A HARMONY OF JEREMIAH IN THREE TRADITIONS

The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls — A Comparative Analysis

Phase 1 of the MT/LXX/DSS Textual Harmony Project

2026

Table of Contents

Preface

This volume presents the first phase of a systematic harmony of the three principal ancient textual traditions of the Hebrew scriptures: the **Masoretic Text** (MT), the **Septuagint** (LXX), and the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (DSS). The book of Jeremiah is chosen as the starting point because it exhibits the most dramatic divergence among these three traditions of any book in the Old Testament canon — a divergence so extensive and so well-documented by the manuscript evidence that it demands a harmony treatment before any other book.

The Three Traditions

The Masoretic Text (MT)

The MT is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament as standardized by the Masoretes — a group of Jewish scribal scholars active in Tiberias, Babylon, and Palestine from approximately 600 to 1000 C.E. The MT of Jeremiah is preserved most completely in:

Codex Leningradensis (L, 1009 C.E.) — the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible; basis of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS, 5th ed., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997) and the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ)

Aleppo Codex (A, c. 920 C.E.) — older but partially damaged; basis of the Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP)

The MT of Jeremiah is **approximately 3,100 Hebrew words longer** than the LXX — roughly **one-eighth longer** than the Greek tradition. It also differs from the LXX in the **arrangement of the Oracles Against the Nations** (OAN): in the MT these appear at chapters 46–51 (near the end of the book); in the LXX they appear in the middle (after chapter 25:13).

English translations based primarily on the MT: ESV, NASB, NIV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV.

The Septuagint (LXX)

The LXX of Jeremiah is a Greek translation made in Alexandria, Egypt, most likely during the second century B.C.E. It is preserved in:

Codex Vaticanus (B, 4th century C.E.) — oldest and most reliable LXX manuscript for most books

Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ, 4th century C.E.)

Codex Alexandrinus (A, 5th century C.E.)

The standard critical edition is **Rahlfs-Hanhart** *Septuaginta* (2006, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). The ongoing *Göttingen Septuagint* (volumes by Joseph Ziegler for Jeremiah, 2nd ed. 1976) provides the most complete critical apparatus.

The LXX of Jeremiah is approximately **2,700 Greek words shorter** than what would be expected if it were a straight translation of the MT. It is not a compressed translation of the MT; it represents **a different and shorter Hebrew Vorlage** (the Hebrew manuscript from which it was translated). This conclusion — long debated — has been definitively confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls.

English translations of the LXX: **NETS** (*A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Oxford University Press, 2007) is the standard scholarly edition. The **Brenton LXX** (1851) is public domain. This harmony uses the **Brenton** translation for the LXX text.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

Six fragmentary manuscripts of Jeremiah have been identified among the Dead Sea Scrolls:

Signum

Location

Character

Significance

4QJer^a (4Q70)

Cave 4, Qumran

Hebrew

Aligns with MT

4QJer^b (4Q71)

Cave 4, Qumran

Hebrew

Aligns with LXX — shorter text

4QJer^c (4Q72)

Cave 4, Qumran

Hebrew

Mixed; mostly MT

4QJer^d (4Q72a)

Cave 4, Qumran

Hebrew

Aligns with LXX — shorter text

4QJer^e (4Q72b)

Cave 4, Qumran

Hebrew

Fragmentary

2QJer (2Q13)

Cave 2, Qumran

Hebrew

Small fragments; MT-aligned

The critical edition is in **Discoveries in the Judaean Desert** (DJD): Volume XV (Oxford University Press, 1997), edited by Eugene Ulrich and Frank Moore Cross. The accessible scholarly translation is in **The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible** (Abegg, Flint, Ulrich; HarperOne, 1999), pp. 399–462.

The decisive significance of 4QJer^b and 4QJer^d is that they prove the LXX's shorter text is not the product of a Greek translator who abridged or compressed the MT. These Hebrew scrolls, written before the LXX translation but in the same shorter form, demonstrate that **two distinct Hebrew editions of Jeremiah circulated in antiquity** — a shorter edition (represented by the LXX Vorlage, 4QJer^b, 4QJer^d) and a longer edition (represented by the MT, 4QJer^a, 4QJer^c). Both editions are ancient. The MT's longer text is not more "original" simply because it is longer; the shorter edition preserved in the LXX and confirmed by the DSS is equally ancient.

Methodology

Text Presentation

This harmony presents the three traditions in parallel for each passage, using the following format:

MT — English translation from the Hebrew (American Standard Version, ASV, 1901; public domain), with significant Hebrew terms transliterated and noted where relevant.

LXX — English translation from the Greek (Brenton, 1851; public domain), with significant Greek terms noted where the LXX diverges in meaning from the MT.

