

What Happened to the Text in Jer 25:1–7?

Anneli Aejmelaesus
University of Helsinki

Abstract: The two versions of the text—the MT and the Septuagint—diverge from each other so radically in Jer 25:1–7 that deliberate editing of the text in one direction or the other must have taken place. Revisiting the passage (after *VT* 52 [2002]: 459–82), I would like to go through the text in detail as well as discuss methodological questions concerning the relationship between textual criticism and literary criticism in dealing with the two editions of the book of Jeremiah.

Introduction

This paper discusses the differences between the two editions of the book of Jeremiah in Jer 25:1–7 as well as methodological questions of how to deal with such differences.¹ The passage in question is characterized by references and links to many other passages in the book of Jeremiah. In fact, there is nothing in this text that does not link with some other passage in the book of Jeremiah. In the first place, the introduction of the chapter strongly connects with the beginning of the book, to the dating given to Jeremiah’s prophetic activity “from the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon ... until the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah ... until the captivity of Jerusalem” (Jer 1:2–3). Altogether this makes forty years, a classical period for a great prophet. The speech in chapter 25 participates in the fiction of Jeremiah’s forty-year career by stating that at this point Jeremiah has been active for twenty-three years. He is somewhat past the middle of his career. He has come to a turning point in his personal history, and even more so, this is a turning point in world history. Whoever designed the introduction and the speech that contain these dates hardly wanted to write a summary to mark the end of Jeremiah’s prophecies. This is not an end, but a turning point.

The turning point in history that is marked by this speech has a most meaningful date: the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which is 605 BCE, the year of the decisive battle at Carchemish. This is the moment when the power of Nebuchadrezzar begins to be felt in Palestine. Jeremiah’s prophecies are about to be fulfilled. This dating connects our chapter with chapters 36 and 45, as well as with the introduction to the oracle against Egypt that mentions the same year and the defeat of the Egyptian army at Carchemish (Jer 46:2).

¹ Revisiting the text after my article “Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History: The Function of Jer xxv 1–14 in the Book of Jeremiah,” *VT* 52 (2002): 459–82, I do not wish to repeat the discussion on the research history of the textual situation in Jeremiah, but refer to this previous article. An earlier version of the present paper was given as an invited paper as part of the Workshop “Editorial Techniques in Light of Empirical Evidence” at the EABS Meeting in Leuven 2016.

As for the speech itself, it is composed of phraseology that occurs elsewhere in the prose speeches of the book, above all in chapters 7 and 35.² The only content this speech does not share with any other passage is pointing out that Jeremiah has been speaking to the nation already for a period of twenty-three years, but without result: the people of Judah and Jerusalem have not listened to him. The radical consequence of this is expressed in the second part of the speech (v. 9): the destruction by the enemy from the north that Jeremiah has threatened the people with will become reality in the near future, and moreover, it will affect not only Judah, but also its neighbours.³ The formulation of all this content as a speech with the help of phraseology found elsewhere in the book is clearly the work of a redactor or an editor, or rather several of them. In this particular case, the redactional composition even seems to have a function in the structuring of the entire book, as indicated by the link to the beginning of the book. Furthermore, in my view, the structural function of the passage includes being an introduction to the oracles against the nations, which had their original location after 25:13, where they are found in the text-form represented by the Septuagint. It is obvious that the text at hand represents altogether a considerably late moment in the composition history of the book.⁴

Methodological Questions

In the case of Jeremiah, we are in the fortunate position that we have two different text-forms, the longer text of the MT and the shorter one represented by the Septuagint, which reveal two different, fairly late stages in the development of the book. Comparison of these two text-forms is often concentrated on the question which one of them is primary. However, we ought not to forget that the two text-forms we have only represent two among the numerous stages in the development of the text. It is necessary to take into consideration the overall character of the book and its growth—especially the writing of the prose speeches by “a hundred hands in a hundred years,” as Christoph Levin put it some time ago.⁵ It is necessary to give some thought to those other stages, too, that are not documented by separate witnesses.

What happened to the text in the passage under discussion is my topic. All in all, the two text-forms of the book of Jeremiah provide us with a rich collection of examples of what can have happened to texts. On the one hand, the book of Jeremiah confirms the basic hypothesis behind historical-critical inquiry, namely, that biblical texts are products of editorial work by generations of scribes. On the other, it demonstrates that tracing the various layers of text is no simple matter. As for methodology, focusing on the question “what happened to the text?” is the most effective way of approaching the problems of a text. To my mind, this is what the critical study of texts is about.

