

Noam Mizrahi

Witnessing a Prophetic Text in the Making

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Noam Mizrahi

Witnessing a Prophetic Text in the Making

The Literary, Textual and Linguistic Development
of Jeremiah 10:1–16

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Contents

Acknowledgments — vii

Introduction — 1

- §1 Prolusion — 1
- §2 Demarcation — 2
- §3 Preliminaries — 4
- §4 Complicating factors — 10
 - §4.1 Literary structure — 11
 - §4.2 Compositional analysis — 12
 - §4.3 Parallel within Jeremiah — 14
 - §4.4 Parallels in Deutero-Isaiah — 18
- §5 Overview of this study — 20
- §6 Caveat — 23

Chapter 1 From cult to polemic (Jer 10:2–5, 8–9, 14–16) — 25

- §1 Prolusion — 26
- §2 Layout of structural constituents — 28
 - §2.1 The first passage — 29
 - §2.2 The second passage — 32
 - §2.3 Internal logic of the descriptive passages — 34
 - §2.4 Fragmentation — 37
- §3 Stylistic profiles — 38
- §4 Subsequent development — 42
- §5 The cultic source — 46
 - §5.1 The negative clauses — 47
 - §5.2 Origin and provenance of the cultic source — 59
- §6 Another echo of the cultic source — 62
- §7 The concluding passage (v. 16) — 68
- §8 Conclusion — 71

Chapter 2 From wisdom to hymn (Jer 10:12–13) — 73

- §1 Prolusion — 73
- §2 Textual evidence — 74
- §3 Untying vv. 12–13 — 76
- §4 v. 12 and its background — 79
- §5 v. 13 and its background — 86
- §6 The combination of vv. 12–13 — 91
- §7 Parallel sources — 97
 - §7.1 Ps 135:7 — 97
 - §7.2 Hymn to the creator — 99
 - §7.3 Epistle of Jeremiah 59–62 — 103

§8	The integration of vv. 12–13 into Jer 10:1–16 — 106
§9	Conclusion — 109

Chapter 3 Language and identity (Jer 10:11) — 111

§1	Prolusion — 111
§2	Literary structure — 112
§3	Provenance and original function — 116
§3.1	Language shift — 116
§3.2	Non-Yahwistic theology — 118
§3.3	Political implications — 119
§3.4	Linguistic traits — 120
§3.5	Theological terminology — 122
§3.6	Echoes of religious reform? — 124
§4	Function within the prophetic unit — 126
§5	The language shift and the Aramaic versions — 129
§5.1	Targum Jonathan — 131
§5.2	Peshitta — 140
§6	Conclusion — 146

Chapter 4 From nature to history (Jer 10:10) — 149

§1	Prolusion — 149
§2	Form — 151
§3	Content — 156
§4	Textual development — 158
§5	Conclusion — 164

Chapter 5 An orison of incomparability (Jer 10:6–7) — 165

§1	Prolusion — 165
§2	Form and content — 166
§3	Parallels — 173
§3.1	David's prayer (2 Sam 7:22) — 173
§3.2	Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs 8:23 + 27) — 179
§3.3	Hymnic addition to individual lament (Ps 86:8–10) — 183
§4	From the shared liturgical tradition to the given orison — 187
§5	Function in context — 194
§6	Conclusion — 197

Synthesis and conclusions — 199

Bibliography — 205

Index of sources — 221

Index of authors — 233

Index of words and phrases — 239

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Introduction

§1 Prologue

The Book of Jeremiah poses one of the greatest challenges to biblical scholarship in terms of its literary composition and textual fluidity, both of which are reflected in the plethora of discrepancies between the Book's Hebrew, Masoretic text (מ) and the Greek, Septuagint version (Σ), both of which are supported by different Jeremiah scrolls from Qumran.

This study traces the intricacies of a range of formative and transformative processes by analyzing the textual manifestations of an instructive case study: the prophecy contained in Jer 10:1–16. Since this prophetic unit notoriously epitomizes many of the typical problems inherent in the textual and literary evidence, it has drawn much scholarly attention due to a range of theoretical and exegetical issues it raises both in itself and in the broader context of the compositional history of the Book of Jeremiah as a whole. Moreover, the prophecy contained in Jer 10:1–16 serves as an example of the genre of idol parodies, also attested in other biblical sources that seem to participate in a broader ancient Near Eastern discourse.¹ The analytical model presented herein is intended primarily to advance our understanding of the particular case study under scrutiny by closely investigating its literary, textual, and linguistic aspects. In so doing, however, this study also aspires to make a contribution to the ongoing, collective effort of critical scholarship towards better comprehension of the complicated compositional history of Jeremiah.² Modern study of this issue is heavily indebted to the seminal observations

¹ For instance, Levton 2008 highlights the political aspect of iconic cult, following previous discussions about the relationship between biblical idol parodies and the Mesopotamian ritual of induction of cult images; e.g., Berlejung 1998: 369–411, esp. 315–413; Dick 1999; Lundberg 2007. Ammann 2015 explores the relation between idol parodies and the world of wisdom, following the seminal study of von Rad 1972: 177–185.

² The enormous scope of scholarly literature on Jeremiah – which continues expanding as I write these lines – cannot be surveyed adequately in a focused study such as this one. In order to keep my analysis intelligible, I opted for a highly selective policy of reference, concentrating on the most pertinent publications for the particular issues discussed herein, bearing in mind that the history of scholarship as well as more general aspects of the issue have been repeatedly summarized in some very recent publications (e.g., Adcock 2017; Ammann 2015) and updated critical commentaries. I also preferred to refrain from extended debates with previous studies for the practical sake of producing a monograph that centers on the text itself while maintaining some degree of readability, despite delving into condensed philological analyses. An informed picture of the current state of Jeremiah studies may be attained from the various contributions to Najman and Schmid 2016.

of Bernard Duhm, adapted and amplified especially by Sigmund Mowinckel.³ The analytical trajectory marked by their work fertilized numerous subsequent studies, but it also yielded a counter trend, characterized by profound skepticism concerning any possibility to reconstruct the various stages by which Jeremiah assumed its current form, thus preferring to treat its text as a literary unity, thereby reverting back to a pre-critical view of the book.⁴ While I do not share this skeptical view of our critical abilities to discern the ‘prehistory’ of the book, the present inquiry is independent of any particular theory concerning the compositional history of Jeremiah.⁵ Most importantly, I do not presuppose the *a priori* primacy of any specific literary component, for instance, by assuming that poetic passages should be regarded, in principle, as older (and more genuine) than passages formulated in prose. Rather, each textual element is examined in and of its own, thus establishing its degree of authenticity and relative chronology vis-à-vis other elements. This is done regardless of theoretical assumptions made on the basis of abstract generalizations, which, as attractive as they may appear to be, do not necessarily conform to the actual evidence furnished by our extant sources.