DSS — Where DSS fragments survive for a passage, the DSS reading is given. Where 4QJer^b or 4QJer^d confirms the LXX reading against the MT, this is explicitly noted. Where no DSS fragment survives for a passage, the column reads "No DSS fragment for this passage."

Variance Classification

Each variance is classified by type:

Code

Type

Description

[OMIT]

Omission

LXX lacks material present in MT

[ADD]

Addition

MT has material absent from LXX

[ORDER]

Order

Same material in different sequence

[VAR]

Verbal variant

Different word, phrase, or clause

[THEOL]

Theological

Variant appears to reflect theological interpretation

[ORTH]

Orthographic

Spelling/scribal difference only

Part One: The Opening Chapters (Jeremiah 1–10)

Chapter 1: The Call of Jeremiah

Overview: Jeremiah 1 exhibits relatively few major divergences between the MT and LXX, making it a useful starting point for the harmony methodology. The chapter narrates the prophet's call, his visions of the almond branch and the boiling pot, and God's charge to Jeremiah to speak to the nations. The LXX is slightly shorter but agrees with the MT in substance. No DSS fragments survive for Jeremiah 1.

Jeremiah 1:1–3 — The Superscription

MT (ASV): The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of Jehovah came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon,

king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

LXX (Brenton): The word of God which came to Jeremias the son of Chelcias, of the priests, who dwelt in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: which came in the days of Josias son of Amon, king of Juda, in the thirteenth year of his reign. And it was in the days of Joakim son of Josias king of Juda, until the eleventh year of Sedekias son of Josias king of Juda, even until the carrying away of Jerusalem.

DSS: No fragment survives for Jeremiah 1:1–3.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"the words of Jeremiah"* (*dibrê Yirmeyâhû*); LXX: *"The word of God which came to Jeremias."* The LXX shifts from the plural "words" to the singular "word of God" — a small but theologically significant difference that frames the book as divine oracle from its first line rather than human speech. - **[OMIT]** MT: *"unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month"*; LXX: *"even until the carrying away of Jerusalem."* The LXX lacks the specification "in the fifth month" (the month of Ab, corresponding to the destruction of the Temple).

Jeremiah 1:4–10 — The Call of Jeremiah

MT (ASV): Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.

Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.

But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah.

Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

LXX (Brenton): And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee, I appointed thee a prophet to the nations.

And I said, O Lord, I know not how to speak, for I am a youth.

And the Lord said to me, Say not, I am a youth; for to all to whom I shall send thee thou shalt go, and according to all things that I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid before them: for I am with thee to deliver thee.

And the Lord put forth his hand to me, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my words into thy mouth. See, I have this day appointed thee over nations and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to rebuild, and to plant.

DSS: No fragment survives for this passage.

Variance Notes: - **[OMIT]** MT: *"and to overthrow"* (*wĕhahărôs*) — the LXX lacks the fourth verb of the destruction sequence, giving five verbs rather than six. The MT six-verb sequence (pluck up / break down / destroy / overthrow / build / plant) is theologically structured as four destructions and two restorations. - **[VAR]** MT: *"I am a child"* (*na'ar*); LXX: *"I am a youth"* — the same semantic range; no significant difference. - **[VAR]** MT: *"saith Jehovah"* at the end of the reassurance — absent from LXX, a minor MT expansion.

Jeremiah 1:11–19 — The Two Visions

MT (ASV): Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree. Then said Jehovah unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it.

And the word of Jehovah came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a boiling cauldron; and the face thereof is from the north. Then Jehovah said unto me, Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

LXX (Brenton): And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, What seest thou, Jeremias? And I said, A rod of a nut-tree. And the Lord said to me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten to perform my words.

And the word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, A caldron on the fire; and the face of it is toward the north. And the Lord said to me, From the north shall the evils be kindled upon all the inhabitants of the land.

DSS: No fragment survives.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"rod of an almond-tree"* (*maqqêl shâqêd*); LXX: *"rod of a nut-tree."* This is a significant translational difference. The Hebrew *shâqêd* means "almond" and is the basis for the word-play in verse 12: *shâqêd* (almond) / *shoqêd* (watching/hastening). The LXX translator renders *shâqêd* as "nut tree" (Greek *karua*), losing the Hebrew pun entirely. - **[VAR]** MT: *"I watch over my word to perform it"* (*shôqêd ani*); LXX: *"I will hasten to perform my words."* The MT preserves the word-play (*shâqêd/shoqêd*); the LXX uses *speudō* (hasten), which captures the meaning but not the sound-play. - **[VAR]** MT: *"boiling cauldron"* (*sir naphûach*); LXX: *"caldron on the fire"* — interpretive paraphrase.