² For a list of the used phrases and their occurrences, see my article “Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History,” 468. The only two phrases that do not occur in chs. 7 and 35 are “the wickedness of your deeds” (25:5; cf. 4:4; 21:12; 23:22; 26:3; 44:22) and “enrage me with the work of your hands” (25:6; cf. 32:30; 44:8).

³ Jer 25 speaks a different language from ch. 36 with which it is often connected. In ch. 36, Jeremiah is ordered to write down everything he has spoken to be read aloud to the people, in the hope that “*perhaps* they will hear ... and turn from their evil ways” (vv. 3, 7). The only hope given in ch. 25 is that the destruction has the limit of seventy years (vv. 11–12). According to v. 9, the destruction prophesied by Jeremiah is on its way to be fulfilled and cannot be stopped.

⁴ See my article “Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History.” Similarly, for instance, Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1986), 490–91.

⁵ Christoph Levin, *Die Verheissung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt*, FRLANT 137 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 65.

What do I mean by the *critical study of texts*? We are accustomed to using the designation *textual criticism* when discussing differences between textual witnesses and *literary criticism* when tracing changes that are not documented in the various forms of the text. However, in the case of Jeremiah we have textual evidence that makes the old dichotomy between textual criticism and literary criticism—between “lower” and “higher” criticism—outdated and inappropriate.⁶ The old division of labour between the two branches of criticism—literary criticism dealing with the composition history until the completion of the text, and textual criticism being restricted to the copying process of the finished product—does not work any longer. Qumran has taught us that there is no point in the history of biblical books where the editorial work would have come to an end and the copying process that produced but inadvertent errors would have started.⁷ Both editorial changes and copyists’ errors have happened in all phases throughout the composition and transmission history of biblical texts.

Today, researchers working on textual evidence and those focusing on literary criticism end up working in the same field. Both are keenly interested in the question “what happened to the text?” and both deal with the same kind of textual material. I see no point in speaking of two different methodologies—the text-critical and the literary critical—but prefer to speak of one methodology that deals with both deliberate and inadvertent changes of the text, whether documented in textual evidence or traceable only through contradictions or conspicuous details of the text. What to call this methodology is an open question. It can be described as the critical study of texts, and its main method is to trace back the development of the text—what happened?—and to look for the reasons and motivations behind the change—why?—to support the argument. The literary critic cannot neglect the study of textual evidence any longer, and the textual critic need not and ought not to stay on the surface of the text, as this paper wishes to demonstrate.

Analysis of the Text

Let us have a closer look at our text as it is transmitted in our two extant witnesses. The Hebrew and the Greek texts and their translations are given in [the appendix](#) (with bold face and colour marking the differences between the MT and the *Vorlage* of the LXX as well as italics marking free formulations by the translator). We shall go through the differences and try to determine the direction as well as motivation of change.⁸

⁶ Biblical scholars are becoming increasingly aware of this problem. See for instance, George Brooke, “The Qumran Scrolls and the Demise of the Distinction between Higher and Lower Criticism,” in *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method*, EJL 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 1–17; and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible*, VTS 169 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), esp. 313

⁷ Of the many publications of Eugene Ulrich, see for instance the most recent: *Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible*, 2015.

⁸ This kind of an analysis definitely needs to begin with a comparison of the extant witnesses, as it is the textual evidence and not the literary critical method that takes the primacy. A diametrically different approach is taken by Shimon Gesundheit, “The Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool for Literary-Critical Analysis,” *VT* 62 (2012): 29–57, who begins his discussion of Jer 25:1–14 by making first his own literary-critical analysis of the text and only then proceeds to ask whether the shorter text of the Septuagint is of any help in solving the problems of the text. It does not surprise that the result is in the negative. By contrast, the principle that “the two-editions theory provides scholars with a sound empirical basis” for a reconstruction of the complicated history of the text is represented by Edward Silver, “Framing the Oracle of a Seventy-Year Servitude: Early Contestation of the Jeremian Legacy in the *Vorlage* of the LXX of Jeremiah 25:1–7,” *CBQ* 78 (2016): 648–65 (esp. 665).