§2 Demarcation

The delimitation of the prophecy poses no special problems.⁶ Its beginning is patently marked by a superscription in v. 1, “Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel,” the likes of which are found throughout the Book of Jeremiah. This passage defines all pertinent dimensions of the communicative situation: the initiator (YHWH), the addressee (the “house of Israel”), the content and relevance of the message (“the word” spoken “to you,” or rather “about you”), and the oral/audial medium of communication (“*hear* the word that the LORD *speaks* to you”). As such, it serves as a fitting statement for opening a prophetic message.

NB. While the redactional nature of v. 1 is evident in all versions of the text, notably, its Deuteronomistic features are more pronounced in 𐤂 than in 𐤁. The main difference between the two versions seemingly concerns only the

³ Duhm 1901; Mowinckel 1914.

⁴ Carrol 1986; Fischer 2005.

⁵ It should be noted, however, that the result of this study generally confirms the “rolling corpus” model, developed by McKane 1986–96.

⁶ For the general issue of delimiting the prophetic units contained in Jeremiah, see Lundbom 2009.

syntactic issue of the place of YHWH's name: it is located within the relative clause in מִן (שמעו את הדבר אשר דבר יהוה עליכם), "Hear the word *that the Lord* spoke concerning you"), but outside of the relative clause in ה (Ἀκούσατε τὸν λόγον κυρίου, ὃν ἐλάλησεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς = שמעו את דבר יהוה אשר דבר עליכם = "Hear *the word of the Lord* that he spoke concerning you"). However, this variation results in exhibiting different redactional formulae in the passage:

- (a) The construct phrase דבר יהוה is popular in Jeremiah as a designation of prophecy, and it is commonly used as the object of the verb שמע in other superscriptions.⁷ The phrase דבר יהוה אשר דבר is not employed elsewhere in Jeremiah as a redactional superscription, but rather in narrative descriptions (Jer 36:4; 37:2). It is a common formula in Kings for emphasizing that historical events are realizations of previous prophecies.⁸ This is a typically Deuteronomistic emphasis, and the function of this formula is to create a redactional link between originally discrete sources. Thus the formulation of Jer 10:1 according to ה bears a Deuteronomistic imprint.⁹
- (b) מִן's reading, שמעו את הדבר אשר דבר יהוה, conflates the common introductory formula שמעו את דבר יהוה (as reflected by ה) with the rarer construction הדבר אשר דבר יהוה, whose attestations in Jeremiah are restricted to the oracles against the nations (Jer 46:13; 50:1).¹⁰ This usage suggests that מִן's reading betrays an interpretation of Jer 10:1–16 as a prophecy dealing mainly with the nations. This ideological concern is indeed underscored in מִן – much more than in ה – and it also corresponds well with the duplication of a subsection of this prophecy (vv. 12–16) in prophecies that concern Babylon (Jer 51:15–19), found among the other oracles against the nations. It appears, therefore, that מִן's reading reflects a late rewriting of the superscription in light of the compositional development that the prophecy underwent as a whole.

The end of the prophetic unit is less clearly marked, but it is not seriously doubted nevertheless. The peculiar contents of the prophecy, comprising of a polemic against idolatry on the one hand and hymnic praises of YHWH on the other, do

⁷ Jer 2:4; 7:2; 9:19; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:29; 29:20; 31:10; 34:4; 42:15; 44:26.

⁸ 1 Kgs 2:27; 13:26; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 17:16; 22:38; 2 Kgs 1:17; 10:17; 15:12; 20:19 (=Isa 39:8); 24:2.

⁹ If this is indeed the case, one must consider the possibility that the formula is employed here – similarly to its function in Kings – in order to link the text back to a previous prophecy. Assuming that the core of the prophecy lies in its polemic against idolatry, the intended antecedent might be the prophecy in Jer 2:26–28, which similarly condemns the worship of idols (cf. Chapter 1, §5.2).

¹⁰ Cf. Isa 16:13; 37:22 (=2 Kgs 19:21). The latter passage is not part of Isaiah's collection of oracles against the nations, but it is thematically similar in concerning Assyria.

not continue beyond v. 16.¹¹ Moreover, v. 16 serves as a fitting conclusion for the argument inherent in the combination of both aforementioned topics: “Not like these [i.e., like the idols] is the LORD, the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name.”¹²

§3 Preliminaries

From a literary-historical point of view, there are clear indications that Jer 10:1–16 is not an original literary unity but rather a composite text. Most conspicuously, following the superscription of v. 1, the prophecy consists of two major literary strands that differ from each other in almost every respect.¹³

The first strand is a satirical presentation of idolatry. The speaker depicts, with considerable detail, the chain of production of cult images, underscoring their material properties and human-made nature. This colorful depiction culminates in a theological argument that the worship of such idols is senseless: how can humans believe that a cult image really has divine powers, even though they have just produced it by their own hands and are thus acutely aware of its

¹¹ Weis 2016a agrees that v. 16 is the conclusion of the prophecy according to **21**, but argues that **6** exhibits a different demarcation. In his view, **6** for Chapter 10 divides into three subunits (vv. 1–11, 12–21, 22–25), and vv. 16–17 are taken jointly as a single constituent within this overall structure. However, v. 17 in its Greek garb is quite unintelligible, and all translations and previous attempts to make sense of it are very forced. Perhaps the least radical assumption is that the translator’s *Vorlage* was damaged in these verses, and he did his best to salvage something from the few intelligible words and letters that he was able to decipher (cf. Streane 1896: 126–127). Adcock 2017 assumes that vv. 17–18 form an inseparable part of the prophecy (in **21**, which in his view represents the original form of the text); but the content, style, imagery and discursive situation of vv. 17–18 are very remote from vv. 1–16, so that they can hardly belong together.