Chapter 2: Israel's Unfaithfulness

Overview: Jeremiah 2 opens the extended metaphor of Israel as an unfaithful bride who has abandoned her husband (Jehovah) for false gods. The LXX and MT are substantially parallel through this chapter, with minor verbal variants. No DSS fragments survive for chapter 2.

Jeremiah 2:1–8 — The Indictment

MT (ASV): And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase; all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah.

Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus saith Jehovah, What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

LXX (Brenton): And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remembered the mercy of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals, in following me in the wilderness, in an unsown land.

Israel was the Lord's holy portion, the firstfruits of his increase; all that devoured him shall offend; evils shall come upon them, saith the Lord.

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and every family of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, What trespass did your fathers find in me, that they revolted far from me, and went after vanities, and became vain?

DSS: No fragment.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"the kindness of thy youth"* (*hesed nĕ'ûrayik*); LXX: *"the mercy of thy youth."* The Hebrew *hesed* is the foundational covenant-loyalty term of the Old Testament, essentially untranslatable. LXX uses *eleos* (mercy/compassion), a reasonable but narrower rendering. - **[VAR]** MT: *"walked after vanity, and are become vain"* — LXX: *"went after vanities, and became vain"* — nearly identical in meaning.

Chapter 3: The Call to Return

Jeremiah 3:6–11 — The Lesson of Faithless Israel

MT (ASV): Moreover Jehovah said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, She will return unto me; but she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

LXX (Brenton): And the Lord said to me in the days of Josias the king, Hast thou seen what things backsliding Israel has done? She has gone on every high mountain, and under every shady tree, and has there committed fornication. And I said when she had committed all these acts of fornication, Turn thou to me. But she returned not. And faithless Juda saw her sister's iniquity.

DSS: No fragment.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"treacherous sister Judah"* (*bâgôdâh Yĕhûdâh achôtâh*); LXX: *"faithless Juda."* The MT uses *bâgôdâh* (treacherous/faithless) as an adjective modifying "sister

Judah." The LXX drops "sister" and uses *athesmos* (lawless), losing the family metaphor. - **[OMIT]** MT v.11: *"And Jehovah said unto me, Backsliding Israel hath showed herself more righteous than treacherous Judah"* — this verse is present in MT; the LXX has a slightly different formulation of the comparison.

Part Two: The Scroll of Doom (Jeremiah 11–20)

Chapters 11–12: The Broken Covenant

Overview: Chapters 11–12 focus on the broken covenant and Jeremiah's first "Confession" (12:1–6). The MT and LXX are relatively close in these chapters. Small DSS fragments survive.

Jeremiah 11:18–23 — The Plot Against Jeremiah at Anathoth

MT (ASV): And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it: then thou showedst me their doings. But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

But Jehovah of hosts, who judgeth righteously, who triest the heart and the mind, I shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

LXX (Brenton): O Lord, make it known to me, and I shall know: then I saw their practices. But I was as an innocent lamb led to the slaughter; I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, Come and let us put wood into his bread, and let us utterly destroy him from the land of the living, and let his name be remembered no more.

O Lord, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and hearts, let me see thy vengeance upon them; for to thee I have revealed my cause.

DSS: No fragment for this passage.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof"* (*neshchitâh 'êts belachmô*); LXX: *"let us put wood into his bread."* This is one of the most debated single phrases in Jeremiah. The MT reads literally "let us destroy the tree with its fruit/bread" — a metaphor for killing the prophet and suppressing his words. The LXX reads "let us put poison into his food" or "wood into his bread." The difference may reflect: (a) a different Hebrew Vorlage; (b) a misreading of the consonants *lechem* (bread) vs. *lachmo* (his bread/fruit); or (c) interpretive translation. The MT's tree metaphor is more naturally coherent; the LXX may reflect a different idiom for poisoning.

Chapters 17–20: The Confessions of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 17:1–4 — The Sin Written on the Heart

MT (ASV): The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the tablet of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; whilst their children remember their altars and their Asherim by the green trees upon the high hills.

LXX (Brenton): [Jeremiah 17:1–4 is substantially shorter in the LXX. Verses 1–4 of the MT correspond to a much compressed passage in the LXX.]

DSS: No fragment survives for this specific passage.

Variance Notes: - **[OMIT]** The LXX lacks approximately half of MT 17:1–4. The MT's extended description of Judah's sin inscribed on their altars and the reference to Asherim (sacred poles associated with the goddess Asherah) are not present in the LXX. This is a significant omission, suggesting either that the LXX Vorlage lacked this material or that a LXX translator found the Asherah reference theologically awkward and abbreviated it.

