


LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 in the light of Jewish literature of the time: On the word usage related to exile and diaspora

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Dates:

Received: 05 Apr. 2021

Accepted: 12 May 2021

Published: 17 Aug. 2021

How to cite this article:

Van der Kooij, A., 2021, 'LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 in the light of Jewish literature of the time: On the word usage related to exile and diaspora', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(1), a6693. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6693>

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This article is not meant to contribute to the debate on the textual history of the book of Jeremiah but intends to examine specific data in the Old Greek version (Septuagint [LXX] Jeremiah) in the light of Jewish literature at the time of the translator. The angle of approach concerns the word usage related to exile and diaspora in LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36, on the one hand, and 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14, on the other hand. I shall argue that the latter two texts display a usage of the terminology involved that at the same time is related to a particular view of the post-exilic age. After a brief discussion of the terminology involved from a broader perspective, LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 are looked at from a perspective obtained from the analysis of the two contemporary texts.

Contribution: This article fits within the scope of *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* since it contributes to research regarding historical thought (source interpretation, reception of and traditions about Jeremiah) and hermeneutics.

Keywords: LXX Jeremiah; exile; diaspora; 2 Maccabees; Tobit; reception of Jeremiah; traditions about Jeremiah; perception of post-exilic history in early Judaism; hermeneutics.

Introduction

Remarkable mutual divergences between ancient witnesses of the text of Jeremiah have led to the conclusion that two text forms, or editions, of the book were part of the Jewish literature in the Hellenistic era: a longer version represented by 4QJer^a and transmitted by the Masoretes (MT) and a shorter one attested by the Old Greek version of Jeremiah (Septuagint [LXX] Jeremiah) and by 4QJer^b. Many scholars subscribe to the view that the shorter version mirrors an older, pre-Masoretic version of the book, whilst a few others do not.¹

In this article, I am not going to discuss any of the complex issues involved, such as the question of priority, but would like to deal with specific data in LXX Jeremiah in the light of Jewish literature of the time (2nd century BC). As far as the *Vorlage* of LXX Jeremiah is concerned, I subscribe to the view that LXX Jeremiah reflects a text form in Hebrew that differs from the longer one attested by MT. However, because except in a few cases (e.g. Jer 10) the Greek version is the only text we have, the focus in this article is on the Greek side of the coin. Moreover, this approach has the advantage of comparing Greek Jeremiah with other Jewish sources in Greek.

The topic I have in mind concerns the word usage related to exile and diaspora in two passages in LXX Jeremiah (25:1–13 and 36:1–14), as well as in two contemporary sources (2 Macc 1–2 and Tob 14). Firstly, I shall concentrate on each of the passages in LXX Jeremiah and on the writings just mentioned, giving special attention to the terminology involved. Next, having dealt briefly with the question of the terminology at stake from a broader perspective, I shall end with a reading of both passages in LXX Jeremiah in the light of the contemporary sources.

LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 (Masoretic Text 29)

Jeremiah 25:1–13

The MT version of Jeremiah 25:1–13, which seen from a literary critical point of view is a complex text,² is marked by striking differences compared with the text of the LXX. Many scholars subscribe

1. For recent surveys, see, for example, Adcock (2017), Bogaert (2016:5–10), Lange (2009, 2017) and Weis (2017).

2. For recent contributions, see Gesundheit (2012) and Silver (2016).

Note: Special Collection: Historical Thought and Source Interpretation, sub-edited by Johann Cook (Stellenbosch University).

to the view that the LXX version attests a Hebrew text, which is earlier than the text transmitted in MT.³ I am not going to discuss the details involved, nor as indicated above the issue of priority, but shall focus on the minuses concerning the king of Babylon in the Greek text because they include a passage relevant to the topic of this article.