¹² For a more detailed discussion of v. 16, see Chapter 1, §7 (pp. 68–70). Kaufmann (1937–63: 3/2.463) suggests that v. 25 (“Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you, and on the peoples that do not call on your name; for they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured him and consumed him, and have laid waste his habitation”) was originally placed after v. 16 and was intended as a conclusion for the prophecy against idolatry. In conjunction, he considers v. 25 to be cited from psalmic literature (Ps 79:6–7), so that the issue of its place in Chapter 10 is more redactional than compositional. For Kaufmann’s unique view of the prophecy under discussion, see Margaliot 1972–74: esp. 87–88.

¹³ Another conspicuous indication of the composite nature of the text is furnished by its discursive incoherence, marked by sudden and frequent changes in deictic references that “make the reader lose his orientation in the organization of the discourse of the chapter” (Glanz 2013: 227–229; the quote is taken from p. 228).

artificial and perishable nature? The prophecy contains three paragraphs that belong to this strand (vv. 2–5, 8–9, 14–15, hereafter referred to as the “satirical passages”).

Interwoven into this strand are other passages whose literary nature is patently distinct. These are hymnic, psalm-like passages that do not refer at all to idolatry but rather focus exclusively on YHWH, glorifying him as the divine sovereign of the entire universe. They too are clustered as three paragraphs (vv. 6–7, 10, 12–13, hereafter the “hymnic passages”). The swing between the satirical and hymnic modes is interrupted once by an additional component: a passage formulated in Aramaic (v. 11). But this passage neatly assimilates into the satirical passages, as it reads as a continuation of the polemic against idolatry.

The form-critical differences between the two major strands are so striking, and the shifts from one strand to the other are so abrupt, that one can easily isolate each constituent without affecting the others. They are combined together only in v. 16, which concludes the prophetic unit. Thus, the internal structure of the prophecy can be presented as following the logic of *alternation*:¹⁴

Opening	1 שמעו את הדבר אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בית ישראל	¹ Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.
S ₁	2 כה אמר יהוה אל דרך הגוים אל תלמדו ומאתות השמים אל תחתו כי יחתו הגוים מהמה 3 כי חקות העמים הבל הוא כי עץ מיער כרתו מעשה ידי חרש במעצד 4 בכסף ובזהב ייפהו במסמרות ובמקבות יחזקום ולוא יפיק 5 כתמר מקשה המה ולא ידברו נשוא ינשוא כי לא יצעדו אל תיראו מהם כי לא ירעו וגם היטיב אין אותם [פ]	² Thus says the LORD: Do not learn the way of the nations, or be dismayed at the signs of the heavens; for the nations are dismayed at them. ³ For the customs of the peoples are false: a tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an ax by the hands of an artisan; ⁴ people deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. ⁵ Their idols are like a wrought palm tree, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good.

¹⁴ The abbreviation “S” stands for the satirical passages, and “H” for the hymnic ones. The English translation of biblical passages – both here and throughout this study – generally follows the NRSV, but often with modifications of my own.

H ₁	6 מאין כמוך יהוה גדול אתה וגדול שמך בגבורה 7 מי לא יראך מלך הגוים כי לך יאתה כי בכל חכמי הגוים ובכל מלכותם מאין כמוך	⁶ There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. ⁷ Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For that is your due; among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you.
S ₂	8 ובאחת יבערו ויכסלו מוסר הבלים עץ הוא 9 כסף מרקע מתרשיש יובא וזהב מאופז מעשה חרש וידי צורף תכלת וארגמן לבושם מעשה חכמים כלם	⁸ They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction given by idols is no better than wood! ⁹ Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz. They are the work of the artisan and of the hands of the goldsmith; their clothing is blue and purple; they are all the product of skilled workers.
H ₂	10 ויהוה אלהים אמת הוא אלהים חיים ומלך עולם מקצפו תרעש הארץ ולא יכלו גוים זעמו [פ]	¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.
Aramaic	11 כדנה תאמרון להום אלהיא די שמיא וארקא לא עבדו יאבדו מארעא ומן תחות שמיא אלה [ס]	¹¹ Thus shall you say to them: The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.
H ₃	12 עשה ארץ בכחו מכין תבל בחכמתו ובתבונתו נטה שמים 13 לקול תתו המון מים בשמים ויעלה נשאים מקצה ארץ [הארץ] ברקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו	¹² It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. ¹³ When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightnings for the rain, and he brings out the wind from his storehouses.
S ₃	14 נבער כל אדם מדעת הביש כל צורף מפסל כי שקר נסכו ולא רוח בס 15 הבל המה מעשה תעתעים בעת פקדתם יאבדו	¹⁴ Everyone is stupid and without knowledge; goldsmiths are all put to shame by their idols; for their images are false, and there is no breath in them. ¹⁵ They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish.
Closure	16 לא כאלה חלק יעקב כי יוצר הכל הוא וישראל שבט נחלתו יהוה צבאות שמו [ס]	¹⁶ Not like these is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name.

The alternating structure is a remarkable feature, virtually unparalleled elsewhere in Jeremiah or even in prophetic literature as a whole.¹⁵ But the methodological interest in this case lies primarily in the fact that the form-critical analysis is independently corroborated by text-critical evidence.¹⁶

It is well-known that in Jeremiah, **⚡** and **⚡⚡** differ extensively from each other.¹⁷ The prophecy in Jer 10:1–16 comprises a particularly condensed selection of a variety of typical discrepancies between the two textual witnesses. Most notably, **⚡** is much shorter than **⚡⚡**, as it contains no representation of vv. 6–8 and 10 in their entirety, and it also exhibits shorter readings in other, individual passages. Furthermore, **⚡** presents a peculiar sequence of the passages comprising the prophecy vis-à-vis **⚡⚡** by having v. 9 *within* v. 5 rather than following it (i.e., vv. 5a→9→5b). Finally, **⚡** presents a full range of differing readings of various sorts throughout the prophecy.

