THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 2 KINGS 17 AND THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH Georg Fischer SJ, Innsbruck / Österreich

Abstract: As Weinfeld, Clements, Holladay and others have observed, the reflection on the fall of Samaria in 2 Kings 17 has strong relations with the book of Jeremiah. These ties are established through so-called "exclusive links", that is to say expressions or phrases only recurring in 2 Kgs 17 and Jer, and other very close or nearly exclusive links, indicating a literary dependence.

Contrary to Holladay, the direction of dependence seems to go from 2 Kgs 17 to Jer. The borrowing of Jer is the result of a triple choice, namely (a) referring to a dtr key text, (b) reusing prominent expressions of it and (c) positioning them at strategic places within Jer. As a result, the book of Jer appears to connect the fall of Jerusalem and Judah with that of Samaria, but also to show how God turns a desperate past into the gift of new life.

[end of abstract]

A) State of the question

As far back as 1886 the relationship between 2 Kgs 17 and the book of Jeremiah had already received attention. Stade, commenting on 2 Kgs 17,7-17, states that it is dependent upon Jer¹. More recently, Weinfeld has collected deuteronomic phraseology², including passages from Jeremiah. Among them at least nine expressions coincide with 2 Kgs 17. More specifically, Hobbs pointed out that "turn from your evil ways" (2 Kgs 17,13) is used in the prophetic messages of Jer 18,11; Ez 33,11; he interpreted the prophets as being later³. Just the other way round, Holladay in his argumentation⁴ describes "Jeremiah's impact on the exilic deuteronomists", referring mainly to 2 Kgs 17. In still another way, Clements has shown structural parallels between Jer 1-25 and 2 Kgs 17,7-23 with regard to four central themes⁵.

¹ B. STADE, Anmerkungen zu 2.Kö.15-21, ZAW6 (1886) 156-189, here 164: "Und zwar hat diese deuteronomistische Hand erst nach Jeremia geschrieben, denn sie ist von jeremianischen Gedanken abhängig, was schon Thenius aufgefallen ist." This means that Thenius perceived this connection even before Stade. - I am grateful to my confrere David Meconi SJ for having corrected the English of this article.

² M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, 320-365.

³ T.R. HOBBS, 2 Kings (WBC) Waco 1985, 233.

⁴ W.L. HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah 2* (Hermeneia) Minneapolis 1989, 85-86: Out of nine connecting phrases or expressions five stem from 2 Kings 17.

⁵ R.E. CLEMENTS, Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History, in: *Understanding*

The research mentioned above seems to indicate that the relationship of 2 Kgs 17 with Jeremiah deserves special attention. This is all the more true in the context of the ongoing debate about the general relationship of Jer with dtrH, to which several recent 'Sammelwerke' testify⁶. Under this aspect, the connection between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer can be seen as an apt and promising example from which to glean relevant material. After

briefly treating some main topics regarding 2 Kgs 17, I will approach the question of the relationship between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer in three steps (B):

- 1) How strong are the relations?
- 2) What is the direction of dependence?
- 3) How can the relationship be interpreted?

Before going to our question, I want to present briefly important recent literature on 2 Kgs 17. Trebolle has investigated the text in its Hebrew, Greek and Latin forms⁷. 2 Kgs 17 apparently has three parts: v1-6 are a historical note on Hosheas disloyalty and its consequences; v7-23 are a reflection on this end of the Northern Kingdom; v24-41 describe the resulting mixture of beliefs⁸. 2 Kgs 17 gives several answers to the question why the North was exiled⁹. It is also a very long answer, with a suspension being built by in v7, starting the protasis, to which the apodosis follows in v18 only¹⁰. There is discussion going

Poets and Prophets (Ed. A.G. AULD, FS G.W. Anderson) Sheffield 1993, 93-114. Clements, however, has to reckon with a juxtaposition of element (3) "Judah and Israel" to the first place in Jeremiah (Jer 2-6). Besides, element (1) "Idolatry - The Worst of Sin", to which he ascribes Jer 7-10, already appears in Jer 2.