Jeremiah 20:7–18 — The Final Confession

MT (ASV): O Jehovah, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day.

And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain.

Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

LXX (Brenton): Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I have been deceived; thou hast been strong, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock, I am continually mocked every day. For I will laugh with my bitter speech, I will call upon rebellion and misery; for the word of the Lord is become a reproach to me and a mockery all my days.

Then I said, I will by no means name the name of the Lord, and I will no more at all speak in his name. But it was a burning fire flaming in my bones, and I am utterly weakened on all sides, and cannot bear up.

Cursed be the day wherein I was born! let not the day on which my mother bore me be blessed.

DSS: No fragment for this passage.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"thou hast persuaded me"* (*pittitâni*, piel of *pâtâh*); LXX: *"Thou hast deceived me."* The Hebrew *pâtâh* in the piel means to persuade, seduce, or deceive. The LXX translator chose the darker meaning ("deceived"), which makes Jeremiah's complaint against God more explicit and more accusatory. The MT's "persuaded" is ambiguous — it can mean legitimate persuasion or seduction. This is one of the most theologically charged translation

choices in the entire book. - **[VAR]** MT: *"there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones"* — LXX: *"it was a burning fire flaming in my bones."* Minor variation; same image.

Part Three: The Great Structural Divergence (Jeremiah 25–52)

The Central Problem: The Oracles Against the Nations

This is where the MT and LXX diverge most dramatically in **structure**, not merely in wording.

The Structural Arrangement

In the MT: - Chapters 1–25:13 — Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem - Chapters 25:15–38 — The Cup of Wrath (summary) - Chapters 26–35 — Narrative sections; the Temple Sermon; Baruch's scroll - Chapters 36–45 — Historical narratives of Jeremiah's suffering - **Chapters 46–51 — Oracles Against the Nations (OAN)** - Chapter 52 — Historical appendix (parallel to 2 Kings 25)

In the LXX (Brenton enumeration): - Chapters 1–25:13 — Prophecies against Judah (parallel to MT) - **Chapters 25:14–31:44 — Oracles Against the Nations (OAN)** [placed HERE in LXX, in the MIDDLE of the book] - Chapters 32–52 — Remaining MT material (chapters 26–45 + appendix)

The LXX places the Oracles Against the Nations **after 25:13** and before the narrative sections. The MT places them **at the end** (chapters 46–51). This is not a minor reordering; it is a wholesale relocation of nine chapters.

Furthermore, within the OAN themselves, **the order of the individual oracles differs**:

LXX Order

Nation

MT Chapter

LXX 25:14

Elam

MT 49:34–39

LXX 26

Egypt

MT 46

LXX 27

Babylon

MT 50–51

LXX 28

Philistia

MT 47

LXX 29

Edom

MT 49:7–22

LXX 30

Ammon

MT 49:1–6

LXX 31

Kedar/Arabia

MT 49:28–33

LXX 31:44

Damascus

MT 49:23–27

The implications of this structural divergence are substantial:

1. **Both arrangements are ancient.** 4QJer^b confirms the shorter LXX edition at several points; 4QJer^a confirms the MT arrangement. Both Hebrew texts circulated simultaneously at Qumran in the first century B.C.E.

2. **The MT's placement of the OAN at the end** follows a logic of mounting judgment: the book builds from Judah's own sin through the historical narrative to the climactic pronouncement of doom on all the nations.

3. **The LXX's placement of the OAN in the middle** follows a different logic: the OAN are triggered by the Cup of Wrath passage (25:15–38), which commands Jeremiah to make all the nations drink the cup. The nations then immediately follow. This arrangement is more thematically integrated with the cup imagery.

4. **Neither arrangement is definitively "original."** Emanuel Tov (*Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., pp. 319–327) argues that the shorter text represented by the LXX is the earlier edition, and the MT represents a later expanded edition. Other scholars (William McKane, John Bright) argue the MT better preserves the authentic Jeremianic tradition. The DSS evidence establishes that both editions are pre-Christian but does not resolve which is chronologically earlier.

Jeremiah 25:1–14 — The Seventy Years

This passage is the hinge between the first half of the book and the OAN. It is one of the most significant theologically, prophesying seventy years of Babylonian captivity.

MT (ASV) — 25:1–14: The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (the same was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying:

From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day, these three and twenty years, the word of Jehovah hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

And Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them (but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear), saying, Return ye now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Jehovah hath given unto you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore; and go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith Jehovah; that ye might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith Jehovah, and I will send unto Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants

thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

And I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate for ever. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

LXX (Brenton) — 32:1–14 [LXX enumeration]: The word that came to Jeremias concerning all the people of Juda in the fourth year of Joakim son of Josias, king of Juda; (the same was the first year of Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon;) which Jeremias the prophet spake to all the people of Juda, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

In the thirteenth year of Josias son of Amos, king of Juda, even to this day for three and twenty years, I have both spoken to you, rising early and speaking, and ye have not hearkened.