While this assortment of differences seems dazzling at first, its significance becomes apparent when mapped against the form-critical analysis presented earlier:¹⁸

Opening	1 שמעו את הדבר אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בית ישראל	¹ Ἀκούσατε λόγον κυρίου, ὃν ἐλάλησεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ·
S ₁ + S ₂	2 כה אמר יהוה אל דרך הגוים אל תלמדו ומאתות השמים אל תחתו כי יחתו הגוים מהמה 3 כי חקות העמים הבל הוא כי עץ מיער כרתו מעשה ידי חרש במעצד 4 בכסף ובזהב יפהו במסמרות ובמקבות יחזקום ולוא יפיק 5 כתמר מקשה המה ולא ידברו	² τάδε λέγει κύριος Κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν μὴ μανθάνετε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν σημείων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ὅτι φοβοῦνται αὐτὰ τοῖς προσώποις αὐτῶν. 3 ὅτι τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἐθνῶν μάταια· ξύλον ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ δρυμοῦ ἐκκεκομμένον, ἔργον τέκτονος καὶ χώνευμα· ⁴ ἀργυρίῳ καὶ χρυσίῳ κεκαλλωπισμένα ἐστίν· ἐν σφύραις καὶ ἥλοις ἐστερέωσαν αὐτά, καὶ οὐ κινήθησονται· ^{5a} ἀργύριον τορευτόν ἐστιν, οὐ πορεύσονται·

¹⁵ This peculiar feature was observed aptly in early Jewish exegesis, for instance: ארבעה פעמים בדף אחד הראה ירמיהו גנותה של ע"ז ושבחיו של הקב"ה (*Exodus Rabbah* 16:2), “Four times on one page will you find that Jeremiah exposed the shame of idolatry and revealed the praise of God” (tr. Lehrman, in Freedman and Simon 1939: 3.207–208), continuing to specify how the two themes alternate. Cf. *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:1 (tr. Cohen, in Freedman and Simon 1939: 7.69–70). See further Chapter 2, §8 (p. 107, n. 91). For the reception of Jer 10:1–16 in rabbinic literature see Lavee 2016 (cf. Rosen-Zvi 2017: esp. 581–582).

¹⁶ Ben-Dov 2000 in particular emphasizes the convergence of both types of evidence.

¹⁷ For the state of the art, see Weis 2016b.

¹⁸ The text of **⚡** analyzed in this study is the basic text of Ziegler 1976: 201–202 (Jer 10:1–16) and 294 (Jer 51[28]:15–19). The English translation generally follows NETS (A. Pietersma and M. Saunders), albeit sometimes with modifications of my own. Cf. Walser 2012: 58–59, 260–261.

		<p>↓ ⁹ ἀργύριον προσβλητὸν ἀπὸ θαρσιν ἤξει, χρυσίον Μωφας καὶ χεῖρ χρυσοχόων, ἔργα τεχνιτῶν πάντα· ὑάκινθον καὶ πορφύραν ἐνδύσουσιν αὐτά·</p> <p>נשוא ינשוא כי לא יצעדו אל תיראו מהם כי לא ירעו וגם היטיב אין אותם [פ]</p>	
H ₁	6 מאין כמוד יהוה גדול אתה וגדול שמך בגבורה 7 מי לא יראך מלך הגוים כי לך יאתה כי בכל חכמי הגוים ובכל מלכותם מאין כמוד	—	<p>^{5b} αἰρόμενα ἀρθήσονται, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπιβήσονται. μὴ φοβηθῆτε αὐτά, ὅτι οὐ μὴ κακοποιήσωσι, καὶ ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς.</p>
S ₂	8 ובאחת יבערו ויכסלו מוסר הבלים עץ הוא	—	
	9 כסף מרקע מתרשיש יובא וזהב מאופז מעשה חרש וידי צורך תכלה וארגמן לבושם מעשה חכמים כלם	↑	
H ₂	10 ויהוה אלהים אמת הוא אלהים חיים ומלך עולם מקצפו תרעש הארץ ולא יכלו גוים זעמו [פ]	—	
Aramaic	11 כדנה תאמרון להום אלהיא די שמיא וארקא לא עבדו יאבדו מארעא ומן תחות שמיא אלה [ס]	—	<p>¹¹ οὕτως ἐρεῖτε αὐτοῖς Θεοί, οἳ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν οὐκ ἐποίησαν, ἀπολέσθωσαν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὑποκάτωθεν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τούτου.</p>
H ₃	12 עשה ארץ בכחו מכין תבל בחכמתו ובתבונתו נטה שמים 13 לקול תתן המון מים בשמים ויעלה נשאים מקצה ארץ [הארץ] בריקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו	—	<p>¹² κύριος ὁ ποιήσας τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ ἰσχύϊ αὐτοῦ, ὁ ἀνορθώσας τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ φρονήσει αὐτοῦ ἐξέτεινε τὸν οὐρανὸν ¹³ καὶ πληθὸς ὕδατος ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἀνήγαγε νεφέλας ἐξ ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, ἀστραπὰς εἰς ὑετὸν ἐποίησε καὶ ἐξήγαγε φῶς ἐκ θησαυρῶν αὐτοῦ.</p>
S ₃	14 נבער כל אדם מדעת הביש כל צורך מפסל כי שקר נסכו ולא רוח במ 15 הבל המה מעשה תעתעים בעת פקדתם יאבדו	—	<p>¹⁴ ἐμωράνθη πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ γνώσεως, κατησχύνθη πᾶς χρυσοχόος ἐπὶ τοῖς γλυπτοῖς αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ψευδῇ ἐχώνευσαν, οὐκ ἔστι πνεῦμα ἐν αὐτοῖς· ¹⁵ μάταιά ἐστιν, ἔργα ἐμπεπαιγμένα, ἐν καιρῷ ἐπισκοπῆς αὐτῶν ἀπολούνται.</p>
Closure	16 לא כאלה חלק יעקב כי יוצר הכל הוא וישראל שבט נחלתו יהוה צבאות שמו [ס]	—	<p>¹⁶ οὐκ ἔστι τοιαύτη μερὶς τῷ Ἰακωβ, ὅτι ὁ πλάσας τὰ πάντα αὐτὸς κληρονομία αὐτοῦ, κύριος ὄνομα αὐτῷ.</p>

