

Towards an Integrated Methodology of Dating Biblical Texts: The Case of the Book of Jeremiah

Workshop, Kirchgasse 9, CH-8001 Zurich, Room 103

29 January 2025

12:30 Lunch (The Southern Indian, Mühlegasse 14, 8001 Zürich)

14:00-14:30

Konrad Schmid: Introduction to the Project

14:30-16:00

Presentation AI I (Martijn Naaijer, Aren Wilson-Wright)

14:30-15:00 Aren will explain the basics of statistical language modeling from simple frequency-based approaches to complex models like transformer based neural networks.

15:00-15:15 Discussion

15:15-15:45 Martijn will present the research proposal. How do we plan to model the Biblical Hebrew language, which methods do we use to classify the language of Jeremiah, and which challenges are ahead of us?

15:45-16:00 Discussion

16:00-16.30

Break

16:30-18.00

Presentation AI II (Barak Sober, Willem van Peursen, Martijn Naaijer, Aren Wilson-Wright)

16:30-16:50 Barak will explain how the content and genre of a text can be an obstacle in modeling and clustering texts. He will show possible solutions based on his own research.

16:50-17:15 Discussion

17:15-17:35 Willem will give a presentation about redaction criticism and linguistic dating of biblical texts.

17:35-18:00 Discussion

19:00 Dinner (Haus Hitl, Sihlstr. 28, 8001 Zürich)

30 January 2025

9:00-10.15

Oded Lipschits: The Source and Purpose of the Description of Jeremiah's History During the Destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 37-38)

In this lecture, I will claim that the “spine” of Jeremiah's ‘biography’ and its central chapters were written and edited a short time after the flight to Egypt, evidently by a writer close to

Jeremiah and among his adherents. These describe what happened to the prophet in the last months preceding the destruction of Jerusalem and in the first months after it. This 'biographical' material, into which Jeremiah's prophecies were embedded and which was written factually and sequentially, was supplemented at a later stage with several popular stories that dealt with central events in the life of the prophet at that time.

The object of this lecture is to examine the scope of the 'biographical' chapters and the supplemented stories, and to specify their source, time, and purpose. A second object is to examine the way those supplemented stories were embedded within the 'biographical' chapters (37-38). This will make it possible to clarify the objectives of the first redaction that created the first version of the 'biography', which was later supplemented by the description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the account of the days of Gedaliah

10.15-10.30

Break

10.30-11.45

Ronnie Goldstein: Early Sources and Late Redaction in The Book of Jeremiah, Central Problems and Some Examples

We will discuss some of the challenges to date passages in the book of Jeremiah by discussing several examples of different types and genres and of the ways to approach them, considering linguistic, literary, and historical factors. After a general introduction, and examples of early and late passages, we will discuss some cases, following the (still valid in some ways) division of the material in Jeremiah as: Poetry prophecies, Narratives about the prophet, and Speeches.

1. The nature and scope of the Deuteronomistic layer in the book of Jeremiah and the possibility of separating it from the sources surrounding it, and dating it is still debated. In this framework we will focus on several speeches of this type. We will examine the two chapters about the descent into Egypt, Jeremiah 42 and 44, and the consequences that the dating of these chapters may have on the rest of the speeches in the book. I will also deal with the question of the possibility of finding an early layer behind the Deuteronomistic passages, and for this purpose we will focus on the temple speech in Jeremiah 7.

2. I will reconsider the possibility of dating the narrative material about the prophet scattered in the second part of the book, and in particular the stories embedded in the biographical sequence in chapters 37-44, and the stages in which this sequence of chapters will be connected.

3. The problem of dating the poetry sections of the book is complex, and we will examine some examples of this type, from the prophecies against the Nations, and from the consolation prophecies scattered in the book.

12.00-13.15

Lunch (Tibits, Seefeldstr. 2, 8008 Zürich)

13.30-14.45

Christl Maier: Concepts and Features in Deutero-Jeremianic Prose Suggesting a Persian Period Setting

Since Winfried Thiel's work on the so-called Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah, many texts have been dated to the exilic period because of their rather stereotypical language with strong parallels in the Deuteronomistic history, especially in German-speaking circles. Some scholars have criticized Thiel's focus on terminology, which made him neglect different ideological perspectives (for example, Konrad Schmid and myself). In addition, the presumed Deuteronomistic idiom, because of its stereotypical phraseology, could easily be repeated in later layers up to proto-Masoretic additions, as Hermann-Josef Stipp has demonstrated. At present, many Jeremiah scholars interested in redactional criticism would agree that there is a Deutero-Jeremianic style of writing that indicates at least an exilic redaction. It is used in prose passages and especially in speeches that retrospectively assess the people's relationship with YHWH and accuse the pre-exilic Judeans and their ancestors of abandoning YHWH and worshiping other deities.

In my paper I identify additional theological/ideological concepts or rhetorical features in order to date parts of the Deutero-Jeremianic prose to the Persian period. Such features are, for example, the inclusion of the ancestors in the retrospective assignment of guilt (Jer 2:4-13), the reference to the Torah as a distinct text (through the use of the article, a suffix, or the genitive referring to God as in Jer 6:18-19; 8:8-9), the inclusion of the nations through the use of specific verbs (e.g., Jer 1:10; 12:14-17; 16:19-21), and the rhetoric of offering an alternative between disaster and deliverance (Jer 7:5-8; 22:1-5). My goal is therefore to combine linguistic and rhetorical features with theological and ideological concepts in our common goal of dating texts in Jeremiah.

14.45-15.00

Break

15.00-16.00

Final Discussion