluation of the Connections

Overall, the links between the books of the Torah and Jer are too many and too strong to be accidental. They span the whole range, from the first chapter of Genesis to the final frame of Deuteronomy; some of these texts are generally deemed to be late.⁴⁶ No book of the Torah is missing. The highest density of relationships and the closest parallels exist between Deuteronomy and Jer and suggest that Jer had great familiarity with Deuteronomy. The connections reveal a desire to choose important texts such as Gen 1, the first creation narrative; Gen 18 and 22, two key passages for Abraham; and Exod 19 and 34, cornerstones for God’s revelation at Mount Sinai.

⁴⁴ For an overview of the major links between Deuteronomy and Jer, see G. FISCHER, “Der Einfluss des Deuteronomiums auf das Jeremiabuch,” in *Deuteronomium – Tora für eine neue Generation* (ed. G. Fischer et al.; BZABR 17; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2011), 247–269; for the relationship of the final chapters of Deuteronomy to Jer, see IDEM, “Das Ende von Deuteronomium (Dtn 26–34) im Spiegel des Jeremiabuches,” in “*Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben*” (*Gen 18:19*): Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie: Festschrift für Eckart Otto zum 65. Geburtstag (ed. R. Achenbach and M. Arneith; BZABR 13; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 281–292.

⁴⁵ FISCHER, “Fulfillment” (see n. 22).

⁴⁶ Examples include Gen 1, normally attributed to the Priestly writer; Lev 26, with its outlook on the reversal of the exile at the end (vv. 40–45); and Deut 32, which covers Israel’s history until the time of its postexilic restoration.

Comparison of the related texts shows some *typical features*:

- i. Similar blessings connect Gen 22 and Jer 4:2; Jer, however, extends it from Abraham and his descendants to all Israel, realizing the original promise.
- ii. The anticreation in Jer 4:23–25 signifies a reversal of Gen 1; normally such a turning back, as in Jer 4, presupposes an originally positive situation, chronologically and on a literary level.
- iii. God's offer in Jer 5 to spare the whole city because of one just person looks like an intensification of God's gracious dealings with Abraham in Gen 18 taken to the extreme.
- iv. Jeremiah 5:15 seems to clarify the strange expression "not to hear the tongue/language" in Deut 28:49 by changing the verb to "know."
- v. In Deuteronomy, Moses is often the speaker, referring to God in the third person.⁴⁷ The parallel passage in Jer 7:23 has God speaking in the first person; thus he confirms personally the announcements made by his prophet and gives added weight to them.

All these traits can be observed more often. These and other indications (see 2.3 below) allow us to surmise that the direction of dependence runs from the Torah to Jer. The author⁴⁸ of Jer was obviously very closely acquainted with the whole Torah.⁴⁹ Our conference in Jerusalem was entitled "The Pentateuch within Biblical Literature: Formation and Interaction." Regarding the aspect of the formation of the Torah, Jer has nothing to contribute. It is very different with the aspect of interaction. The first five books of the Torah are the source, and Jer uses them as basis for its expressions, ideas, and proclamations, but not without developing them further. The book of Jeremiah thus presents itself as a kind of prolonged reflection on and elaboration of the Torah. The next point will emphasize that even more.

2.3 *The Book of Jeremiah's Differences with Respect to the Torah*

So far we have mainly concentrated on what is common to both the Torah and Jer. Now we have to go one step further and look at the differences. Some are obvious, like the presence or absence of divine law or the different genre of the book of Jeremiah. As a prophetic book, it is distinguished from the books of the Torah, which contain mainly narration and laws. By contrast, there are no laws to be found in Jer. The book of Jeremiah does, however, have some narratives

⁴⁷ See above, 2.1, the example of Deut 5:33, with YHWH changed to "I" in Jer 7:23.

⁴⁸ In my view, Jer is the work of one author, despite its composite nature, variety of language, and complex arrangement; for these reasons, see G. FISCHER, *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 91–114.

⁴⁹ The connections even with the last chapters of Deuteronomy suggest this; therefore, as a logical conclusion, Jer must be late, i.e., not earlier than 400 BCE.

about the prophet.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the characteristic feature of prophetic books, to present divine speech and to address the people, is encountered not only in Jer but also in Deuteronomy. Furthermore, several texts in Deuteronomy portray Moses as prophet.⁵¹ We can observe three types of differences. The first type consists of aspects of the Torah not present in Jer. The second is marked by alterations made in Jer. The last type shows new themes within Jer.