In verse 1, the MT has a plus that gives a synchronizing dating: “that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon.”⁹ It is hard to think of a reason why the shorter text would have left out these words, even less so the translator of the Septuagint. By contrast, greater interest in Nebuchadrezzar seems to be typical of the longer text-form. In chapter 25:1–14, Nebuchadrezzar or the title king of Babylon does not occur in the shorter text-form at all, so that “the enemy from the north” is still anonymous, whereas the MT reveals his identity by the synchronizing dating in verse 1 as well as in verses 9, 11, and 12. This indicates that the editor is well aware of the meaning of the dating and emphasizes the fatefulness of the year.¹⁰

In verses 2 and 3, two pluses of the MT emphasize Jeremiah’s role as a prophet who receives the word from the Lord. In the shorter text-form this is not as explicit, but still clear enough on the basis of the preceding context. Using the title “prophet” in connection with the name of Jeremiah is one of those features that are multiplied in the longer text-form (with twenty-nine occurrences against four in the shorter text).¹¹ The other plus—“the word of the Lord has come to me”—is not unique either: with small variations, it has numerous occurrences in the book of Jeremiah and occurs as a plus of the MT in an additional five cases.¹² A further plus of the MT repeats in verse 3 “and you have not listened,” which also occurs in verses 4 and 7.

So far, the differences between the text-forms seem to be rather haphazard without any pattern, although connections to other parts of the book could be observed. The crucial point of the passage is, however, at the transition from verse 3 to verse 4, where the identity of the speaker becomes a problem. The previous cases that emphasize Jeremiah as the speaker seem to anticipate this problem.

In verse 3, the speech opens with the exceptional reference to the number of years that Jeremiah has served as a prophet. Both texts use the first-person singular “I have spoken to you early and again.” However, verse 4 brings along confusion. The Greek text continues with the first-person singular “I have sent to you my servants the prophets.” This makes one wonder who is the “I” speaking in the previous verse: is it Jeremiah after all? It is, of course, normal that prophetic speech contains the divine first person. However, if the speaker of both verses is the Lord, it certainly sounds awkward that the Lord has been speaking and sending his prophets for twenty-three years only. The MT differentiates between the subjects of verses 3 and 4: it is Jeremiah who has been speaking and the Lord who “has sent his prophets.”

Both phrases “I have spoken to you early and again” (וְאָדַבְרַתְּ אֵלֵיכֶם הַשְּׂכֵם וְדַבַּר) and “I have sent to you my servants the prophets early and again” (וְאֶשְׁלַח אֵלֵיכֶם אֶת־עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִאִים הַשְּׂכֵם) (וְשִׁלַּח)—both of them with the typical double absolute infinitives¹³—occur several times in the book of Jeremiah, but they always have the Lord as the subject (that is, the divine first person).¹⁴

⁹ Please note the exceptional form of the word “first” that appears only here.

¹⁰ At Jer 46(26):2, Nebuchadrezzar is given the title of king already at Carchemish, and our text seems to follow that parallel.

¹¹ “Jeremiah the prophet” occurs in the MT twenty-nine times. Of these sixteen correspond to “Jeremiah,” four to “Jeremiah the prophet” and five to a mere personal pronoun in the LXX, and four are included in MT plusses.

¹² וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה occurs as a plus at Jer 25:3; 46:1; 47:1; 49:34; וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה at Jer 2:1; 16:1.

¹³ The expression is difficult to translate: KJV “rising early and speaking” (= LXX), many other Bible translations “again and again,” or “persistently.” William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986–1996), translates it as “urgently and ceaselessly.”

¹⁴ There are a number of similar expressions—called in German “Unermüdlichkeitsformel”—that show minor variations in the details, including the verbs, but always appear in the divine first person. There are altogether eleven cases, six with שִׁלַּח qal (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4), three with דַּבַּר piel (Jer 7:13; 25:3; 35:14), one with עוֹד hiphil (Jer 11:7), and one with לְמַד piel

It is most exceptional in our passage that it is Jeremiah who is the subject of “speaking early and again.” It is also exceptional in the MT that the Lord’s sending of the prophets is expressed in the third person singular and with a peculiar verbal form, *perfect consecutive* instead of a normal narrative form, *imperfect consecutive* (וישלח instead of וישלח).