⁶ Jeremia und die >>deuteronomistische Bewegung<< (Ed. W. GROß; BBB 98) Weinheim 1995; The Book of Jeremiah and its Reception (Ed. A.H.W. CURTIS, T. RÖMER; BETL 128) Leuven 1997; see also the recent reedition of Le Livre de Jérémie (Ed. P.-M. BOGAERT; BETL 54) Leuven ²1997.

J.C. TREBOLLE BARRERA, Recensión y redacción de 2 Re 17,7-23 (TM LXX-B/LXX-L VL), in: Simposio biblico español (Ed. N. FERNANDEZ MARCOS et al.) Madrid 1984, 215-228.

⁸ For a more detailed structure of v7-23 see B. BECKING, Theologie na de ondergang: Enkele opmerkingen bij 2 Koningen 17; Theology after the fall; remarks on 2 Kings 17:7-23, *Bijdr* 49 (1988) 150-174. - A formcritical division leads S. TALMON, Polemics and Apology in Biblical Historiography, in: id., *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible. Form and Content*, Jerusalem 1993 (first published in 1981), 134-159, to discern three different strata in 2 Kings 17,1-18,12 (143s).

⁹ M. BRETTLER, Ideology, History and Theology in 2 Kings XVII 7-23, VT 39 (1989) 268-282.

¹⁰ J.A. MONTGOMERY, Kings (ICC) Edinburgh 1951, 468.

on about the literary levels11.

One crucial aspect about 2 Kgs 17 is its relation to history. The most extensive study in this regard comes from Becking¹². Another point discussed is the identity of the Egyptian Pharao in v4, אוס¹³. Hobbs remarks that the high number of captives in Sargon's annals cannot come from the capital Samaria alone¹⁴. Interestingly, the text refers in v18s to readers in the South¹⁵.

2 Kgs 17 shows parenetic features¹⁶. The strange evaluation of King Hoshea in v2, making him better than the kings before him, has been explained by van der Kooij¹⁷. Linguistic relations besides those with Jer exist with Deut 31 and with other texts of the hexateuch¹⁸. - This brief survey has tried to give the

¹¹ Most exegetes distinguish a basic dtr 'Grundschrift' and at least two postexilic comments ('Fortschreibungen'), see e.g. C. FREVEL, Vom Schreiben Gottes. Literarkritik, Komposition und Auslegung von 2 Kön 17,34-40, *Bib* 72 (1991) 23-48, here 26 and 29; and J.-D. MACCHI, Les controverses théologiques dans le judaisme de l'époque postexilique. L'exemple de 2 Rois 17,24-41, *Transeuphratène* 5 (1992), 85-93.

¹² B. BECKING, *The Fall of Samaria*. An Historical and Archaeological Study, Leiden 1992. He argues for a double conquest of Samaria in 723 and in 720 (56). Similarly, M. COGAN and H. TADMOR, *2 Kings* (AB 11) NY 1988, 200, conclude for 2 Kings 17,5s that the author "has telescoped two events", namely the fall of Samaria in 722 and the captivity in 720, under Sargon. Also G. GALIL, The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria, *CBQ* 57 (1995), 52-65, sees 720 as the date for the fall.

¹³ D.L. CHRISTENSEN, The identity of "King So" in Egypt (2 Kings XVII 4), \(\mathcal{V}\begin{align*}\mathcal{T} 739 (1989) 140-153, thinks that King Hoschea has addressed Tefnakht I in 724 (153); this might have been in Sais (= מאר). Some years later, J. DAY, The Problem of "So, King of Egypt" in 2 Kings XVII 4, \(\mathcal{V}\begin{align*}\mathcal{T} 42 (1992) 289-301, rejects Kitchens theory of an equation with Pharao Osorkon IV in Zoan (296) and comes to the same conclusion like Christensen (299).

¹⁴ HOBBS, 2 Kings [n3] 230.

¹⁵ P.A. VIVIANO, 2 Kings 17: A Rhetorical and Form-Critical Analysis, *CBQ* 49 (1987) 548-559: "... of Israel to Juda" 559. See MACCHI, Les controverses [n11] 85, for the first postexilic comment that only Judaeans with the experience of exile constitute the true Israel.