As is well known, instead of mentioning ‘the king of Babylon’ as the enemy, LXX is a text in which the enemy who will bring destruction to Jerusalem and Judah is anonymous. The relevant passages are verses 9, 11 and 12:

LXX I will take the clan [sg.] from the north

[λήψομαι τὴν πατριὰν ἀπὸ βορρᾶ]

MT I will take all the clans [pl.] of the north, says the Lord, and for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon my servant. (v. 9)

The idea of the anonymous enemy ‘from the north’ in LXX reminds one of passages such as 1:15 and 6:22 (cf. e.g. Aejmelaeus 2002:470; Stipp 1994:115). As a matter of fact, the wording both in LXX and MT is not the same as in our text, but they all share the notion of some disaster from the north. LXX 1:15 reads, ‘all the *kingdoms* from the north’ (MT: ‘all the *clans* of the *kingdoms* of the north’), and in 6:22, LXX reads, ‘a people comes from the north, and nations [...]’ (MT: ‘a people is coming from the north country, a great nation [...]’). Unlike these passages our text is marked by the singular (‘the clan/tribe from the north’), on which see further below, at verse 12:

LXX and they will serve among the nations, 70 years

[καὶ δουλεύσουσιν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη]

MT and these nations will serve the king of Babylon, 70 years (v. 11b)

The MT has it that ‘these nations’, that is ‘the nations around’ of verse 9, will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. The LXX does not refer to the king of Babylon; it reads, ‘they will serve among the nations’. In this text, ‘they’ (the subject of the clause) are the inhabitants of ‘the whole land’ [πᾶσα ἡ γῆ] in verse 11a, that is the land of the Judeans mentioned in verse 9.⁴

This verse is important for the topic of this article because of the phrase ‘to serve among the nations’.⁵ Scholars have expressed different opinions regarding the meaning of the expression. Stipp (1994:116, 118) thinks of exile in the sense of deportation (see also Holladay 1986:663; Schenker 1991:151), whilst Aejmelaeus notes: ‘our writer revealed his own time when Jews were living in the diaspora in various countries, not only in the Babylonian exile’ (Aejmelaeus 2002:475).⁶ These comments are quite interesting as they suggest a distinction between ‘exile’ and

3. See, for example, Schenker (1991), Goldman (1992:189–211), Stipp (1994:111–119), Aejmelaeus (2002, 2017) and Stipp (2019). For a critical view, see Gesundheit (2012).

4. Cf. Erzberger (2018:690–691). For the rendering ‘the whole land’, see also A New English Translation of the Septuagint and LXX.D. The alternative, ‘the whole earth’ hardly makes sense in the context. For a different view, see Stipp (2019:289) (the Judeans and their neighbours, cf. v. 9c).

5. For the issue of the underlying Hebrew, see, for example, Gesundheit (2012:55) and Erzberger (2018:691).

6. Cf. Vonach (2011:2777) (‘Anspielung auf die Diaspora’). Halvorson-Taylor (2011:160), on the other hand, suggests that the phrase might point to ‘Judah’s demotion to provincial status’.

‘deportation’ on the one hand and ‘diaspora’ on the other hand. I shall come back to this issue below.

Finally, verse 12a:

LXX When the 70 years have completed I will punish that nation.

[καὶ ἐν τῷ πληρωθῆναι τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη ἐκδικήσω τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο]

MT Then after 70 years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, says the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans.

Here again, LXX does not make a reference to ‘the king of Babylon’, or to ‘the land of the Chaldeans’ either, but speaks only of ‘that nation’, which likely so is to be identified with ‘the clan from the north’ in verse 9 (cf. Erzberger 2018:691). This might explain the singular employed in verse 9.

Jeremiah 36(29):1–14

The first part of this chapter (vv. 1–14) contains the letter of Jeremiah to the exile in Babylon. The verses of interest to our topic are verses 1, 10 and 14.

LXX verse 1 reads:

These are the words of the book [βιβλου], which Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the elders of the exile [τῆς ἀποικίας] and to the priests [...], as a letter to the exile in Babylon [ἐπιστολὴν εἰς Βαβυλῶνα τῆ ἀποικία], and to all the people.

Compared to MT the italicised clause is a plus in LXX. Its reference to Babylon may be related to the final clause of the verse in MT, which is not attested in LXX: ‘whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon’. The letter refers to the exile of King Jehoniah and his family and of other leading people, being deported from Jerusalem to Babylon. They are the deportees also referred to in Jeremiah 24:1 (the king Jehoniah and his people being taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon [LXX and MT]). The vocabulary employed, ἀποικία (36:1, 4) and ἀποικίζω (Jer 24:1, 5; 36:4, 7), obviously is about ‘deportation’, denoting people being carried away from one place to another.⁷

Verse 10 reads:

LXX When Babylon’s 70 years are about to be completed

[Ὅταν μέλλῃ πληροῦσθαι Βαβυλῶνι ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη],

I [i.e. the Lord] will visit you and I will establish my words upon you to bring your people back to this place

MT When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise [lit. ‘my word’] and bring you back to this place.