Taking a glance at the rest of the speech (until v. 7), we can observe that the Greek text—that is, the shorter text-form—is consistent in using the first-person singular throughout. In most cases, it is unambiguous who is the speaker. It must be the Lord who says, “the land which I have given to you” (v. 5) and “not to provoke me to anger” (v. 6). In the shorter text-form, the formulation is thus consistent: it is the Lord who speaks (in the divine first person), but the beginning of the speech in verse 3 is problematic, because it would seem more natural for Jeremiah personally to say “twenty-three years I have spoken to you early and again.”¹⁵

In the MT, the speaker of verses 3 and 4 is Jeremiah, who speaks of the Lord in the third person. The same happens in verse 5, which contains a further difference between the two text-forms. The MT again mentions the Lord in the third person: “the land which *the Lord* has given to you.” So far, in the longer text-form the speaker is clearly Jeremiah, and it seems that the plusses in verses 2 and 3 that emphasize Jeremiah’s prophetic activity were also meant to underline Jeremiah as the speaker. Until verse 5, the formulation is consistent: Jeremiah speaks of the Lord in the third person.

The consistency of the MT is however disturbed in verses 6 and 7, where the Lord is clearly speaking in the first person: “do not provoke me to anger,” “I will do you no harm” (v. 6), and “you have not listened to me” (v. 7). This divine first-person style continues in the plus of the MT in verse 7, which repeats the latter part of verse 6, and it is strengthened by the formula נאם יהוה “says the Lord.” These verses are closely connected to verse 5 until which the Lord is mentioned in the third person, so that there is no way to explain away this discrepancy.

The Direction of the Change

So far, I have tried to present the two text-forms as neutrally as possible. The next step is to ask: What happened to the text? In which direction was it changed and why? Is it one uniform direction in the whole passage or are there different solutions for different details?

As I already pointed out, the plusses of verses 1 and 2 have parallels elsewhere in the book and represent expansions typical of the MT, regardless of what the solution in the following verses will be.

The changes in verses 3–5 are clearly connected with each other, whatever the direction of change. It cannot have been an accident—the text was changed on purpose in one direction or the other. Many scholars are accustomed to the argument by *lectio difficilior*. Often, however, both alternatives have their difficulties, for which the text at hand is an example. The difficulties of the MT come in the later verses, verses 6 and 7, when the speech continues with the

(Jer 32:33). For the “Unermüdlichkeitsformel” as a distinctive language feature of deuteronomistic prose in Jeremiah, see Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–46: Mit einer Gesamtbeurteilung der deuteronomistischen Redaktion des Buches Jeremia*, WMANT 52 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 97–98.

¹⁵ The discrepancy between vv. 3 and 4 in the shorter version is so confusing that Rahlfs decided to print in his edition a lower case initial letter at the beginning of v. 3, as if it would be an option to connect the dating with what precedes. It is, however, not normal to have any words between לאמר / λέγων and the direct speech, and there is a copula that unmistakably connects the dating with the following speech. In Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, *Septuaginta*, editio altera (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), v. 3 was changed to begin with a capital letter.

divine first person, and it also contains a few exceptional—either late or erroneous—grammatical forms. The difficulty of the shorter text-form lies in its ambiguous use of the first-person forms: first it seems to be Jeremiah saying “I,” then suddenly the Lord. However, weighing the difficulties on both sides does not solve the problem.¹⁶ Rather, we need to ask about the motives for the changes. What happened and why?

Let us first look at verses 3 and 4 in the MT and test the possibility that the longer text is primary. What would be the motive for leaving out the two plusses in verse 3 of the shorter text and changing the third person forms to the first person (in v. 4, and again in v. 5)? This change would actually mean bringing confusion into a clear text. It is difficult to explain why anyone would have wanted to change the text in the direction of the shorter text. There is no problem in the longer text demanding remedy before verses 6 and 7 where the divine first person appears into the picture. The plus in verse 7 would certainly not have been left out by an editor who was changing the speech to the first-person style.