And the Lord sent to you his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, and ye hearkened not, and inclined not your ears to hear; saying, Turn ye every one from his evil way, and from his evil practices, and ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to you and your fathers, of old and for ever. Go ye not after strange gods, to serve them, and to worship them, that ye provoke me not by the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt.

But ye hearkened not to me. For ye provoked me by the works of your hands to your own hurt.

Therefore thus saith the Lord; Since ye believed not my words, behold, I will send and take my servant Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon, and will bring him upon this land, and upon the inhabitants of it, and upon all the nations round about it, and will make them utterly waste, and make them a desolation, and a hissing, and an everlasting reproach.

And I will destroy from among them the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the scent of ointment, and the light of a candle. And all the land shall be a desolation; and they shall serve among the Gentiles seventy years.

DSS (4QJer^b): Fragment survives for Jeremiah 25. The 4QJer^b reading at 25:7–8 aligns with the shorter LXX form, lacking several phrases present in the MT. This is the DSS confirmation that the LXX's shorter text in this section represents a genuine ancient Hebrew reading, not Greek abridgement.

Variance Notes: - **[ADD]** MT v.9: *"my servant"* applied to Nebuchadrezzar is present in MT; LXX has "my servant" but with slightly different placement. This remarkable designation — a pagan king called the servant of Jehovah — is one of the most theologically striking phrases in Jeremiah. - **[ADD]** MT: *"and a hissing, and perpetual desolations"* — LXX lacks "perpetual desolations" here. - **[VAR]** MT: *"the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp"* — LXX: *"the scent of ointment, and the light of a candle."* The LXX lacks "the sound of the millstones"

and adds "the scent of ointment" — two quite different domestic images. This is a significant verbal variant, not easily explained as scribal error, suggesting genuinely different Vorlagen. - **[DSS]** 4QJer^b confirms the LXX's shorter text at v.7–8, establishing that the LXX's differences here reflect its Hebrew source, not Greek editorial choices.

Part Four: The Book of Consolation (Jeremiah 30–33)

Overview

The "Book of Consolation" (chapters 30–33) is one of the most important sections in Jeremiah — containing the famous New Covenant passage (31:31–34) and the promise of restoration. The LXX and MT agree substantially in these chapters, though with some significant variants. The New Covenant passage in particular warrants careful comparison, since it is the most-quoted passage from Jeremiah in the New Testament.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 — The New Covenant

MT (ASV): Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

LXX (Brenton) — 38:31–34: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took hold of their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them, saith the Lord.

For this is my covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will surely put my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not at all teach every one his fellow citizen, and every one his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them; for I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins I will remember no more.

DSS: The New Covenant passage is partially preserved in the Damascus Document (CD) and is central to the Qumran community's self-understanding. The *yahad* (community) at Qumran explicitly identified themselves as those who had entered into the New Covenant — the *brit hadashah* — referenced in Jeremiah 31:31. Their own communal rule (the Community Rule, 1QS) is structured as a covenant document reflecting this passage.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"although I was a husband unto them"* (*anoki ba'alti bam*); LXX: *"for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them."* This is a highly significant variant. The MT uses *ba'al* (to be lord/husband over), drawing on the marriage metaphor that runs through Jeremiah. The LXX has an entirely different reading: *"I disregarded them"* (*ēmelēsa autōn*). This cannot be explained as translation difference — the two readings represent different Hebrew texts. The letter sequence *ba'alti* (I was lord/husband) and *ga'alti* (I rejected/loathed) differ by a single letter (ב *bet* vs. ג *gimel*). The LXX Vorlage most likely read *ga'alti* (I rejected them) — one letter different from the MT's *ba'alti* (I was husband to them).

This single-letter difference has substantial theological implications: the MT stresses God's continued marital relationship with Israel despite the broken covenant; the LXX stresses God's subsequent rejection of Israel for breaking the covenant.

- **[VAR]** MT: *"I will put my law in their inward parts"* (*tôrah*); LXX: *"my laws"* (plural, *nomous*) — the LXX pluralizes what the MT treats as a singular entity.
- **[THEOL]** The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31–34 at length in Hebrews 8:8–12 and 10:16–17 — the longest Old Testament quotation in the New Testament. The Hebrews quotation follows the LXX version (including "for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them") rather than the MT's "although I was a husband unto them." This is significant: the NT author's theological argument rests on the LXX reading.