As the table clearly shows, 6 lacks two of the three hymnic passages (vv. 6–7, 10), while two satirical passages (vv. 2–5, 8–9) are combined therein into a single, continuous paragraph (which does not contain v. 8). It is quite unlikely that any

scribe or translator would have omitted passages the praise God as the divine king; on the other hand, it is inherently reasonable to suppose that such passages could be supplemented to any religious text along its textual transmission. The simplest conclusion, therefore, is that 6's shorter version testifies to an older stage in the compositional history of the prophecy compared to 21, whereas 21 represents a later formation, enriched with hymnic passages.¹⁹ Thus, 6 generally affirms the results of the form-critical analysis to a surprising degree, affording an independent validation of the composite nature of the prophecy under scrutiny.²⁰

While sustaining the basic distinction between the satirical and hymnic passages, 6 also suggests – albeit indirectly – that at least some components of the prophecy had an independent existence prior to their integration into the text. Furthermore, 6 alerts our attention to the possibility that the hymnic strand is not a literary unity of its own – otherwise, it would be difficult to comprehend why vv. 12–13 are shared by both 6 and 21, whereas vv. 6–7 and v. 10 are not witnessed by 6 and remain peculiar to 21 and its congeners. The suspicion that the three hymnic passages do not converge but rather stem from different sources is confirmed by literary and philological analysis, which demonstrates their original independence of one another. Both philological and textual evidence further indicates that the hymnic passages were not added *en bloc*, but rather were added to supplement the prophecy incrementally. Such a development trajectory cannot be reconciled with reading all three passages as a continuous strand.²¹

If this analysis is correct, it also has an important implication for understanding the textual relationship between 6 and 21. Most importantly, the long text of 21 cannot be taken as a direct descendent of the short text represented by 6 (and 4QJer^b). Rather, one ought to hypothesize intermediate stages, in which the various components were added, bit-by-bit, before accumulating to the

¹⁹ See especially Bogaert 1981 (1997) (cf. Bogaert 2013: esp. 230–237). Cf. McKane 1985. The relative lateness of 21, however, should not be overstated; for instance, the Hasmonean dating of the so-called “long recension” – asserted by Amphoux, Aussedat and Sérandour 2009 – ignores the fact that it is already recorded in 4QJer^a, copied at the end of the third (or beginning of the second) century BCE, i.e., before the Hasmonean period.

²⁰ This presentation of the evidence presupposes that 6 is a not the product of a free translator but rather a faithful rendition of a deviant Hebrew *Vorlage*. While early critics debated this assumption, it was fully vindicated with the publication of 4QJer^b (4Q71), a fragment that preserves parts of Jer 9:22–10:20 and closely matches the text underlying 6. This finding renders obsolete all speculations about the allegedly free translation technique of 6. 4QJer^b was published preliminarily by Janzen 1973: 181–182, followed by the full and official edition of Tov 1997: 171–176 (cf. Tov 1989). Saley 2010 offers an alternative reconstruction of the missing parts. For a survey of the Jeremiah scrolls from Qumran, cf. Lange 2009: 297–324 and 2016.

²¹ For a different opinion, see Finsterbusch 2013.

conglomerate represented by **MT**. For this reason, I do not share the common assumption that the Book of Jeremiah circulated in antiquity in (only) two so-called “recensions”: a short recension represented by **G** and 4QJer^b and a long recension represented by **MT** and the other ancient versions.²² Rather, I consider **G** and **MT** to be better viewed as a random selection of two witnesses out of a greater number of textual formations that should be surmised in order to account for the textual discrepancies between the extant versions.²³ Put differently, the textual history of Jeremiah is that of an “open recension.”

§4 Complicating factors

The above conclusions supply a solid foundation for any critical inquiry of the prophecy in Jer 10:1–16. On this basis, one can analyze further the individual strands and speculate about their distinct histories before, during, and after being integrated into the prophetic unit as it now stands in the extant versions, primarily **MT** and **G**. Several factors, however, have proved to complicate the study of this prophecy, pushing its scholarly discussion in different – sometimes contradictory – directions:

- (1) The seemingly sophisticated literary structure of the prophetic unit led to a harmonistic reading of the prophecy as an original unity.
- (2) Attempts yielding opposite results were made to discern different strata even within the most solid part of the prophecy; namely, the satirical passages.
- (3) A subsection of the prophecy (Jer 10:12–16) is duplicated elsewhere in the book (Jer 51:15–19), thus comprising one of the many cases of textual doublets so characteristic of the Book of Jeremiah. This situation prompted the assumption that originally, the duplicated section was an independent unit – an assumption that had a decisive effect on all attempts to reconstruct the compositional history of the prophecy.

²² Cf. Tov 1981.

²³ Cf. the theoretical framework formulated by Tov 1982. Note that the Jeremiah scrolls from Qumran might supply a confirmation for this hypothesis. The oldest copy of Jeremiah from Qumran, 4QJer^a (dated, on paleographic grounds, to the late third or early second century BCE; cf. Yardeni 1990) is often adduced as supporting the long, proto-Masoretic recension. But even if this is true for Jer 10:1–16, one should take care to distinguish, in this scroll, between the text of the original scribe and the many textual corrections added at a later stage. Most significantly, Jer 7:30–8:3 is missing from the main text, and it was added only by a later corrector. Although the editor eventually preferred to explain it as an omission due to a scribal lapse (Tov 1997: 152–153), the opposite option of considering it as a testimony of an older formation of the text remains an attractive alternative. If so, the text of the original scribe is shorter than **MT** but still longer than **G**, thus fitting as representing a sort of an intermediate stage between the two.

- (4) There are striking parallels between our prophecy and Deutero-Isaiah, which are not limited to the shared theme of a polemic against idolatry but extend to very specific verbal contacts. Such similarities motivated the treatment of Jer 10:1–16 jointly with Deutero-Isaiah's idol parodies, amounting to denying any connection between this prophecy and Jeremiah's *oeuvre*.

I submit, however, that all these arguments rest on a methodologically shaky ground and do not stand up to criticism. Indeed, in my view, none of them is able to subvert the basic contentions presented above regarding the composition of the prophecy and the literary relation between the textual witnesses. Let us consider these points one by one.