On the other hand, if the shorter text is taken as the starting point, the beginning of verse 4 poses a problem that an editor would want to sort out. Our editor reasons that it is Jeremiah speaking in verse 3 about his own career as a prophet, and he adds more emphasis to it: it is “the word of the Lord” that Jeremiah has been preaching, but the people “have not listened” (v. 3). In verse 4 it is easy to change the formulation into the third person singular (although the grammatical form is not impeccable), and the same is done again in verse 5. However, this kind of correction would have been needed again in verses 6 and 7, but our editor neglects it.¹⁷ The plus in the first-person style in verse 7 also poses a problem for this solution. Either one needs to presuppose that the editor who changed verses 3–5 would have totally forgotten about what he did in those verses, or one could consider different editors having made sporadic changes. In verse 1, the synchronizing dating need not stem from the same hand as the changes in verses 3–5, and equally, the plus in verse 7 could also represent a different hand. Some of the plusses of the MT are part of wider phenomena in the book of Jeremiah: “Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon” (v. 1), “Jeremiah the prophet” (v. 2), “says the Lord” (v. 7). The changes in verses 3–5 are, however, clearly connected with each other and motivated by the desire to remove the discrepancy.

Thus, the most plausible explanation of the differences between the two text-forms is that the longer text-form was created by one or more editors, of whom at least one aimed at removing the discrepancy between verse 3 and the rest of the speech.¹⁸ An additional confirmation of the priority of the shorter text comes from the phraseology: the first-person form represented by the shorter text is the form found in parallel cases elsewhere in the book (“I sent my servants the prophets,” “the land that I gave to you”).

¹⁶ Nevertheless, Gesundheit, “Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool,” 56, uses the “roughness” of the MT as an argument for its primacy over the text-form of the Septuagint.

¹⁷ Theoretically, there would have been other, easier options for correcting the ambiguity, for instance, adding at the beginning of v. 4 “thus says the Lord.”

¹⁸ For the argumentation, see also McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1:621–22; and Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches: Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte*, OBO 136 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 113–15. I agree with the argumentation of Stipp, which is unduly criticized by Gesundheit, “Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool,” 52–53, as resulting from “loyalty to the priority of LXX.” McKane, on the other hand, regards it as “the duty of a commentator on the Hebrew text to maintain the final form of that text in MT” (1:623).

Going One Step Further: How Did the Problematic Text Come About?

This leaves us with the puzzling question of how it is possible that the shorter and primary text-form contains such an inconsistent use of the first-person formulations.¹⁹ I think the phraseology typical of the book of Jeremiah and its imitation by subsequent editors will provide the key. Let us consider how Jeremiah's speech in verses 3–7 (according to the shorter text-form) might have come about.²⁰

(1) The main message of the speech is what we find in verses 3 and 7: “twenty-three years I have spoken to you and you did not listen to me.” The editor who first created the passage borrowed the phrase “I have spoken to you early and again,” wishing to say that Jeremiah has been constantly active as a prophet for a long time. The editor did not, however, pay attention to the fact that the subject of this phrase is otherwise the Lord (Jer 7:13; 35:14). In fact, verse 3 diverges in style from all those prose speeches that the editor could use as his sources, in that Jeremiah's speeches are always formulated in the divine first person. They always contain the messenger formula “thus says the Lord” (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה), and they are presented as “the word of the Lord” (דְּבַר יְהוָה) that Jeremiah was commanded to speak. Thus, a familiar phrase was used in an exceptional way. If this part of the speech had been kept short, containing verses 3 and 7 only, it would have made a perfectly suitable introduction to “therefore, thus says the Lord” (לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה) in verse 8. So, let us consider verses 3 and 7 (according to the shorter text) as the core and the earliest layer of the passage (see the chart below).

(2) For some reason, words spoken by Jeremiah—an example of his preaching during his long career—were filled in. A model was found in Jer 35:15: “Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds,²¹ and do not go after other gods to serve them.” The speech in 35:15 of course contains details in the divine first person, and such were also included: for instance, “the land that I have given to you” (v. 5). A closer look at Jer 35:14–15 reveals how complete the parallels with verses 3–6 are (see the table).²²

¹⁹ Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches*, 115, poses the same question and suggests that the inconsistencies might have resulted from secondary connection of the passage with Jer 36.

²⁰ According to Gesundheit, “Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool,” 53, a literary-critical analysis of the shorter text is impossible, because it represents a “flattened” version of the MT, in which the redactional layers are more difficult to discern. I do not see this difficulty, agreeing in this respect with Silver, “Framing the Oracle of a Seventy-Year Servitude,” 648–65, who makes an interesting attempt at a reconstruction of the compilation of the shorter version on the basis of two different traditions of the oracle. My approach differs in principle from Silver's in that I consider the passage at hand completely redactional. Both Gesundheit and Silver, each in their way, analyze vv. 1–2 as containing a doublet, whereas I would parallel the clumsiness of these verses with the redactional introduction of the whole book, which they clearly depend on.