It is to be noted that the verb μέλλω is used in the first half of the verse – when the 70 years are *about to be* completed, or *are going to be* completed – thus conveying the idea of something that really is going to happen.⁸

7. The term ἀποικία is typical of LXX Jeremiah and 2 Esdras.

8. For a different interpretation of μέλλω, see Bryan (2018:117–118) (the phrase ‘are about to be completed’ being taken as indicating that the number of 70 years should not be taken in a precise way but as a round figure).

The phrase 'my words' (MT sg.) is best understood in the light of the promise found in Jeremiah 24:4–7 (cf. v. 6 LXX: 'I will restore them [i.e. the deportees from Jerusalem] into this land for good'; cf. MT).⁹ So, the deportees will be brought back after the '70 years' of Babylon, that is to say, when the Babylonian rule has come to an end.

Unlike most of the preceding verses, this one is marked by a great difference between LXX and MT:

LXX I will appear to you [ἐπιφανοῦμαι ὑμῖν]

MT I will be found by you [למך אמצא], says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. (v. 14)

Except for the first clause, MT verse 14, which contains two expressions related to the motif of exile and diaspora, has no equivalent in the Old Greek of Jeremiah. The lexical choice of LXX (ἐπιφανοῦμαι) is interesting.¹⁰ I will come back to it below.

In summary, as far as LXX Jeremiah 36:1–14 is concerned, we are left with a passage with a clear focus on the exile from Jerusalem to Babylon and the promise of return.

Jewish sources of the time

Let us now have a look at the other passages mentioned above, 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14.

Maccabees 1–2

The first two chapters of 2 Maccabees contain two festal letters, the second of which (1:10b–2:18) is relevant to our topic. It is a festal letter sent by the Jews and Judas Maccabaeus to Aristobulus and the Jews in Egypt, extending an invitation to them to participate in a feast of liberation connected with the Jerusalem temple. The history presented in chapters 3–15 of the book serves as an explanation of this invitation.

The main topic of the second letter is the celebration of the purification of the temple, at the time of Judas Maccabaeus (1:18a; 2:16–18). The passages, which are of interest for our purpose, are to be found in the sections about Nehemiah (1:18b–36), in the one about the prophet Jeremiah (2:1–7), as well as in the final part of the letter (2:16–18). Significantly, Nehemiah plays a major role in the letter being presented as the one who celebrated the restoration of the cult in his time (1:18b–36). This is clearly meant as a parallel to what Judas did in his time. As Bergren (1997:253) has noted, 'the story of Nehemiah's dedication of the temple altar [...] is intended to provide historical precedent for, and thus lend support to, Judas' own purification of the sanctuary'.

9. Compare also LXX Jeremiah 36:11a ('I will devise for you a device of peace, and not evil') with LXX 24:5–6 ('I will acknowledge the Judeans being deported [...] for good [...] I will fix my eyes upon them for good').

10. On the relationship between the reading of LXX and MT, see Goldman (1992:66–68) (*Vorlage* of LXX the same as MT).

As to the topic at stake, two groups of passages deserve attention. The first one consists of three instances, which share the idea of the people being 'led captive':

1:19 when our fathers were being led captive to Persia [εἰς τὴν Περσικὴν ἤγοντο]

1:33 it was reported to the king of the Persians that, in the place where the exiled [μεταχθέντες] priests had hidden the fire

2:1 One finds in the records that Jeremiah the prophet ordered *those who were being deported* [τοὺς μεταγενομένους] to take some of the fire, as has been mentioned, and that the prophet, after giving them the law, instructed *those who were being deported* [τοὺς μεταγενομένους] not to forget the commandments of the Lord.