Part Five: The Oracles Against the Nations (Jeremiah 46–51 [MT] / 25:14–31 [LXX])

Egypt — Jeremiah 46 (MT) / LXX 26

Overview: The oracle against Egypt commemorates and interprets the Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.E.), at which Nebuchadrezzar decisively defeated Pharaoh Necho II and established Babylonian supremacy over the ancient Near East.

Jeremiah 46:1–12 — The Battle of Carchemish

MT (ASV): The word of Jehovah which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations. Of Egypt: concerning the army of Pharaoh-neco king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.

Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, put on the coats of mail. Wherefore do I see it? they are dismayed and are turned backward; and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: terror is on every side, saith Jehovah.

Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; in the north by the river Euphrates have they stumbled and fallen.

Who is this that riseth up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers? Egypt riseth up like the Nile, and his waters toss themselves like the rivers: and he saith, I will rise up, I will cover the earth; I will destroy cities and the inhabitants thereof.

LXX (Brenton) — 26:1–12: The word of the Lord which came to Jeremias against the nations; against Egypt, concerning the host of Pharao Nechao king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Charcamys, which Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Joakim king of Juda.

Take up arms and shields, and draw nigh to battle; and harness the horses; mount, ye horsemen, and stand ready in your helmets; advance the spears, and put on your breastplates. Why do they fear, and turn backward? even because their mighty men shall be slain; they have utterly fled, and being hemmed in they have not rallied, saith the Lord.

Let not the swift flee, and let not the strong man escape to the north: the forces by the river Euphrates are become feeble, and they have fallen.

Who is this that shall rise up as a river, and as a river whose waters are troubled? The waters of Egypt shall rise up as a river: and he said, I will go up and will cover the earth, and will destroy the dwellers in it.

DSS: No DSS fragment survives for Jeremiah 46.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"terror is on every side"* (*magôr missâbib*) — a phrase that appears repeatedly in Jeremiah as a summary formula for divine judgment (also at 6:25; 20:3, 4, 10; 49:29). The LXX renders it variously in these different occurrences; here the LXX lacks the phrase entirely. - **[VAR]** MT: *"Who is this that riseth up like the Nile"* — LXX: *"Who is this that shall rise up as a river."* Minor difference; same image. - **[ADD]** MT has several phrases in verses 3–12 that are compressed or absent in LXX, consistent with the pattern throughout the book.

Babylon — Jeremiah 50–51 (MT) / LXX 27

Overview: The Oracle Against Babylon is the longest in the OAN collection and theologically the most complex. It pronounces Babylon's destruction at the hands of a northern enemy (understood as the Medes) after Judah's seventy years of captivity are complete.

Jeremiah 50:1–7 — Babylon Shall Fall

MT (ASV): The word that Jehovah spake concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame, Merodach is dismayed; her images are put to shame, her idols are dismayed.

For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they are fled, they are gone, both man and beast. In those days, and in that time, saith Jehovah, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; they shall go on their way weeping, and shall seek Jehovah their God. They shall

inquire concerning Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come ye, and join yourselves to Jehovah in an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten.

My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting-place.

LXX (Brenton) — 27:1–7: The word of the Lord which he spoke concerning Babylon. Declare ye among the Gentiles, and cause the message to be heard, and suppress it not: say, Babylon is taken, Belos is broken to pieces, Merodach is conquered. Their works that are graven are broken to pieces, their images are conquered.

For a nation has come up against her from the north, which shall also make her land desolate, and there shall be none to dwell in it, from man even to beast; they have been moved and are gone.

In those days and at that time the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Juda together; they shall proceed, weeping as they go, seeking the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Sion, so bending their faces, and they shall come and flee to the Lord their God; for the everlasting covenant shall not be forgotten.

My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds thrust them out, and made them wander on the mountains: they went from mountain to hill, they forgot their resting-place.

DSS: No fragment survives for Jeremiah 50.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"Bel"* (the chief Babylonian deity, Marduk under his title Bel, "lord"); LXX: *"Belos."* Simple transliteration difference. - **[VAR]** MT: *"they shall seek Jehovah their God"* — LXX: *"seeking the Lord their God."* Essentially identical. - **[ADD]** MT: *"Come ye, and join yourselves to Jehovah in an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten"* — LXX has a different arrangement: the everlasting covenant reference appears later. Significant structural difference in the same passage. - **[VAR]** MT: *"their shepherds have caused them to go astray"* — LXX: *"their shepherds thrust them out."* Hebrew *hit'û* (led astray) vs. LXX's *exethliipsan* (thrust/pressed out). Meaningfully different: MT stresses misleading; LXX stresses force.