²¹ “From the wickedness of your deeds” finds a parallel at Jer 23:22.

²² The parallels with ch. 35 have naturally been observed before. See for instance Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25*, WMANT 41 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 267; and Gesundheit, “Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool,” 42–43, who argues for the primacy of ch. 35. What I wish to underline is the greater correspondence in several details with the wording of the version represented by the Septuagint.

Table: Parallel Features between 25:3–6 and 35:14–15

| | Jer 25 MT | Jer 35 MT parallel | Jer 25 LXX |
|---|---|---|--|
| 3 | וְאָדַבַּר אֲלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־בְּיָדֵי וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם: ¹⁴ | וְאָנֹכִי דִבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם הַשָּׁבָב וְדַבַּר וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי: | καὶ ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὀρθρίζων καὶ λέγων |
| 4 | וְשָׁלַח יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים הַשָּׁבָב וְשָׁלַח וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְלֹא־הִטִּיתֶם אֶת־אָזְנוֹכֶם לְשִׁמְעָנִי: | וְאֶשְׁלַח אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים הַשָּׁבָבִים וְשָׁלַח לֵאמֹר שָׁבוּ־נָא אִישׁ מִדַּרְכּוֹ הַרְעָה וְהִיטִיבוּ מֵעַלְלֵיכֶם | καὶ ἀπέστειλλον πρὸς ὑμᾶς τοὺς δούλους [μου] τοὺς προφήτας ὄρθρου ἀποστέλλων, καὶ οὐκ εἰσηκούσατε καὶ οὐ προσέσχετε τοῖς ὤσιν ὑμῶν, λέγων Ἀποστράφητε ἕκαστος ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ τῆς πονηραῖς καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πονηρῶν (< מרע > ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑμῶν, καὶ κατοικήσετε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἧς ἔδωκα ὑμῖν καὶ τοῖς πατράσιν ὑμῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος καὶ ἕως αἰῶνος· μὴ πορεύεσθε ὀπίσω θεῶν ἄλλοτριῶν τοῦ δουλεύειν αὐτοῖς |
| 5 | וְשָׁבוּ עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה לְכֶם וְלֹא־בֹתִיכֶם לְמַן־עֹלָם וְעַד־עֹלָם: | וְשָׁבוּ אֶל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ נָתַנִּי לְכֶם וְלֹא־בֹתִיכֶם וְלֹא הִטִּיתֶם אֶת־אָזְנוֹכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי: | καὶ τοῦ προσκυνεῖν αὐτοῖς ὅπως μὴ παροργίζητέ με ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν ὑμῶν τοῦ κακῶσαι ὑμᾶς (= לדע לכם). |
| 6 | וְאַל־תֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרִים לְעַבְדָּם וְשָׁבוּ אֶל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ נָתַנִּי לְכֶם וְלֹא־בֹתִיכֶם וְלֹא הִטִּיתֶם אֶת־אָזְנוֹכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי: | וְאַל־תֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרִים לְעַבְדָּם וְשָׁבוּ אֶל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ נָתַנִּי לְכֶם וְלֹא־בֹתִיכֶם וְלֹא הִטִּיתֶם אֶת־אָזְנוֹכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי: | |
| | וְלֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהֶם וְלֹא־תִכְעִסוּ אוֹתִי בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיכֶם וְלֹא אָרַע לְכֶם: | | |

Colours are used to illustrate which parts of the texts correspond to each other.

Words in which the text-forms show differences are enframed.

Verses 5 and 6 are, in fact, in the present form of the text (both the shorter and the longer text as well as in the model 35:15) part of the sermon of “my servants the prophets” sent by the Lord, but they might just as well have been used in our context as Jeremiah’s last appeal to the nation, or perhaps as a recollection of his earlier appeals: “I have spoken to you early and again saying, “Turn now from your evil ways ...’ but you did not listen to me.” (vv. 3, 5–7; cf. the chart below).²³ In a quotation from Jeremiah’s earlier speeches, the divine first person was not necessarily disturbing. If just verses 5 and 6 were added by a subsequent editor (or editors) as the second component of the passage, the speech would still flow without difficulty. Nevertheless, it does contain a contradiction with regard to the following context: “dwell on the land which I have given to you and your forefathers forever and ever” (v. 5) is in sharp contrast with verse

²³ Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, KHC 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901), 200, regards vv. 5 and 6 as the content of Jeremiah’s speeches mentioned in v. 3.