Clearly, the terminology employed (the verbs ἄγω [pass.], μετάγω [pass.] and μεταγίνομαι) in these three verses denotes the idea of people being led captive, in the sense of being deported, from one place to another, from Jerusalem, Judah, to Persia (1:19).¹¹ Nehemiah being one of the descendants of those having been deported was allowed to return to Jerusalem, in order to rebuild the temple and the altar (1:18–20). It is noteworthy that Jeremiah is presented here as someone who was preaching to the people who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the Lord.¹²

The second group of verses is to be found in the prayer offered at the celebration at the time of Nehemiah (1:23–27), in the prophecy uttered by Jeremiah (2:7) and in the final part of the letter (2:17):

1:27 Gather together our scattered people [ἐπισυνάγαγε τὴν διασπορὰν ἡμῶν], set free those who are slaves among the nations [ἐλευθέρωσον τοὺς δουλεύοντας ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι]

2:7 The place (i.e. the place where the prophet had carried the tent, the ark,¹³ and the altar of incense) shall be unknown [...], until God gathers his people together [ἕως ἂν συναγάγη ὁ θεὸς ἐπισυναγωγῆν τοῦ λαοῦ] and shows his mercy.

2:18 For we hope in God that he will soon have mercy on us and will gather [ἐπισυνάξει] us from everywhere under heaven [ἐκ τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν] into his holy place, for he has delivered us from great evils and has purified that place.

These passages share the motifs of 'gathering' the people in the diaspora, people being dispersed 'among the nations' and living 'everywhere under heaven', testifying to an important theme of the letter (cf. Wacholder 1978:150–151). What was prayed for in the time of Nehemiah (1:27) and was prophesied by Jeremiah (2:7) is something Judas Maccabaeus hopes will happen 'soon' (2:18), that is to say, in his time.

11. Cf. Habicht (1976:205). The reference to Persia may seem inappropriate, but compare Nehemiah 1:1, where Nehemiah is said to be someone living in Susa, the main city of Persia. For more comments on the reference to Persia, see Schwartz (2008:152).

12. The motif of Jeremiah preaching to the deportees is also attested by the *Apocryphon of Jeremiah C* ('[...] and commanded them what they should do in the land of [their] captivity' [4Q385a 18 i 7]). See Dimant (2013:457). For this tradition, see also the Epistle of Jeremiah.

13. The motif of Jeremiah saving the ark is also known from the work of Eupolemus (see Wacholder 1974:237).

The two groups of texts thus reflect a clear distinction between people being led into captivity, that is, deported from one place (Jerusalem) to another (Persia, 1:19), and the motif of the gathering of the diaspora, of all those 'who are slaves among the nations', living 'everywhere under heaven'¹⁴ (1:27; 2:18), on the other. As far as the deportees are concerned, the letter presupposes a return to Jerusalem (cf. 1:20: 'after many years has passed'), which given the reference to the diaspora in 1:27 is a partial one.

Tobit 14

The second passage of interest to our topic is to be found in the last chapter of Tobit, 14:3–7 (according to the longer version¹⁵). It forms an important part of the last words of Tobit, a kind of testament, in which he gives instructions to Tobias, his son:

³Now when he [i.e. Tobit] is about to die, he called his son Tobias and gave him these instructions:

'My son, take your children⁴ and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh. Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel whom God sent will occur. [...]

All of our kindred, inhabitants of the land of Israel, will be scattered [διασκορπισθήσονται] and taken as captives [αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται] from the good land; and the whole land of Israel will be desolate, even Samaria and Jerusalem will be desolate. And the temple of God in it will be burned to the ground, and it will be desolate for a while.

⁵But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back [ἐπιστρέψει αὐτοῦς] into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfilment shall come.

After this [καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα] they all will return [ἐπιστρέψουσιν] from their captivity [ἐκ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας αὐτῶν πάντες] and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendour; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it.

⁶[...]

⁷[...] All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together [ἐπισυναχθήσονται]; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety forever in the land of Abraham [...]

These last words of Tobit, in which he strongly emphasises the reliability of the words of the prophets (v. 3), refer to three stages in history:

1. The time of destruction of Nineveh (fulfilment of the prophecy of Nahum), the time when the people will be taken as captives as well as being scattered and when the land of Israel, including Jerusalem and its temple, will be desolate (v. 4).