(a) *Not Present in the Book of Jeremiah*

Whereas some commandments of the Torah, like the observance of the Sabbath, receive great attention (Jer 17:19–27), others are not even mentioned or play only a very minor role. This, however, must not be over interpreted, as there may be other causes for the absence of certain themes in Jer.

The entire legislation for cultic offerings is completely absent in Jer. Jeremiah 7:22–23 relativizes the importance of holocausts and sacrifices. Whereas the Shema asks for visible signs like tefillin and mezuzot,⁵² Jer never speaks of them. The major feasts – Pesach, Sukkot, and the Feast of Booths – are not mentioned, nor are the pilgrimages prescribed on these occasions.⁵³ Similarly, Yom Kippur does not occur in Jer. These and other observations in the same direction point toward a different orientation of Jer. Some religious practices do not seem to be considered relevant.

(b) *Differences and Changes in the Book of Jeremiah*

Several times Jer counters ideas and attitudes relevant for the Torah. This is a step beyond the previous point. It shows that Jer differs in some aspects from the Torah and even distances itself from it.

The beginning of Jer 3 quotes the case presented in Deut 24:1–4: a woman sent away by her husband who has become another man's wife. According to that law, the former husband must not take her back later. In Jer 3:12, God himself invites unfaithful Israel to return to him, thus transgressing his proscription in Deut 24.

Jeremiah 3 holds yet another change with regard to the Torah. Moshe Weinfeld has pointed to several instances of a “spiritual metamorphosis” in Jer that

⁵⁰ Mainly in the second part, especially in Jer 26–44.

⁵¹ See especially Deut 18:15–18; 34:10–12; and D. MARKL, “Moses Prophetenrolle in Dtn 5; 18; 34: Strukturelle Wendepunkte von rechtshermeneutischem Gewicht,” in *Deuteronomium – Tora für eine neue Generation* (ed. G. Fischer et al.; BZABR 17; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2011), 51–68; J.-P. SONNET, “La construction narrative de la figure de Moïse comme prophète dans le Deutéronome,” *RTP* 142 (2010), 1–20.

⁵² Mentioned in Deut 6:4–9, esp. vv. 8–9; for the tefillin, see also Exod 13:9.

⁵³ The pilgrimage of eighty men from Shiloh and Samaria to the “house of YHWH” in Jer 41:5, however, might allude to the “seventh month” (Jer 41:1) of the Feast of Booths.

involves important changes in the religious orientation of Israel.⁵⁴ The first one of these passages is Jer 3:16–17: whereas the ark of the covenant is the primary object among those mentioned for the furnishing of the tent of meeting in Exod 25:10–22, Jer 3:16 stresses with five verbs that the ark will no longer have any relevance at all. The following verse (17) even replaces it with the new role attributed to Jerusalem.

There are several similar cases for such religious changes. Jeremiah 7:22–23 lays all emphasis on “listening” to God, downplaying the significance of sacrifice. The “new exodus” from the countries of the exile in Jer 16:14–15, with a parallel in 23:7–8, will outweigh the old one out of Egypt. The new covenant in Jer 31:31–34 will surpass the old, broken one from Mount Sinai.⁵⁵

God declares in Jer 21:5 that he will personally fight against the people in Jerusalem “with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm.” This is a reversal of God’s engagement for Israel, as depicted in Deut 4:34,⁵⁶ underlined by the unique permutation of the adjectives. Unlike in Exod 14, God will take the side of Israel’s foes in the battle.

A veiled revocation of a law of the Torah is present in Jer 30:18, 21. The law about the apostasy of a whole city states that “evil men go out from its midst” and that it shall become a תל, a “heap of ruins, tel” and “never be built up again.”⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 13 aims at Jerusalem’s fate and tries to explain what it had deserved. Jeremiah 30, picking up both expressions and creating a unique relationship between them, describes how God overturns this merited punishment, fails to abide by his own law, and acts graciously once more.⁵⁸

A decisive difference, even a sharp opposition, lies in the contrasting movements of the Torah and Jer. Whereas the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy describe Israel’s wandering toward the promised land, Jer reverses the direction and shows in Jer 42–44 how the people and their leaders choose to go back

⁵⁴ M. WEINFELD, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” *ZAW* 88 (1976), 17–56.