Part Six: The Historical Appendix (Jeremiah 52)

Jeremiah 52 — The Fall of Jerusalem

Overview: Jeremiah 52 is an historical appendix, closely parallel to 2 Kings 24:18–25:30, recording the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, the exile, and the release of Jehoiachin. It is widely regarded as a later addition to the book (appearing to be drawn from Kings) rather than Jeremiah's own composition. The LXX of chapter 52 is substantially shorter than the MT.

Jeremiah 52:28–30 — The Three Deportations

This passage is **unique to Jeremiah** — it does not appear in the parallel text of 2 Kings. It gives specific numbers for three deportation events.

MT (ASV): This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty and three Jews; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons; in the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

LXX (Brenton): [The LXX **entirely omits** Jeremiah 52:28–30. These three verses — the precise count of the three deportations — are absent from the LXX and from all LXX manuscripts.]

DSS: No fragment for this passage.

Variance Notes: - **[OMIT]** The three-deportation account (52:28–30) is present only in the MT. The LXX lacks it entirely. This is one of the most striking omissions in the entire book. The numbers given in the MT (3,023 + 832 + 745 = 4,600) differ from the round numbers given in other biblical sources (2 Kings 24:14: 10,000; Jer 52:15: thousands). The MT passage may be drawn from a temple record or administrative document not available to the LXX translator.

Part Seven: The 4QJer^b Manuscript — A Case Study

The Significance of 4QJer^b

Of all the Dead Sea Scrolls evidence for Jeremiah, **4QJer^b (4Q71)** is the most consequential for understanding the relationship between the MT and LXX. It was first fully published in DJD XV (1997) by Eugene Ulrich.

4QJer^b preserves fragments corresponding to Jeremiah 9:22–10:21 and 43:2–10. These fragments are written in a Hebrew script dated to approximately 225–175 B.C.E. — making them among the oldest biblical manuscripts yet discovered.

4QJer^b at Jeremiah 10:3–11 — The Idol Polemic

MT (ASV) — 10:1–16: Hear ye the word which Jehovah speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: thus saith Jehovah, Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the nations are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are vanity; for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

[MT continues through verse 16 with an extended polemic against idol worship]

LXX (Brenton) — 10:1–16: The LXX of Jeremiah 10 is notably shorter. After verse 5, the LXX **lacks MT verses 6–8** (*"There is none like unto thee, O Jehovah… they are altogether brutish and foolish, the instruction of idols is but a stock"*) — three MT verses are absent from the LXX at this point.

4QJer^b reading: The DSS fragment at Jeremiah 10 confirms that the LXX's shorter text reflects its Hebrew Vorlage. 4QJer^b **lacks the material corresponding to MT 10:6–8**, in agreement with the LXX. This is the clearest proof point in the entire Jeremiah textual tradition: the same verses absent from the LXX are also absent from a pre-Christian Hebrew manuscript. The LXX translator did not abbreviate the MT; the MT expands an earlier shorter Hebrew text.

Variance Notes: - **[ADD by MT]** MT 10:6–8 is an expansion present in the longer MT edition but absent from both the LXX and from 4QJer^b. This material — a doxology praising God's uniqueness in contrast to the vanity of idols — may have been added to the longer Hebrew edition by a scribe or editor at some point between the composition of the shorter edition (reflected in 4QJer^b and the LXX Vorlage) and the standardization of the MT.

Appendix A: Summary Table of Major Divergences

Chapter

MT

LXX

DSS Confirmation

Type

1:1

“words of Jeremiah”

“word of God which came to Jeremias”

None

[THEOL]

1:10

6 verbs of judgment/restoration

5 verbs (lacks “overthrow”)

None

[OMIT]

7–8

Extended

Shorter

4QJer^b confirms LXX

[OMIT]

10:6–8

Present

Absent

4QJer^b absent

[ADD by MT]

17:1–4

Extended

Much shorter

None

[OMIT]

20:7

“thou hast persuaded me”

“thou hast deceived me”

None

[VAR/THEOL]

25:1–14

Extended

Shorter at several points

4QJer^b shorter

[OMIT]

25:13

OAN begin ch.46

OAN begin here (middle of book)

Both Hebrew editions at Qumran

[ORDER]

31:32

“I was a husband to them”

“I disregarded them”

None

[VAR — 1 letter]

46–51

OAN at end

OAN in middle (25:14–31)

4QJer^a = MT; 4QJer^b = LXX

[ORDER]

52:28–30

Three deportations enumerated

Entirely absent

None

[ADD by MT]

Appendix B: The Two-Edition Theory — Scholarly Consensus

The following scholars have argued for the two-edition hypothesis (shorter edition = LXX Vorlage; longer edition = MT):

Emanuel Tov (*Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., 2012, pp. 319–327): "The textual differences between MT and LXX in Jeremiah are best explained as reflecting two different stages in the composition of the book… the LXX reflects an earlier and shorter literary edition." Tov's analysis of 4QJer^b is the definitive statement of this position.