14. For the expression 'everywhere under heaven', compare Deuteronomy 28:64 and 30:4 and Nehemiah 1:9.

15. For evidence of the longer version as being the primary one, see, for example, 4Q198, a fragment containing a few words of Tobit 14:2–6; see Discoveries of the Judaean Desert XIX, 57–59.

2. The time when people will return and rebuild the temple, though not yet as foretold by the prophets (v. 5a).
3. The time of fulfilment of prophecies (of salvation), that is the time when all will return from their captivity and Jerusalem will be rebuilt in splendour, including the temple (v. 5b). This will also be the time when all Israelites who are truly mindful of God will be gathered (v. 7).

After the period of desolation of the city and temple, Tobit 14 distinguishes between two periods of time (b and c). The first is about the rebuilding of the temple but 'not as it was first' [καὶ οὐχ ὡς τὸν πρῶτον]. One is reminded here of Ezra 3:12, which tells us how:

[M]any of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid.

The second period of time, which is to be distinguished from the first one,¹⁶ is about the rebuilding of the city and the temple, as foretold by the prophets (v. 5; cf. 'the period when the times of fulfilment shall come'). So the two periods differ from each other because the first is about the building of the *temple* only, whereas the second is depicted as a time in which the *city* will be rebuilt and the *temple*. And not only that, because different from the first rebuilding of the temple, which will be 'not as it was before', at the later stage the city will be rebuilt 'in splendour', including the temple. This seems to suggest that the temple too will be rebuilt gloriously, the more so because, as is stated, all this will be in line with what the prophets have foretold.

With regard to the vocabulary of exile and diaspora in Tobit 14, the following picture emerges. In verse 4, two verbs are employed, διασκορπίζω [to scatter] and αἰχμαλωτίζω [to carry off into captivity], both in the passive, the subject being 'all [...] inhabitants of the land of Israel'.

Verse 5a has it that 'God will bring them back [ἐπιστρέψει αὐτοῦς] into the land of Israel'. The verb ἐπιστρέφω alludes to people who will be brought back to the place from which they had been carried off into captivity (cf. deportation).

In verses 5b and 7 the following two expressions occur: 'all will return from their captivity' and 'all the Israelites [...] will be gathered together'. The verbs used here are ἐπιστρέφω and ἐπισυνάγω. As is clear from Tobit 13:3, 5 and 15, the 'gathering' concerns those who are dispersed amongst the nations.

As these data show, Tobit 14 reflects a clear distinction between two concepts: (1) 'to lead captive' (cf. deportation) and its counterpart 'to bring back' or 'to return' and (2) 'to scatter' (cf. diaspora) and 'to gather'.¹⁷ It is worth noting that

16. Cf. Flusser (2009:73), Kiefer (2005:318) and Middlemas (2019:79–80). See also the Revised English Bible: 'not until the time of fulfilment comes' (italics A.V.D.K.). Ego (2011:1350) and Hicks-Keeton (2013:99) on the other hand have overlooked the distinction made in verse 5.

17. This applies to the book of Tobit as a whole. See Kiefer (2005:307–318).

verses 5b and 7 correspond in a contrasting way to verse 4: the two verbs used in verse 4 ('to scatter' and 'to lead captive') have their counterpart in verse 5b ('to return from captivity') and verse 7 ('to gather together'). Moreover, verse 4 and verses 5b and 7 share the emphasis on 'all' Israelites: 'all the inhabitants of the land of Israel' (v. 4), 'all will return' (v. 5b) and 'all the Israelites [...] will be gathered' (v. 7). Verse 5a on the other hand refers to a partial return and can be typified as an intermediate stage.