¹⁶ TALMON, Polemics [n8] 144, and also VIVANO, 2 Kings [n15] 557s.

¹⁷ A. van der KOOIJ, Zur Exegese von II Reg 17,2, *ZAW*96 (1984) 109-112. He connects it with 2 Kings 15,29; there Dan becomes Assyrian territory so that at the time of Hoshea only *one* golden calf was venerated (112).

¹⁸ M. O'KANE, Isaiah: A Prophet in the Footsteps of Moses, *JSOT* 69 (1996) 29-51, points to the links between Dtn 31, especially v16-18.27.29, which are foreseeing, and 2 Kings 17,7-23; 21,10-15, looking back and forming a frame around the portrayal of Isaiah as a prophet with the whole authority of Moses in 2 Kings 18-20 (34s and 48s). - G. BAENA, El vocabulario de II Reyes 17,7-23.35-39, *EstBib* 32 (1973) 357-384, and id., Carácter literario

main information about 2 Kgs 17 in the actual discussion. It has become clear that it is a dtr key text, with many facettes. We may now go to our question.

B) Connections between 2 Kgs 17 and Jeremiah

1) How strong are the relations?

We have seen already Clements' proposal to show four central themes shared by 2 Kgs 17 and Jer 1-25. In a similar way, but following the covenant pattern, Nicholson tries to establish structural parallels between texts from Deut to 2 Kgs 17 and texts in Jer¹⁹. Without denying these similarities, the comparisons of Clements and Nicholson remain too general, comprising also other texts outside Jer, and are therefore little conclusive for our question.

Another path has been set by Rendtorff²⁰ who relates 2 Kgs 17 with the dtr interpretation of Israel's history in Jer 25. McConville follows his lead by showing as specific connections "although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets" (Jer 25,4; cf. 2 Kgs 17,13) and "to this day" (2 Kgs 17,34; Jer 44,10)²¹. Moreover, Römer²² refers to lexical parallels between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer 7. These relations are mostly based on shared expressions or similar ideas, forming thus a more specific bond. Yet all the similarities referred to by these authors can also be found in other texts. So it remains open whether the relation affects only 2 Kgs 17 and Jer or is a common trait with other biblical passages.

More specifically Holladay lists phrases shared by Kgs and Jer under the rubric "Jeremiah's Impact on the Exilic Deuteronomists"²³, and he distinguishes

de 2 Reyes 17,7-23. *EstBib* 33 (1974) 5-29, shows in a rather technical way the connections of words and expressions of 2 Kings 17 with other biblical texts; he mentions explicitly Ex 32 and covenant texts (384) and assigns to 2 Kings 17 a synthetic character (9).

¹⁹ E.W. NICHOLSON, *Preaching to the Exiles*, Oxford 1970, 33s.

²⁰ R. RENDTORFF, *Das Alte Testament*. Eine Einführung. Neukirchen 1983, 215. He remarks with regard to Jer 25,1-13: "Er zeigt deutliche Beziehungen zu der zusammenfassenden deuteronomistischen Deutung der Geschichte Israels in 2 Kön 17."

²¹ J.G. McCONVILLE, *Judgement and Promise*. An interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. Leicester 1993, 84 and 120.

²² T. RÖMER, La conversion du prophète Jérémie à la théologie deutéronomiste, in: *The Book of Jeremiah* (Ed. Curtis; Römer) [n6] 27-50, here 43 n77.

²³ HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah 2* [n4] 85s. The heading refers to the exilic deuteronomists, but in the text Holladay gives only examples of 1 and 2 Kgs. This may be casual, but it also

two categories, those surely dependent on Jer and others which might be stimulated by Jer. With regard to our question, he views Jer 2,20 "on every high hill and under every leafy tree" as the origin for 1 Kgs 14,23 and 2 Kgs 17,10, and Jer 2,5 "they walked after a nothing and shared in nothingness" as source for 2 Kgs 17,15; both phrases belong to the first category. Under the second category he connects the phrases "turn from your evil way", "but they did not listen but stiffened their neck" and "fling (someone) away from before the presence of Yahweh" of 2 Kgs 17,13s.20 with Jer 18,11; 7,26.15.