§4.1 Literary structure

The identification of an alternating pattern in Jer 10:1–16 exerted much influence over scholarly discussions, as it created an imposing impression of literary cohesion of this prophecy. Many scholars have construed the peculiar alternating structure accordingly as a decisive argument for the literary unity and original integrity of the prophetic unit.²⁴

Such a view, however, does not accord with the fact that no alternating pattern is visible in **6**.²⁵ If this version indeed reflects an older stage of the prophecy, the alternating structure should be regarded as a secondary development rather than a feature of the *Urtext*. The only way to defend the alternating pattern as original is to argue for the authenticity of **11** – for instance, by rejecting **6** as the product of a literary technique of reworking an older and longer text by way of excerption.²⁶

Indeed, even for scholars admitting the composite nature of the prophecy, the alternation between satirical and hymnic passages could still be interpreted as the result of purposeful redaction.²⁷ However, this position is not a necessary conclusion from the evidence either. It is just as possible to construe a

²⁴ See, e.g., Ackroyd 1963; Overholt 1965; Margaliot 1980; Krašovec 1984: 76–85; Clendenen 1987; Holladay 1986–89: 1.321–337.

²⁵ Cf. Scholz 1875: 60–62.

²⁶ See, e.g., Vonach 2009; Adcock 2017. The extreme view that **6** reflects a heavily corrupted text, the cumulative result of numerous cases of haplography – over 330 instances throughout Jeremiah, consisting of some 1,715 words (!), according to Lundbom 2005 – is based on abuse of textual criticism.

²⁷ As my own previous discussion of this unit implied (Mizrahi 2014: 120–121).

different scenario, which focuses on the fact that most textual segments suspected as late interpolations (vv. 10, 11, 12–13) are actually concentrated together at the same locus. The only passage that appears to violate this rule is the hymnic vv. 6–7, which is separated from v. 10 by the satirical passage of vv. 8–9. But this exception disappears in ❸ (where v. 8 is absent and v. 9 is integrated into v. 5), thus pushing vv. 6–7 to the very same locus of the all the other supplementations.

If so, the impression of an alternating structure can be replaced by an alternative view, identifying a compilation of interpolations, all placed on top of each other, within a single structural slot in the prophecy, between vv. 1–5 (including v. 9) on the one hand and vv. 14–16 on the other. In other words, the alternating structure is in the eye of the beholder, and although commentators and scholars repeatedly observed this structure since Late Antiquity through the modern age, it is not necessarily the intended configuration of the text; it may well be the random result of a gradual process of literary accretion.

§4.2 Compositional analysis

While structural features of the prophecy have motivated its harmonistic reading, another complicating factor resulted in an opposite trajectory, yielding a hypercritical approach. More specifically, questioning the literary integrity of the satirical strand led to a radical reevaluation of the originality of most of textual segments contained in the prophecy.²⁸

The starting point for this approach has been the argument that v. 2 (“Thus says the Lord: Do not learn the way of the nations, or be dismayed at the signs of the heavens; for the nations are dismayed at them”) and v. 3a (“For the customs of the peoples are false”) duplicate each other while differing in their phraseology. Thus, v. 2 denotes the nations twice by the term הַגִּיִּים, whereas v. 3a refers to them as הָעַמִּים. Furthermore, the passages contrast in the expressions they employ for the false customs of the nations: v. 2 evinces “the way (דֶּרֶךְ) of the nations,” while v. 3a prefers “the customs (תְּקוּנֹת) of the peoples.” These facts were taken as betraying signs of literary complexity, leading to the hypothesis that v. 3a is

²⁸ The most influential analysis in this direction is that of Wambacq 1974. The following paragraph describes the essentials of Wambacq’s thesis, but its underlying logic is shared by other studies that accepted his analysis.

a redactional addition meant to radicalize the message of v. 2, arguing that the astrological beliefs of the gentiles are completely false (הבל).²⁹

It was further speculated that vv. 3b-4 form an even later redactional addition, which reflects a misinterpretation of the term הבל (v. 3a) as a reference to idols, following a usage attested elsewhere in the Book of Jeremiah;³⁰ these passages were later supplemented by vv. 5, 8, 9, etc. According to this supplementary theory, the original kernel of the prophecy is restricted to v. 2 alone. This is the only passage ascribable to Jeremiah, and it addresses refugees of the northern kingdom, who survived the destruction of Samaria and were not deported by the Assyrians. All the other segments of the prophecy are judged to be subsequent additions made much later, around the beginning of the third century BCE.

Unfortunately, the literary evidence adduced in support of this complicated reconstruction is very slim, and it may well be interpreted in alternative, even contradictory ways. Most importantly, the terms גי and עס form a word-pair in Biblical Hebrew, so that a single author could have easily employed them within a single context (see, e.g., Deut 4:27 in prose; Deut 32:8 in poetry). Indeed, such a usage is documented elsewhere in Jeremiah (Jer 6:22; cf. 50:41). Similarly, the terms חקה and דרך are jointly employed, in an overlapping sense, especially in

29 The idea that the phrase אֲתוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם, “the signs of the heavens,” refers to astronomical phenomena that were given astrological interpretation is very common among commentators of Jeremiah. Cf. already Targum Jonathan (Ⲯ), which renders the phrase as “signs which are changed in the heavens,” and similarly in rabbinic literature, e.g., *b. Shabbat* 156a: “R. Johanan said: How do we know that Israel is immune from planetary influence? Because it is said, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the nations are dismayed at them’: they are dismayed but not Israel” (tr. Freedman, in Epstein 1935: 2/1–2.156a, col. ii, c). Cf. the Syriac commentator Ishodad of Merv (van den Eynde 1972: 1.12, 2.13). Critical scholars sometimes distinguish between the argument against astrology presumably expressed in v. 2 and the polemic against idolatry manifested in the rest of the prophecy. However, the term אֹת “sign” in v. 2 is better interpreted as denoting a material object (cf. Num 2:2); in that case, אֲתוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם may be the astral symbols of the deities comprising “the host of heavens,” whose worship was common in Judah in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (2 Kgs 21:3, 5; cf. Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 23:5; Jer 8:2; 19:13; Zeph 1:5), probably under Syrian and Assyrian influence; cf. Cogan 1974: 84–87. (Koch 1982–83: 2.48–54, esp. 52, did not distinguish carefully enough between these two interpretations, and he discussed the whole issue in too general terms; for a different opinion, see Ben-Dov 2000: 106–108.)