The two passages read together

The two passages discussed above share a particular presentation of the postexilic era, which is characterised by the following elements:

1. Regarding word usage, both passages are marked by a clear distinction between 'exile' (deportation) and 'diaspora' (dispersion).
2. In their presentation of the postexilic era, both texts distinguish between two stages in history: (a) that of a partial return in the Persian period and (b) the gathering (as well as the return [Tobit]) of all Israelites at a later date.¹⁸
3. Prophets play an important role in both of them: Jeremiah in 2 Maccabees 1–2 and 'the prophets' in Tobit 14. In 2 Maccabees 1–2, Jeremiah is the one who prophesied the gathering of the diaspora. As we have seen, the fulfilment of this prophecy of Jeremiah is expected to happen 'soon', that is in the Maccabean era. In Tobit 14, the fulfilment of the words of the prophets focuses on the restoration of the city in splendour, including the temple.¹⁹

Word usage related to exile and diaspora

As is well known, the exile did not end in the early Persian period when people returned to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city and the temple (Haggai; Ezra-Nehemiah). Only some of the people deported to Babylonia went back to Jerusalem. Jewish sources dating to the Hellenistic period confirm this picture, and the texts dealt with above are clear examples of what has been called a 'prolonged' or an 'enduring' exile (see, e.g., Halvorson-Taylor 2011; Knibb 1976). Sources such as Ben Sira,²⁰ 2 Maccabees and Tobit testify to the view that the return in the Persian period was only a partial one, implying that many Jews were still living outside the holy land.

The use of the term 'exile' in expressions like the 'enduring exile' raises however the question of what we mean by this

18. Tobit here distinguishes between the notion of return and that of gathering people from elsewhere. Generally speaking, however, the motif of 'gathering' people scattered all over the place may include the 'return' of deportees. See for example Isaiah 11:11, which includes a reference to deportees in Assyria.

19. Usually the book of Tobit (the longer version) is dated to ca. 200 BC. See, for example, Ego (2011:1318) and Hauspie (2016:293). However, the concept of the two stages in the post-exilic era, presupposing the crisis under Antiochus IV, points to a later date (second half of the 2nd century BC). For this later dating (as far as the final version of the book is concerned), see Rabenau (1994:189).

20. Cf. Sir 36:11 ('Gather all the tribes of Jacob that they may inherit the land as in days of old').

term. In publications on the topic, the term 'exile' is often used in a rather global and encompassing way, understood as comprising not only the idea of deportation but also that of dispersion.²¹ However, this does not do justice to the terminology as found in the ancient sources because as is clear from the evidence to be found in books like Deuteronomy and Kings, for example, the term 'exile' refers to 'deportation', people carried off to a particular place elsewhere (e.g. Babylonia; 2 Ki 17:6, 24:15 and 25:21), whereas passages about 'diaspora' mirror a different picture, that is of people being scattered all over the place, being dispersed 'among the nations' (see, e.g., Dt 4:27 and 28:64f.). Note also the two expressions to be found in Jeremiah 29:14 (MT): God will 'gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you' and 'I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile'. The dispersion was usually the result of people having fled for reasons such as those stated in Jeremiah 42:14: 'We will go [to] the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread' (cf. Kiefer 2005:219). As has also been pointed out by Lust (1999; see also Van Unnik 1993), the terminological distinction made in the sources, both in MT and LXX, should be taken more seriously (Doering 2005; pace Scott 1997).

Scholars who are aware of the distinction often consider it not that important; Kiefer, for example, does so on historical grounds (Kiefer 2005:44–46). However, whatever the historical reality in the Persian and Hellenistic eras may have been, the issue at stake is the way the relevant terms are employed in sources like 2 Maccabees and Tobit.²² The latter in particular obviously distinguishes between the idea of 'being carried away as captive' (cf. 'exile') and the notion of 'being scattered among the nations' (cf. 'diaspora').

LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 in the light of 2 Maccabees and Tobit

Before looking at LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 from the perspective of 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14, a summarising statement on the relevant data with regard to both chapters in LXX may be in order.

In Jeremiah 25:1–13 the expression 'to serve among the nations' in verse 10 is of great interest, as well as the fact that the Greek text does not contain any explicit reference to Babylon, or the king of Babylon (as in MT). As noted above, scholars disagree on the meaning of the expression 'to serve among the nations' employed in verse 10. Does it refer to exile, or to diaspora? In this regard, 2 Maccabees is very helpful as it contains the same expression (1:27), which obviously denotes the diaspora. Furthermore, the phrase 'among the nations' is also found in a text like Deuteronomy

21. See, for example, Abegg (1997), Vanderkam (1997) and, more recently, Halvorson-Taylor (2011). Compare also the comment by Gesundheit on the phrase 'among the nations' in LXX Jeremiah 29:11: 'the nations' refers to 'those located in the lands to which Judah will be exiled' (Gesundheit 2012:55).