⁵⁵ Another instance might be Jer 31:29–30, which contains the idea of individual retribution, in contrast to the idea that subsequent generations have to pay for the guilt of their forefathers. The idea of individual retribution is an opinion that could – falsely – arise on the basis of Exod 34:7, if one did not take into account “(in case) they hate me” in Exod 20:5, which places a condition on it.

⁵⁶ G. FISCHER, *Jeremia 1–25* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 636; similarly, D. ROM-SHILONI, “Facing Destruction and Exile: Inner-Biblical Exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” *ZAW* 117 (2005), 189–205, esp. 193–194.

⁵⁷ These two expressions, referring to a city, occur for the first time in Deut 13:14, 17 and elsewhere only in Jer 30.

⁵⁸ G. FISCHER, *Das Trostbüchlein: Text, Komposition und Theologie von Jer 30–31* (SBB 26; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993), 191–192 and 207–208; E. OTTO, *Gottes Recht als Menschenrecht: Rechts- und literaturhistorische Studien zum Deuteronomium* (BZABR 2; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 76–78, has taken up this interpretation and defined it as “abrogation” of the Deuteronomic law in Jer.

down to Egypt,⁵⁹ the land of their former slavery, despite God's warnings through Jeremiah.

These are some indications of Jer's deviation from prescriptions and concepts of the Torah. Whereas the construction of the sanctuary and the instructions for its functioning are a key element of the Torah (Exod 25–31; 35–40; etc.), in Jer the temple is destroyed and emptied.⁶⁰ Whereas the Torah never mentions Jerusalem, in Jer it is besieged, captured, and burnt, yet for the future receives a new role as a center for the worship of YHWH. There are still some other, more general differences in accentuation, for example, with regard to Moses's mediation and to prayer for others.⁶¹ Overall, Jer advocates at least in some points for an essentially different position from that of the Torah.

(c) *New Aspects*

In contrast to the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, Jer employs שדך, "new," only twice:⁶² in Jer 31:22 and 31, both times within the scroll of consolation. In the first passage, God announces that he will "create (something) new in the country," whereas in the latter he promises a "new covenant."

The small number of occurrences are countered by the importance of the contents. Jeremiah 31:22 envisions a changed relationship between the genders and an increased role for women as a basis for a more just and fruitful society. Jeremiah 31:31 is the beginning of the unit presenting a fundamental change for Israel's faith; three aspects of it have already been dealt with above.⁶³

In comparison to the other books of the Hebrew Bible, Jer offers a deeper analysis of the causes for the disaster. The Torah, being fictionally situated in a time before the people's entering the land, could only sporadically refer to infidelity, idolatry, and other reasons for Israel's and Judah's downfall. The Former and the Latter Prophets adopt another stance, dealing more extensively with the community's guilt throughout its history. The book of Jeremiah, however, goes

⁵⁹ For the important role of Egypt in Jer, see M. P. MAIER, *Ägypten – Israels Herkunft und Geschick: Studie über einen theo-politischen Zentralbegriff im hebräischen Jeremiabuch* (ÖBS 21; Frankfurt: Lang, 2002).

⁶⁰ Jer 52:13, 17–27; for this motif and its significance in Jer, see G. FISCHER, "Zur Relativierung des Tempels im Jeremiabuch," in *L'Écrit et l'Esprit* (ed. D. Böhler et al.; OBO 214; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 2005), 87–99.

⁶¹ Knowledge of God in each individual and the group collectively (see Jer 31:34) makes teaching and religious exhortation superfluous; there is no more need for intermediaries. Additionally, the only mention of Moses in Jer appears in connection with his inability to obtain God's forgiveness (Jer 15:1). Whereas Deut 23:6 taught not to seek the *shalom* of Ammonites and Moabites, Jer 29:7 exhorts the exiled Judeans to pray for the *shalom* of the city whose inhabitants took them captive.

⁶² Isaiah has sixteen occurrences of the Hebrew root for "new," and Ezekiel has thirty-two.