If we look more closely at the examples given by Holladay, there are two types. One is dominant, showing relations not only between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer, but also with other texts in Kgs or Deut. The other one, for which 2 Kgs 17,15//Jer 2,5 is the only example mentioned by Holladay, marks a connection not found elsewhere. It can adequately be named "exclusive link"²⁴, establishing a strong and indisputable bond between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer. There are others of this type, not observed so far.

Exclusive links between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer are:

ע4 מצא קשר "find treachery" - Jer 11,9

v15 - Jer 2,5 (see paragraph above)

ע20 מאס בכל־זרע שראל "despise/reject all the seed of Israel"

- Jer 31,37 (without 55 also 33,26)

v36יהוה מארץ מצרים .. העלה השלה "JHWH who brought .. up from the country of Egypt" - Jer 16,14; 23,7

Furthermore, there are other very close or nearly exclusive links 26 : v9 נוצרים "(tower of the) watchers" (also 2 Kgs 18,8) 27 - Jer 4,16 (in the sense of "besiegers") and 31,6

על כלינבעה וחחח כליעץ רענן (see above, also 1 Kgs 14,23) - Jer 2,20 על 11 The infinitive ההכעים alone, without a suffix, is only found in Kgs (6 times). But להכעיסטי occurs also in 1 Kgs 14,9; 16,2; Jer 11,17; 32,32; 44,3.8 and Ez

reflects the greater proximity of Jer to Kgs than to the rest of the dtrH - although the books of Sam, too, show affinities to Jer (see Holladay, 41s).

²⁴ G. FISCHER, *Das Trostbüchlein*. Text, Komposition und Theologie von Jer 30-31. Stuttgart 1993, 206s: "ausschließliche Berührungen".

²⁵ There occurs a very similar phrase in 1 Sam 12,6; the difference is that another relative clause interrupts the connection between God's name and his upbringing and that it refers to "your fathers".

²⁶ This category may be applied in cases where there are just few other cases in related (e.g. other passages of Kgs) and/or dependent texts (like Neh, Chr).

²⁷ In construct form and in another sense ('preservers' of God's commandments) the participle ניצרי appears elsewhere, too.

8,17; 16,26; cf. ממען הכעיסני (2 Kgs 22,17; 2 Chr 34,25 - Jer 7,18; 25,7; 32,29) v14 in Pausa ולא שמעו , also v40 and 2 Kgs 21,9 - Jer 13,11

ויקשו אחדערפם (see above) - Jer 7,26; 17,23 and Neh 9,16s; out of these²⁸, Jer 7,26 is most closely linked because preceded by ולא and followed by מאבוחם (a), like 2 Kgs 7,14

v18 סור מעל פנים "to remove from before the face", also v23 and 2 Kgs 23,27; 24,3 - Jer 32,31

v31 שרף בנים באש, probable root Deut 12,31 - Jer 7,31; 19,5

It is not possible to list all further relations; neither is it useful, because most of them are affinities not allowing sure conclusions. However, the quantity and closeness of the connections visible in the phrases and expressions above point to a literary dependence between 2 Kgs and Jer which requires an explanation²⁹. As our next step we may try to determine the direction of literary borrowing.

2) What is the direction of dependence?

This is a very delicate matter, as arguments such as context, typical or rare vocabulary and others can be used in both directions. To me, the evidence in our case seems to point to a reuse of 2 Kgs 17 in Jer. I will first examine some of the links above and then adduce additional reasons for this hypothesis.

God's rejection of the whole seed of Israel in 2 Kgs 17,20 is a devastating statement. God's oath in Jer 31,37 can be seen as a reply to it, in the sense of its dissolution, never to do it again. It is more difficult to assume the reverse direction; in this case 2 Kgs 17 would annul God's oath from Jer 31 without even alluding to his promise.

The reference to God's bringing the forefathers up out of Egypt (2 Kgs 17,36) is reused in Jer and extended contrastingly by the allusion to the repatriation from exile³⁰; the converse - taking Jer 16 or 23 as origin for 2 Kgs

²⁸ The origin of this phrase might be the exhortation in Dtn 10,16, and there are a number of occurences with other tenses or (grammatical) persons; so this connection is of very restricted weight.