30 According to Barstad 1978, the occurrence of הבל in Jer 10:3 is a proper noun, the name of a Canaanite god related to the deity Hubal, known from sources that concern the Arabian peninsula in the pre-Islamic period. However, Becking 1993 persuasively rejected this interpretation (cf. Becking 1999).

Deuteronomistic passages (Deut 30:16; 1 Kgs 2:3; 11:33, 38; 2 Kgs 17:13).³¹ Thus, the sharp distinction made between v. 2 and v. 3a is unjustified. Moreover, the very same data may be utilized to argue the exact opposite; namely, that vv. 2–3a belong together, revealing a Deuteronomistic-like hand.³²

Noteworthy is the methodological lesson that transpires from this discussion. The attempt to distinguish between two literary components – v. 2 vis-à-vis v. 3a – was based largely on the presumed existence of a doublet, while the more traditional criteria pointing to the obvious presence of distinct literary strands in the prophecy – such as differences in theme, stylistic mode, and ideological outlook that distinguish between the satirical and hymnic passages – were played down.³³ In principle, however, redactional activity may fuse together several sources or traditions that will necessarily *differ* in their content and form; yet they need not *duplicate* each other. For this reason, the primary criteria of differences in content, form, and worldview must take precedence in literary-historical analysis; doublets may or may not exist in a composite text, so that their existence is not a prerequisite for its analysis. Finally, internal doublets should not be assumed if other – especially easier – ways to explain the evidence are equally available.

§4.3 Parallel within Jeremiah

A third element that complicated previous discussions of our prophecy is the fact that a subsection of the prophetic unit, Jer 10:12–16, has a verbatim doublet in Jer 51(Ⓜ 28):15–19. The latter is embedded in a structurally and generically different part of the Book of Jeremiah; namely, as part of the Oracles against the Nations:³⁴

³¹ Compare the related word-pair דרך // חק (Deut 26:17; 1 Kgs 3:14; 8:58; cf. Exod 18:20; Ps 119:33). Note Job 28:26, בעשתי למטר חק ודרך לחיזי קלות, “when he made a *decree* for the rain, and a *way* for the thunderbolt,” as this passage employs the word-pair of דרך // חק in the context of God’s control over meteorological phenomena.

³² Indeed, Deuteronomistic-like features are not limited to this passage but rather typify a specific stratum within the prophecy (see Chapter 1). Intriguingly, Thiel (1973: 135–138) disregarded such elements contained in Jer 10:1–16. He may have ignored them given his presupposition – inherited from previous scholars (e.g., Mowinckel 1914: 48–49) – that the entire prophecy of Jer 10:1–16 is a late, post-Deuteronomistic addition (e.g., Thiel 1973: 12, 282). It seems to me, however, that the evidence does not support this line of thinking.

³³ The decisive weight of the notion of duplication in Wambacq’s theory suggests that despite its supplementary results, the critical sensitivity underlying his approach is actually akin to documentary models.

³⁴ The only major difference between 10:12–16 and 51:15–19, according to Ⓜ, pertains to the name of Israel, which is included in Jer 10:16 but absent from 51:19. Other than that, there is only

Jer 51:15–19

15 עשה ארץ בכחו מכן תבל בחכמתו
 ובתבונתו נטה שמים 16 לקול תתו המון מים
 בשמים ויעל נשאים מקצה ארץ ברקים למטר
 עשה ויצא רוח מאצרתיו
 17 נבער כל אדם מדעת הביש כל צורף מפסל
 כי שקר נסכו ולא רוח בם 18 הבל המה מעשה
 תעתעים בעת פקדתם יאבדו
 19 לא כאלה חלק יעקוב כי יוצר הכל הוא
 ושבט נחלתו יהוה צבאות שמו

Jer 10:12–16

12 עשה ארץ בכחו מכן תבל בחכמתו
 ובתבונתו נטה שמים 13 לקול תתו המון מים
 בשמים ויעלה נשאים מקצה ארץ [הארץ]
 ברקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו
 14 נבער כל אדם מדעת הביש כל צורף מפסל
 כי שקר נסכו ולא רוח בם 15 הבל המה מעשה
 תעתעים בעת פקדתם יאבדו
 16 לא כאלה חלק יעקב כי יוצר הכל הוא
 וישראל שבט נחלתו יהוה צבאות שמו

This case is but one example of a much wider phenomenon, as Jeremiah is replete with textual doublets of this kind.³⁵ Nonetheless, our particular case has led many scholars to view vv. 12–16 as comprising an originally independent literary unit that had its own compositional and textual history, independent of vv. 1–11 (or at least vv. 2–10, if one excludes the redactional superscription of v. 1 and the Aramaic passage of v. 11).³⁶

However, such a conclusion is contradicted by basic facts of the literary evidence afforded by both Chapter 10 and Chapter 51. As far as Chapter 10 is concerned, vv. 12–16 cannot be isolated from the rest of the prophecy, because one finds

a slight orthographic fluctuation concerning the /o/ vowel in צו(ו)רף (spelled *plene* in 10:14 but defectively in 51:17) and עיק(ו)ב (spelled defectively in 10:16 but *plene* in 51:19). The differences in the Greek versions of both sections are discussed below.

³⁵ See, e.g., Parke-Taylor 2000: esp. 177–180. In my opinion, no single solution can be offered for all such duplicates, and the matter should be dealt with discriminatively; cf. Rofé 2009.