22. This is not meant to deny that the usage in later, for example, rabbinical, sources is more global (*galut* also conveying the notion of dispersion), as pointed out by Kiefer (2005:278–284).

4:27: 'the Lord will scatter you among the peoples [LXX: ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν], and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you', a passage that refers to the dispersion, too.

Jeremiah 36:1–14, on the other hand, has its focus on exile in the sense of deportation and does refer to Babylon in verse 10. According to this verse, God will bring people back when the 70 years of Babylonian rule are about to be fulfilled, that is, when the Babylonian rule has ended. Unlike MT, the Greek version of this chapter does not refer to the motif of diaspora.

What to make of all this in the light of 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14?

To begin with Jeremiah 36 in LXX, it can be said that this text is best understood as referring to the first stage in history, namely, that of a return from 'exile' in the early Persian period, or to put it in line with verse 10 of the chapter, at the time when the Babylonian rule has come to an end. This would imply that the number of 70 years in this chapter was understood in line with passages such as 2 Chronicles 36:21–22.²³

As noted above, verse 14 in the LXX contains an intriguing expression: 'and I will appear to you [καὶ ἐπιφανοῦμαι ὑμῖν]'. This phrase comes after the call to 'pray' to God (v. 12) and to 'seek' him, which is followed by the statement 'you will find me [...] (v. 13). One could argue that the verb 'to find' in verse 14 was rendered freely in order to avoid a repetition of the same verb in verse 13 (Goldman 1992:68.), but even so, the question remains why the verb ἐπιφανοῦμαι, being an unique rendering of the Hebrew נָצַח, was chosen. In verses 10–14, the thought is that when those who returned to this place (v. 10), that is Jerusalem, 'pray' to God and 'seek' him he will 'appear'. On the assumption that Jeremiah 36 fits the first stage in the post-exilic history, one wonders whether the choice of 'appear' is related to the rebuilding of the temple and the altar in Jerusalem. This might be the case because in LXX Genesis 35:7 the verb ἐπιφάνω is used in connexion with the building of an altar: 'and he [i.e. Jacob] built there an altar [...], ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἐπεφάνη αὐτῷ ὁ θεός'. If so, the Greek of Jeremiah 36:14 hints at the rebuilding of temple and altar as being legitimised by virtue of the 'appearance' of the Lord.

Jeremiah 25, on the other hand, would make good sense if understood as alluding to a later stage in history because of its focus on the long-lasting dispersion. In this regard, 2 Maccabees 1–2 is important because the prophecy uttered by Jeremiah in 2:7 (about the 'gathering of the people together') is considered here as having not yet been fulfilled up to the time of Judas Maccabaeus but is hoped to happen 'soon', namely, in the Maccabean era. It is true that LXX Jeremiah 25:1–13 does not mention explicitly the gathering of the dispersed Jews, but the devastation of 'that nation' (v. 12; i.e. the 'clan from the north') and of 'that land' (v. 13) marking

23. On this understanding in other Jewish sources of the time, see Bryan (2018).

the end of foreign rule implies that their 'serving among the nations' will come to an end.

However, what about the fact that LXX Jeremiah 25:1–13 does not contain explicit references to Babylon or to the king of Babylon? Although the phrase 'a clan from the north' is in line with passages such as 1:14f, 4:6 and 6:1 and 22, the 'clan from the north' likely alludes to people from Babylon (cf. Stipp 1997:166–168). Even so, the question arises as to why the enemy is not mentioned explicitly in our text. In the light of the proposal made above, it is my contention that an explicit reference to (the king of) Babylon would not fit in with the idea of a dispersion lasting much longer than that the period of the Babylonian rule, as noted above. So, given the concept of an enduring and long-lasting diaspora, any reference to Babylon would be inappropriate to the focus of the text as presented in LXX. Moreover, the anonymous designation has the advantage of being applicable to a 'people from the north' in later times. Seen from the perspective of the 2nd century BC one could think, in line with the expression 'the king of the North' in Daniel 11, of the Seleucid power.