²⁹ A neglected aspect of our presentation up to now is the phraseology of 2 Kgs 17; as it does not directly concern our field, I only want to hint at several unique expressions in this text. Not to be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible are: עלה בכל־הארץ, ע7 (and v35.37s) עוד בישראל וביהודה v13; ירא אלהים אחרים Hi; v15 עוד בישראל וביהודה v20; ירא אלהים אחרים Hi; v27s אחרי הגוים (three times). Especially the fourtimes exclusive repetition of the phrase "to fear other gods" gives a peculiar character to 2 Kgs 17.

³⁰ See the continuation of the sayings in Jer 16,14s and 23,7s. - As in the previous case, both are oaths and therefore of a more complex rhetorical form than their equivalents in 2 Kgs

17 - would weaken the theological argumentation, reducing it from one including previously Israel's return from Exile to one only referring to the Exodus.

2 Kgs 17,4 reports that Shalmaneser found treachery in Hoshea. This is connected to actual deeds, like sending messengers to Egypt and stopping to pay tribute. Compared to this historical use of the phrase its only other occurence in Jer 11,9 is applied to God's perception of the behaviour of people in Juda and Jerusalem, and explained by guilt and rejection of hearing his words (v10). Because figurative language normally is deduced from factual language, 2 Kgs 17 is best read as the origin³¹ of Jer 11.

The long expressions of 2 Kgs 17,10 "on every high hill and under every leafy tree" and 15 "and they went after the³² nothing and became (themselves) nothing" are found again in Jer 2, verses 20 and 5. Now, the expression in 2 Kgs 17,10 is identical with the one in 1 Kgs 14,23 where Judah's sins under Rehoboam are equated with those of the Northern Kingdom, thus framing the history of the divided kingdoms nearly at their beginning and at the end. This salient localisation of the people's idolatry recurs in God's reproach in Jer 2,20 as explaining (5) the unwillingness of a feminine "you" to serve.

Similarly, the two phrases of 2 Kgs 17,15, which it shares with Jer 2,5, show the same constellation. In 2 Kgs they stay in a sequence of narratives describing the people's action. In Jer 2 however, these phrases are put into the mouth of God, once again introduced by 5, asking for the reason for the people's rejection of God. Both times we encounter in 2 Kgs the narrator speaking, always on the simple level of narrating, whereas in Jer 2 these expressions are attributed to God and stay on a more complex level of reasoning. In general, the more sophisticated level is depending on the easier one which would mean that Jer 2 quotes two long expressions from 2 Kgs 17.

I was not able to conclude more from the other strong connections, so I will move on to additional arguments from outside our base text 2 Kgs 17.

There is a similar case with an even stronger relationship: 2 Kgs 24,18-25,30 and Jer 52 are for the most part nearly identical. Many reasons induce to

^{17.} Maybe this fact is another sign for Jer's dependence.

 $^{^{31}}$ The phrase could also have been a commonplace in oral language, even before both literary occurrences; then neither one would be the origin of the other passage. - The distribution of γ shows seven texts in 2 Kgs and only one in Jer.

³² The two passages are the only ones in the Hebrew Bible containing mach (with article).

see Jer 52 as dependent from 2 Kgs 24s³³, and this is also the opinion of the majority of exegetes. In a comparable way the author(s) of Jer could have drawn on 2 Kgs 17.

In my study of Jer 30-31 many other exclusive or very close links turned up³⁴. They do not only regard 2 Kgs 17, but also other dtr key texts like 2 Sam 7, 1 Kgs 8, 2 Kgs 23 etc. It seems that this scroll of consolation can be understood as a reversal of dtr sayings, especially judgements, by reusing their typical vocabulary and turning them to the positive³⁵.

If these last observations are applied to our question of the direction of dependence, they seem to confirm the picture argued for above using the direct comparison of the shared phrases between 2 Kgs 17 and Jer. The latter appears to be dependent on the first³⁶. Taking this as a result, there remains the task to interpret it.

3) How can the relationship be interpreted?