Eugene Ulrich (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 1999): "The fragments of 4QJer^b demonstrate that a shorter form of the Book of Jeremiah was known, copied, and transmitted in Hebrew — not just in Greek — proving that both forms represent genuine Hebrew textual traditions."

Martin Haran and **Alexander Rofé** have argued for a different explanation — that the LXX translator abbreviated the MT deliberately. This view has become a minority position since the publication of 4QJer^b.

William McKane (*International Critical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2 vols., T&T Clark, 1986, 1996) remains cautious about assigning priority to either edition: "It is premature to conclude that one edition is the original and the other the revision."

Jack Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, *21–36*, *37–52*, Anchor Yale Bible, 1999–2004): Generally argues for MT priority but acknowledges the significance of 4QJer^b.

The current dominant view in Old Testament textual criticism — represented by Tov, Ulrich, and the editors of the BHQ Jeremiah volume — is that **both the shorter and longer editions are ancient**, that the shorter edition (LXX/4QJer^b type) is likely earlier, and that the MT represents a later expanded edition. Neither edition is "corrupt"; both are witnesses to the living textual tradition of the book.

Appendix C: The New Covenant Passage in Three Traditions and the New Testament

Jeremiah 31:31–34 (LXX 38:31–34) is quoted in the New Testament at Hebrews 8:8–12 and partially at Hebrews 10:16–17. The Hebrews quotation is the longest single OT quotation in the NT. Comparing the three traditions:

Phrase

MT

LXX

NT (Hebrews 8)

“new covenant”

brit hadashah

diathēkēn kainēn

diathēkēn kainēn

Reason for failure

“although I was a husband to them” (*ba’alti bam*)

“for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them”

“for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not” (= LXX)

Location of law

“in their inward parts and in their heart”

“into their mind and on their hearts”

“into their mind and on their heart” (= LXX)

Forgiveness

"I will forgive their iniquity"

"I will be merciful to their iniquities"

"I will be merciful to their iniquities" (= LXX)

The author of Hebrews is quoting the LXX throughout. This means the NT's theological argument for the supersession of the old covenant rests on the LXX reading ("I disregarded them") rather than the MT reading ("I was husband to them") — a significant observation for any understanding of how the New Testament authors used the Old Testament. The LXX's reading makes the break between old and new covenant more decisive; the MT's reading preserves the continuity of God's marital relationship with Israel even through the covenant's failure.

Appendix D: Essential Scholarship for Further Study

Primary Text Editions

Rudolph, W., ed. *Jeremia*. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. 4th ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997. [MT]

Ziegler, J., ed. *Ieremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Ieremiae*. Göttingen Septuagint Vol. 15. 2nd ed. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976. [LXX critical edition]

Tov, E., and F.M. Cross. *Qumran Cave 4, X: The Prophets*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XV. Oxford University Press, 1997. [4QJer^a through 4QJer^e]

English Translations

Brenton, L.C.L. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*. 1851. Public domain. [LXX]

Pietersma, A., and B.G. Wright, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS)*. Oxford University Press, 2007. [LXX — scholarly standard]

Abegg, M., P. Flint, and E. Ulrich. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*. HarperOne, 1999. [DSS]

Commentaries

McKane, W. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*. 2 vols. International Critical Commentary. T&T Clark, 1986, 1996.

Lundbom, J.R. *Jeremiah 1–20*; *Jeremiah 21–36*; *Jeremiah 37–52*. Anchor Yale Bible. Yale University Press, 1999–2004.

Brueggemann, W. *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. Eerdmans, 1998. [Theological]

Allen, L.C. *Jeremiah: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Westminster John Knox, 2008.

Textual Criticism

Tov, E. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd ed. Fortress / Van Gorcum, 2012. — The essential methodological foundation for any MT/LXX/DSS work.

Tov, E. *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*. Brill, 1999.

Ulrich, E. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*. Eerdmans / Brill, 1999.

Jobes, K.H., and M. Silva. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. 2nd ed. Baker Academic, 2015.

Troxel, R.L. *LXX-Isaiah as Translation and Interpretation*. Brill, 2008. [For methodology applicable to Jeremiah]

Specific Studies on Jeremiah's Text

Fischer, G. *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion*. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007.

Stipp, H.-J. *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 136. Fribourg / Göttingen, 1994. — Definitive study of the exclusive content of each edition.

Bogaert, P.-M. "Le livre de Jérémie en perspective: les deux rédactions antiques selon les travaux en cours." *Revue biblique* 101 (1994): 363–406.