³⁶ See, e.g., Crüsemann 1969: 111–114; Rudman 1998: 63–73; Lundbom 1999–2004: 1.596–600. Note especially the nuanced approach of Ben-Dov 2000, who accepts the common view that vv. 12–16 represent an independent unit but identifies signs for its literary complexity. For him, vv. 12–13 are the kernel of the hymnic layer of the prophecy as a whole (with vv. 6–7 and 10 as later expansions). In his view, the hymnic layer is related to doxologies added to prophetic literature as part of its redactional history (cf. already Tov 1981: 154, n. 27), as exemplified especially by the Book of Amos (cf. Crenshaw 1969 and 1971: esp. 75–114). Thematically, the doxologies concentrate on the motif of God the Creator, who also takes care of the regular maintenance of his world. Stylistically, they make extensive use of participles. Furthermore, they link to the employment of the formula, “YHWH of Hosts is his name” (יהוה צבאות שמו), which indeed occurs in v. 16. In my opinion, however, these characteristics do not apply equally to all the hymnic passages of Jer 10:1–16. None of them matches vv. 6–7, and the name formula depends exclusively on v. 16, which (according to Ben-Dov himself) was not originally connected to the hymnic passage of vv. 12–13. This example provides further indication that it is better to refrain from considering all the hymnic passages of Jer 10:1–16 as belonging to the same stratum. In any case, their resemblance to the Amos doxologies does not appear to me to bear satisfactory explanatory potential.

in them exactly the same two literary strands that run through the prophetic unit as a whole: a satirical presentation of idolatry on the one hand (vv. 14–15; cf. vv. 2–5, 8–9) and a hymnic praise of YHWH on the other (vv. 12–13; cf. vv. 6–7, 10). The thematic and stylistic differentiation makes little sense within vv. 12–16 on their own; it becomes understandable only within the broader context of Jer 10:1–16. Moreover, the satirical passages, including vv. 14–15, integrate into a continuous, narrative-like description, thus suggesting that they all stem from a single literary source. Finally, vv. 12–16 do not display greater textual stability than other segments of the prophecy; like all other passages, this section too evinces significant differences between **MT** and **OG**, including shorter readings in **OG** for vv. 13 and 16. The inescapable conclusion is that Jer 10:12–16 cannot be considered as a self-standing unit that had existed separately of the other parts of the prophecy in Jer 10:1–16. On the contrary, it is manifestly nothing but a section abruptly cut out from its original context and secondarily interpolated into Chapter 51.

Examination of the parallel section in Jer 51:15–19 leads to a complementary conclusion. First, this section does not interact in any way with its immediate context. Jer 51:15–19 is embedded within a collection of prophecies against Babylon (Jer 50–51), but vv. 15–19 contain no reference or even hint to Babylon, which is the conspicuous theme of all the prophecies surrounding it. Second, the section contains a condemnation of idol worship (vv. 17–18 || 10:14–15) that has neither antecedent nor continuation in the prophecies against Babylon contained in Chapters 50–51. To be sure, these prophecies do occasionally predict destruction for idols (Jer 51:47, 52; cf. 50:38),³⁷ but these oracles do so only by explicitly identifying such idols as the *Babylonian* gods, so that their destruction functions as a symbol for the pending loss of Babylonia at large. By contrast, the polemic of vv. 17–18 is directed against idolatry as such, without making any geographical or ethnic identification. Third, vv. 15–19 also differ from their context in some formal respects, such as their discursive situation: in the prophetic units that precede this section (Jer 51:11–14, especially vv. 13–14) and follow it (Jer 51:20–24), God speaks in the first person, whereas our section begins with a description of God in the third person (in vv. 15–16 || Jer 10:12–13), thereby interrupting the sequence of divine speeches in the first person. These facts converge in indicating that vv.

³⁷ Note Qimhi's attempt to utilize this fact in explaining why the section from Chapter 10 was integrated into Chapter 51: האלילים שהיו בוטחים בהם בני בבל והיו חושבים כי בעבודתם היתה הצלחה (Cohen 2012: 254), "He reiterated the passage here because of the issue of the idols, in which the Babylonians were trusting and thinking that their worship ensures their success." But this explanation lacks conviction as it ignores the fact that the Babylonian idols are not mentioned in the immediate context of our section; namely, in the preceding and following units within Chapter 51.

15–19 are alien to their present context in Chapter 51. Their presence there surely results from a secondary interpolation, while their source is to be identified in Chapter 10.

The evidence furnished by both Chapters 10 and 51 indicates that the parallel in Jer 51:15–19 may well be valuable for text-critical purposes, but it cannot testify to older stages in the compositional history of the text contained therein. Its presence in Chapter 51 can only point to the later *reception* of the prophecy included in Chapter 10.³⁸ This state of affairs obviously prompts the question: Why was this section inserted into Chapter 51? A perceptive comment of the medieval Jewish commentator Menaḥem of Posquières suggests a possible answer for this query:³⁹

עשה: הטעם בעבור שהזכיר למעלה נשבע ה' צבאות הגיד הכתוב שיש לו כח לקיים שבועותו
כי הוא היה עושה ארץ בכוח וכל אלה הפליאות שמגידה זאת הפרשה

“Who makes [the earth by his power, etc.]” [Jer 51:15]: The motivation [for citing this paragraph here] is that since it is mentioned above that “YHWH of Hosts *has sworn*” [v. 14], the passage explicates that He indeed has the power to fulfil his oath, for he was “the maker of the land by his power” [v. 12] and all the other miraculous deeds that this paragraph tells about.

According to this proposition, the divine oath that Babylon will suffer a mass invasion (v. 14) is amplified by reminding the (potentially skeptical) audience that God had already committed greater deeds, such as the creation of the world, thus affirming that he indeed possesses the power to bring destruction even to a mighty kingdom such as the Neo-Babylonian empire.⁴⁰

³⁸ Another important witness for a later stage in the reception of our prophecy is the apocryphal work *Epistle of Jeremiah*, which is appended to Jeremiah, Baruch, and Lamentations in 6 (see most recently Adams 2014). Since analysis of this work entails many complications due to its peculiar literary features, the following discussion addresses this work only in as much as it bears on elucidating textual points of Jer 10:1–16.

³⁹ See Cohen 2012: 255. A similar view was also expressed in modern scholarship, cf. Hill 1999: 174–176.

⁴⁰ Menaḥem does not adduce comparable instances in which a divine oath is accompanied by a demonstration of God’s sovereignty over the universe, but he may have had in mind cases such as Am 8:7–9, in which a divine oath to take revenge of oppressors of poor people (v. 7: “The Lord has sworn [נשבע יהוה] by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds”) is immediately followed by a depiction of a cosmic uproar (v. 8: “Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who lives in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt? On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight,” etc.).