9 according to which the destruction cannot be stopped any more.²⁴ We might consider this as the second phase in the development of the passage.

(3) It is difficult to say how many hands have been at work in verses 4–6 in this passage, but the result makes an impression that certainly justifies the description by Duhm:

Das Buch ist also gewachsen, fast wie ein unbeaufsichtigter Wald wächst und sich ausbreitet.²⁵

The passage at hand contains in its final form not only the admonitions in Jer 35:15, but also the rest of the verse, though in a different order and with additional phrases from other contexts. The text may have grown over some time. One phrase has drawn along another one that was felt to be missing. Thus, the beginning and end of 35:15 (parallel to 7:25–6) were added in verse 4: “I have sent to you my servants the prophets early and again, and you have not listened nor inclined your ear.” This part was perhaps felt to be missing between verses 3 and 5 because it is part of a similar sequence in 35:14–15. However, this is the part that caused the final derailment of the speech and made the need for correction compelling to the editor of the MT.²⁶ The editor behind this addition had already lost sight of the whole.

(4) It is worthwhile considering the repetition of the phrase “and you did not listen (to me)” as an indication of the gradual growth of the text. The subsequent additions pushed this phrase away from its connection with verse 3 to verse 7. One possibility might be that verse 4 was meant to recover this phrase in its more elaborate form, yet drawing along—either simultaneously or soon after—the sending of the prophets (7:25–6). The MT once more recovered the phrase “and you have not listened” to verse 3.

Chart: How Did the Shorter Text Come About?

³ From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, and until this day, twenty-three years [*] and I have spoken to you early and again, [*] (Jer 7:13; 35:14)

⁴ *and I sent [*] to you my [*] servants the prophets early and again, and **you did not listen** and did not incline your ear [*],* (Jer 7:25–26; 35:15)

⁵ saying, Turn, each of you, from his evil way and the wickedness of your deeds, and dwell in the land which I have given [*] to you and your forefathers forever and ever;

⁶ do not go after other gods (Jer 35:15)

to serve them and to worship them, (Jer 13:10; 16:11)

and do not enrage me with the work of your hands to harm [] yourselves,* (Jer 32:30; 44:8)

⁷ and **you did not listen to me.** [*] (Jer 7:13; 35:14)

Indentation illustrates the growth of the text (from left to right).

[] marks the points where the MT differs.*

²⁴ Cf. note 3 above. The contradictions within vv. 3–7 and with the following context as well as the irregularities in the application of the phraseology corroborate the view that the passage is the result of successive additions.

²⁵ Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, xx (“The book has thus grown, almost like a neglected forest grows and spreads”). Cf. McKane *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1:xlvi–lxxxiii, who speaks of a “complicated, untidy accumulation of material” and coins the term “rolling corpus” for the process behind the text.

²⁶ No wonder, Duhm suggested that v. 4 should be removed altogether (*Das Buch Jeremia*, 200).

Conclusions

Comparison between the two extant text-forms in Jer 25:1–7 has shown that the differences mainly stem from changes that happened in the textual line represented by the MT. The changes were motivated by a desire partly to complement the text according to parallel passages and partly to correct the confusion caused by the inconsistent use of first person formulations. The corrections were, however, not carried through consistently. The analysis has also shown that the variation within the textual evidence is for the most part not the result of scribal errors during copying, but presupposes that the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint represents an earlier stage than the MT in the editorial/redactional history of the book.

Thus, the textual critic working on this text is not only dealing with so-called “lower criticism,” but necessarily touches upon “literary-critical”—and even “redaction-critical”—questions when discussing the passage and its place in the composition of the book.

In the case of Jer 25:1–7, the origin of which can be characterized as redactional altogether, the analysis of the extant text-forms can only take us halfway, being able to describe only the final stages of the development of the text while at the same time raising urgent questions concerning the earlier stages. Going one step further in sketching the nondocumented editorial history of the text helps to understand the emergence of the problems seen on the surface of the text. In my view, this kind of a text demonstrates the outdatedness of the dichotomy between textual criticism and literary criticism and the need for a more comprehensive view on the critical study of biblical texts.

Appendix

See <http://purl.org/TC/v22/TC-2017-Aejmelaeus-appendix.pdf>.