The least that can be said after this investigation is, with Römer, that there is a desire to establish in Jer a relationship with dtrH³⁷. The strong ties between both text corpora show a triple choice, (a) one regarding the chosen texts, (b) another one regarding the chosen expressions and (c) a last one regarding their positioning within Jer.

- a) The dtr base texts chosen by the author(s) of Jer are mainly dtr key texts, including long speeches and reflections (see three paragraphs above). 2 Kgs 17 fits adequately into this selection.
- b) The chosen expressions are, to a large extent, marked and salient phrases, repeted sometimes \grave{a} la lettre and without any other occurrence in the

 $^{^{33}}$ Just some arguments: 2 Kgs 24s is an apt conclusion for the history of the (Israelite and) Judaean kings; without it an essential part would be lacking. Its chronology, vocabulary, themes and formulaic expressions are closer to 2 Kgs than to Jer. - It may be noted that 2 Kgs 17 is linked to 2 Kgs 24s. Among other connections there are יבלה מעל ארמתו (23 ; 25,21 = Jer 52,27) and ממנים Hi (24 ,20 = Jer 52,3; similar to 2 Kgs 17,20 with .

³⁴ FISCHER, *Trostbüchlein* [n24] 186ss, evaluation starting at 205.

³⁵ See G. FISCHER, Aufnahme, Wende und Überwindung dtn/r Gedankengutes in Jer 30f, in: *Jeremia* (Ed. Groß) [n6] 129-139. There (138, n20) I refer to the reuse of dtn/r expressions as a trait which also marks other chapters of Jer (e.g. Jer 6; 7; 11; 13; ...).

³⁶ HOBBS, 2 Kings [n3] 233, shares this opinion, also T. COLLINS, *The Mantle of Elijah*. Sheffield 1993, 108s on the general level. As seen, HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah 2* [n4] 85, is contrary to it.

³⁷ RÖMER, La conversion [n22] 43: "une volonté de mettre en rapport l'HD et Jr dtr".

Bible, as in the case of the exclusive links. This seems to indicate that Jer has to be read in relation to its base in dtn/r literature and to be understood as an answer to it.

c) The third choice regards the position of the reused material within Jer. The chapters with the most and prominent connections are Jer 1; 2; 7; 11; 31; 36; 52, among others. This points to a deliberate use, displaying a preference for structurally conspicuous places in Jer, as the beginning of longer sections (Jer 2; 7; 11; 36), the frame of the whole book (Jer 1 and 52) and the theological centre in the scroll of consolation (Jer 31)³⁸.

After this more general remark we have to explain the special choice of 2 Kgs 17. Its main contents is the fall of Samaria, explained by its great guilt. Most of the exclusive and the other close links contained references to this main theme. So the *relecture* in Jer is a reflection on this crucial moment in Israel's history, reconsidering the reasons for the fall and trying to relate them with one closely connected main issue of Jer, namely the fall of Jerusalem and Judah, due to their guilt. Along this line, the destruction of Jerusalem becomes justified like the one of Samaria, and this fact is emphasized by the use of the same expressions (e.g. in Jer 2,5.20; 11,9).

Yet there is more. The reversal of the Lord's rejection of Israel (2 Kgs 17,20) in the oath of Jer 31,37 is one outstanding sign of a new time and a new theology. The dark, oppressing past is overcome; a new era is beginning. God leads his people back from exile (Jer 16,15//23,8), thus exceeding his 'old' salvation at the exodus out of Egypt. Similarly, the references of Jer 31 to his promise in 2 Sam 7 and Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8 confirm this blossoming of hope. Using the same salient expressions as 2 Kgs 17, the book of Jer goes beyond Kgs in showing how God turns a desperate past into the gift of new life.

³⁸ It is noteworthy that dtr phraseology is not restricted to just a few passages or chapters, but pervades, with variations, nearly the whole of Jer. See for this also L. STULMAN, *The Prose Sermons in the Book of Jeremiah*. A Rediscription of the Correspondences with Deuteronomistic Literature in the Light of Recent Textcritical Research, Atlanta 1986. This implies that the connections with dtr texts cannot be ascribed to just a small layer or to one restricted 'Bearbeitung' in Jer.