⁶³ These are vv. 31–34 as the last example for "spiritual metamorphosis," the inscription of the Torah on the heart in v. 33, and the widespread knowledge of God in v. 34.

still further by concentrating almost relentlessly on the catastrophe of 587 BCE, penetrating into the roots of the destruction of Jerusalem at length, exceeding all other treatments of it by far.

In a similar way, Jer goes beyond the Torah in describing the new salvation granted by God after 587. In this regard, Jer is much more restrained than Isaiah and Ezekiel, for instance. It can say more than is presented in the Torah, but it remains sober and realistic in its hope.

The Torah announced God's dealings with the people for the future, when they would enter the promised land. It could not show the realization of these assurances or of the threats. This, in turn, is one perspective of the prophetic books, starting with Joshua. The book of Jeremiah occupies a special place therein, insofar as it picks up the curses of Deut 28 more than any other scroll of the Bible. The book of Jeremiah demonstrates that those announcements have been fulfilled; thus the way is open for conversion and return to God, as foreseen in Deut 30 and other texts.⁶⁴

2.4 Significance

The foregoing observations have revealed an interesting, even contrasting picture. On the one hand, it is obvious that Jer uses the Torah to a great extent, Deuteronomy being its main source for allusions. On the other hand, Jer goes beyond the Torah. The book of Jeremiah thus uses the Torah as its foundation yet has also the freedom to put forward new ideas and changes in matters of faith and orientation, even to the extent of revoking laws.⁶⁵

To be sure, this attitude does not touch key issues, like YHWH as the God of Israel, the general concept of covenant, worship, etc. There is much common ground between the Torah and Jer, and it is only on this basis that Jer differs from it.

If we ask for a possible background for this contrasting picture, another aspect typical of Jer might give a clue: no other book of the Hebrew Bible describes so extensively its author's conflicts with other priests and prophets.⁶⁶ Both groups

⁶⁴ The last three paragraphs contained more general remarks on the differences between Torah and the following books of the Bible, including Jer. The book of Jeremiah stands out among them only in some specific aspects.

⁶⁵ The distance Jer displays with regard to Deuteronomy and some Dtr ideas asks for great caution in applying the label *DtrJ*, as is often done – besides, it is far from clear what is meant by “*DtrJ*.” Although one has to acknowledge Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic elements in Jer, it employs many more forms of language; it has a different scope and covers a much larger field of interests than Deuteronomy and the related books. Therefore, it can hardly be adequately understood by the term *DtrJ* or by proposing a Dtr redaction for it. Jer is really beyond such categories, as the subtitle of our session, “Beyond *DtrJ*,” indicated.

⁶⁶ The main texts are Jer 4:10; 5:13; 6:13–14 // 8:10–11; 14:13–18; 23:9–40; 26–29; for the latter, see the recent study by A.C. OSUJI, *Where Is the Truth? Narrative Exegesis and the Question of True and False Prophecy in Jer 26–29 (MT)* (BETL 214; Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

were involved in the interpretation of the Torah. This would fit well with the initial statement on those handling the Torah, in Jer 2:8. Jeremiah 18:18 also mentions these two groups and presupposes them to be working in opposition to Jeremiah. In addition, Jer 8:8 introduces a group of scribes connected with תורה and accuses them of deceit.

It may well be that disputes over the understanding, relevance, and application of the Torah were a key factor for the formation of Jer.

3 Results

3.1 Jeremiah 2:8 as a Key

The first instance of תורה in Jer connects it with a group of responsible persons in Judah, alongside priests, shepherds/leaders, and prophets. This group is described negatively, as are the others, and accused of “not knowing” God, although they are “handling/grasping הַתּוֹרָה.”

Both these themes pervade Jer. תורה is neglected, despised, and abandoned and thus receives a similar fate to its originator, God. The “knowledge” of YHWH is largely absent, and the people even refuse it (Jer 9:5). The dynamic of Jer, however, foresees also a healing, presented in the announcement of a new covenant in Jer 31:31–34, with deliberate reversals of the relationship with divine תורה and of the knowledge of God in vv. 33–34.