Of course, all this raises the question of how the reference to 70 years may have been understood in this chapter (v. 11). On the assumption that LXX Jeremiah 25 alludes to the long-lasting diaspora, the 70 years might have been taken symbolically, referring to a longer extended period of time. This issue reminds one of Daniel 9. The question at stake in this chapter is how to understand the prophecy of 70 years as found in the book of Jeremiah (v. 1). It is often taken for granted that the 70 weeks of years announced in verse 24 is just a re-interpretation of the 70 years of Jeremiah, but as scholars have pointed out it is more likely that the period of '70 weeks' should be taken as a period following the 70-year period of the Babylonian dominion, in this way extending the former period in order to link up the prophecy of Jeremiah with dramatic events in the 2nd century BC.²⁴

Conclusions

In this article an attempt is made to approach LXX Jeremiah from an angle that hardly plays a role in current research, namely, by examining specific data in the Greek version in the light of Jewish sources at the time of the translator.²⁵ The topic chosen is the word usage related to exile and diaspora in LXX Jeremiah 25:1–13 and LXX Jeremiah 36:1–14, on the one hand, and in 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14, on the other hand. The two latter passages turn out to testify to a presentation of the post-exilic era being characterised by two stages in history, both of which are marked by a distinct word usage as far as exile and diaspora are concerned. After a brief discussion of the terminology involved from a broader perspective, it is argued that the picture that emerged from the analysis of the two contemporary writings sheds light on the profile of LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36, the former text fitting in with the second

24. Cf. Bergsma (2007:220), Segal (2011:296) ('seventy years for Babel have gone because of the transition from the Babylonian to the Median kingdom', cf. v. 1) and Bryan (2018:114).

25. For the relationship between LXX Jeremiah 10 and the Epistle of Jeremiah, see Van der Kooij (2020).

stage (with a focus on the expected ending of the long-lasting diaspora) and the latter with that of the first stage (with a focus on the return from 'exile' in Babylon, in the early Persian period). If so, the translator regarded the prediction in Jeremiah 36(29):10 as fulfilled in the past (see also Bryan 2018:118). This may also explain the use of μέλλω in verse 10.

Finally, a few additional comments may be made. In this article, only two chapters in LXX Jeremiah are dealt with as far as the terminology regarding exile and diaspora is concerned. Yet there is evidence that the distinction between the two concepts is also to be found elsewhere in LXX Jeremiah. For example, LXX Jeremiah 24 also reveals an interest in this distinction because the first part of this chapter (vv. 1–7) refers to the *exile* (deportation; cf. ἀποικίζω in vv. 1 and 5) of King Jehoniah, his family and other leading people from Jerusalem to Babylon and to the land of the Chaldeans, whereas verses 8–10 are about *dispersion*: 'I will give them [i.e. King Zedekiah and other people] as a scattering [διασκοπισμός; MT 'horror for evil'] to all the kingdoms'. Further research is needed in order to see whether this might also apply to other parts of LXX Jeremiah.

With regard to the model of the two stages in the post-exilic age as attested by 2 Maccabees 1–2 and Tobit 14, it should be noted that this idea is also attested in Daniel 9. In fact, Daniel 9 is the first text attesting this idea, which is clear from this chapter presupposes the crisis in the first half of the 2nd century in Jerusalem. Seen from a hermeneutical point of view, this model is most interesting as it served to link up ancient prophecies with events in the Hellenistic era, revealing in this way a great interest amongst leading scholars in understanding the present in the light of the words of prophets such as Jeremiah.²⁶ It is this hermeneutical move that in my view helps us understand some specific data in LXX Jeremiah 25 and 36 and that as I have argued elsewhere also sheds light on modifications in LXX Haggai 2:3 and 6 (see Van der Kooij 2015).

On the assumption, as stated at the outset of this essay, that LXX Jeremiah is based on the shorter text form of the book, the Greek provides a window onto a text form that, as far as Jeremiah 25 and 36 are concerned, conveys, so it seems, a message related to the distinction between 'exile' and 'diaspora', which is also typical of Jewish sources of the time (2nd century BC). This may have been one of the reasons why the shorter form was translated into Greek, because a translation of the longer text form would not have served the message at stake.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

A.v.d.K. is the sole author of this research article.

²⁶On the hermeneutical issue, see also Van der Kooij (2016).

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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