These problems with the תורה and with the group seemingly responsible for dealing with it indicate a struggle in the background of Jer, most probably connected with the conflicts of the prophet Jeremiah with other priests and prophets. They represent two parties, characterized by different attitudes; the latter stand for a more traditional position, hold authority, have high esteem for the temple and its cult, and are convinced that God is always on their side. The figure of the prophet Jeremiah, on the other hand, represents another stance,⁶⁷ open to God’s new, different dealings with his people, seeing even Nebuchadnezzar as God’s servant, and promoting a “spiritual metamorphosis” enabling a deeper understanding of what happened in the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

3.2 The Book of Jeremiah Is Based on the Torah but Differs from It

Part 2 demonstrated the undeniable links between Jer and all the books of the Torah. These links suggest that Jer depends on the books of the Torah, in their

⁶⁷ The main title of the session in Jerusalem was “Torah and Prophets I.” In my view, Jer occupies a *very late place* in the process of forming the prophetic books, after all the Former Prophets, after more than half of the Book of the Twelve (namely Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah), and even after Isaiah (in its entirety) and Ezekiel. Jer thus belongs to “Prophets III” (or even IV).

integrity, as even late passages seem to be presupposed in Jer. The extent of their usage varies and increases toward the last book, Deuteronomy.

In light of these manifold and sometimes strong relationships, an interpretation of התורה in Jer 2:8 as “the Torah” – namely, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible – receives additional weight and cannot be excluded. In fact, it seems to offer the most likely and reasonable understanding of the first and probably also of most other occurrences of תורה in Jer.

Though Jer picks up expressions, ideas, and motifs from the Torah, it does not completely concur with it. In some instances, it shows other aspects, or it even runs counter to texts of the Torah – e.g., regarding the ark of the covenant⁶⁸ or the law of the apostasy of a whole city.⁶⁹ This raises the question of whose authority Jer dares use to proclaim such reversals of important Torah concepts.⁷⁰

Besides these contrasts with the Torah, Jer also goes a stage further than the Torah. It deals extensively with the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem and depicts this catastrophe against the background of Deuteronomic curses. As it discusses the realization of former announcements, Jer must be later. Furthermore, the undoing of creation in Jer 4:23–26 presupposes God’s creative act described in Gen 1. All these aspects point toward a more extensive background and a broader horizon present in Jer.

3.3 The Book of Jeremiah Offers a Glance into (Late) Persian Period Judah and Second Temple Judaism

The critique contained in Jer 2:8 and the contrasting positions with regard to the Torah that have come to the fore through this analysis of Jer point to disputes during the time of its production, probably in the fourth century BCE, shortly before the Hellenistic era.⁷¹ Several rival opinions struggle to be heard as authoritative voices of God, and Jer engages with some influential groups who are falsely convinced that they are already and always on the right track. The book

⁶⁸ Contrasting texts are Exod 25 and Jer 3:16–17.

⁶⁹ Jer 30:18, 21 stand in opposition to Deut 13.

⁷⁰ Jeremiah’s legitimization is stressed several times throughout the book: at his commissioning in Jer 1:9, as God touches his mouth; in 5:14, still intensifying the force of the divine words in his mouth through the additional “fire”; and in 15:19, with God’s offer to Jeremiah to “be like his mouth.” All these elements are unique for the Hebrew Bible. Indirectly, the criticism of the false prophets in Jer 23:9–32 also heightens Jeremiah’s authority, allowing us to suppose that the positive qualifications (like v. 18, or “wheat, fire, hammer” in vv. 28–29) are applicable to him and his proclamation of God’s words.

⁷¹ This dating for Jer is a consequence of its intertextual relationships: If the author of the book of Jeremiah could use the whole Torah, all the Former Prophets, and a large part of the Latter Prophets, it cannot be earlier than the fourth century BCE. At the same time, Hellenistic influence can hardly be detected in Jeremiah. For a more extended reasoning see FISCHER, *Jeremia 1–25* (see n. 56), 65–75. I am grateful to Mrs. Felicity Stephens for improving the English of this article.

of Jeremiah claims against them that the primary aim must be “to know God,” who “creates new things in the country” (Jer 31:22) and is able to go beyond what is traditional and usual.

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Let me conclude with Jer 2:8: “Those handling/grasping התורה do not know me.” This is an early comment on the custodians, interpreters, and exegetes of the Torah, dating back more than two thousand years. I wonder what the author of Jer would say to Pentateuch research today. In any case, it raises the question of the relationship between studying divine Scripture and being familiar with God.