

Riddles of Reference: “I” and “We” in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah: The Relation of the Suffering Characters in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah

GEORG FISCHER (UNIVERSITY OF INNSBRUCK)

ABSTRACT

The use of “I” and “We” in literature is a delicate issue, especially when the references are left open. In some cases authors wish to involve their audience more (A). This feature can also be observed in the Books of Isaiah (B) and Jeremiah (C), and in some instances it is connected with suffering figures. In Isaiah “YHWH’s servant” is outstanding among them, in Jeremiah the prophet himself. Interestingly, their portrayals show a number of common traits, and even the same or similar expressions. A comparison and analysis of them (D) points in the direction that the figure of the prophet Jeremiah seems to be a realisation of the servant and his fate, even radicalized to some extent, and that the book of Jeremiah is later than Isaiah, as a whole. The servant in Isaiah, and in Jeremiah the prophet of the same name, both testify personally, speaking with “I,” to a common message, namely that God achieves his goals through the suffering of his elect.

A THE USE OF THE FIRST PERSON IN LITERATURE

“First person figurations of servant and suffering in Isaiah and Jeremiah” was the theme proposed by the chairs of two SBL-subgroups.¹ Ulrich Berges, as a specialist on Isaiah,² was expected to present from this prophet’s perspective, and my contribution was to cover the part of Jeremiah and a comparison of both prophets under the two aspects of the theme. Before addressing that, it seems appropriate to see how literature in general makes use of the first person.

¹ Paper read in 2010; see Georg Fischer, “Riddles of Reference: ‘I’ and ‘We’ in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah: The Relation of the Suffering Characters in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah” (paper presented at the joint session of the two groups “Formation of Isaiah” and “Writing / Reading Jeremiah” at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, 21 November 2010), in response to Ulrich Berges’ presentation on Isaiah 53, published in this volume: Ulrich Berges, “Servant and Suffering in Isaiah and Jeremiah: Who borrowed from whom?” *OTE* 25/2 (2012): 247-259. I thank Mrs. Felicity Stephens for editing the English of this article.

² See, *inter alia*, his Habilitationsschrift: Ulrich Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS 16; Freiburg: Herder, 1998), and the first volume of his commentary: Ulrich Berges, *Jesaja 40-48* [HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2008].

"I" and "We" are mostly used for the *speeches of persons* within a narrative, and generally present none, or few, problems, especially if the speakers can be identified. This holds true also for the Bible.³

Yet there is more. In poetry an author can choose to express his feelings and ideas by taking the stance of a *personal "I,"* without giving further information about its identity.⁴ This phenomenon is called in German "das lyrische Ich" and stands for a literary technique that brings the author's message more closely to the feelings of his audience and enables them to identify with the "I" of the text.

A similar procedure can be observed in some modern novels.⁵ There the author uses the "I" for his / her presentation as narrator, often in order to make the description *more vivid and immediate* for the readers. Franz K. Stanzel talks in these instances of an "Ich-Erzähler."⁶

The use of the first person *plural*, too, elicits the attention of the audience. When God for the first time speaks in first person, he uses the plural.⁷ Normally this indicates a group, as for example in Pss 44:2; 46:2 (both Psalms of the "sons of Korach"), the foreign nations in Isa 2:3 or the crowd speaking in Isa 53:1-6.

The use of "we" is delicate, as most of us know from our own publications: should / can we include our readers in our positions and options? Or is it better to maintain a distance and leave them free with regard to what we expose? There are different styles of scientific writing, and they *mirror the attitudes* of their authors.

"I" and "We" can be used as *refined literary techniques to influence the audience*, and they reflect the communication process between an author and the readers. Often the use of the first person, either singular or plural, seems to serve to achieve a higher degree of identification between the audience and the figures of the text.⁸

³ E.g. in Gen 3:10 Adam; in Isa 1:2 the Lord.

⁴ Examples for this are Ps 45:2; Isa 40:6; see also the question of the "Davidic Psalms."

⁵ Like Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, London: Dent 1959; Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, New York: Random House 1926; Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, New York: Macmillan 1962 and others.

⁶ Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 263, and more often.

⁷ Genesis 1:26, different from Gen 1:29; 2:18.

⁸ The "I" thus is in some way dissolved from its reference to just one person and becomes open for various identifications. This includes that the "I" in prophetic texts

B "I" AND "WE" IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

After these preliminary clarifications we can address our theme more directly, with the use of the first person in the book of Isaiah. It covers a wide spectrum:

1 First person singular

The "I" can stand for God (Isa 1:2; 5:3-6; ...), for the prophet (Isa 6:5 ...; 5:1?), for king Hezekiah (Isa 38:3), for Zion (Isa 49:14), or for others, but some texts remain open with regard to their references.⁹ Especially in Isa 21–24 there are traces of a suffering first person,¹⁰ to which the following two chapters bring a kind of relief in the confessions / declarations of 25:1 and 26:9.

2 First person plural

The first person plural occurs in Isaiah in approximately 25 passages. They begin with Isa 1:9f, and end in Isa 63f with an intensified and widespread use of "we" in the prayer, including the thrice-repeated address to God as "our father" in Isa 63:16 and 64:7.

Most of these instances seem to speak about the community of believers. *Four main aspects* appear, namely offences against God (Isa 42:24; 59:12f ...), suffering (3:6; 4:1; 17:14 ...), hope (25:9; 26:8; 32:15; 33:2, among others) and finally a new relationship with God and salvation (e.g. Isa 7:14; 26:12f; 33:20-22, etc.). This seems to form a trajectory – but within the book of Isaiah it does not follow the "normal," logical sequence of the elements mentioned.¹¹

3 First person combined with "servant"

There are a number of explicit identifications with historical personages which use *first person singular* in combination with "servant" in Isaiah, like "my servant Isaiah" for the prophet (Isa 20:3), or for Eliakim (22:20) and David (37:35). Starting with Isa 41:8, we encounter only texts that identify "my servant" with Israel (also 44:21; 49:3) or Jacob (44:1f; 45:4), obviously referring to a group (see 43:10), or leave open its reference (42:1,19, ..., until 52:13 and 53:11). Most of these passages allude to weakness and suffering.

need not be biographical, and comes close to what Ulrich Berges (see his article in this issue, "Servant and Suffering in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Who Borrowed from Whom?" *OTE* 25/1 (2012):) expressed by the subtitle he gave to his initial paper in Atlanta (and to which I initially responded): "Beyond Individuality and Collectivity."

⁹ Starting with Isa 3:7, also 12:1-2.

¹⁰ Isaiah 21:2-16 *passim*; 22:4; 24:16.

¹¹ One could speculate why the sequence is mixed up. It might have to do with the formation of the book of Isaiah. In any case, it is interesting that now, in the final structure of the book, the first element which provides the reason for all the following ones, comes last.

At the very end of the book, there is a significant change to the *plural* "my servants."¹² It occurs in high density in the second-last chapter, six times in Isa 65:8-9,13-14, with God speaking, and indicates a new time of blessing.

The picture is quite different for the *first person plural* in connection with "servant" in Isaiah. Isaiah 61:6 reads: "And you shall be called 'priests of YHWH,' 'servants of our God' will be said to you." This is the only instance where a group reference "we" applies to servants in Isaiah. Yet it has a form of שָׁרֵך (participle *pi 'el*), in contrast to all the other passages mentioned before which use the root עָבֵד, and the continuation does not indicate suffering. Therefore we may omit this text from our discussion.

4 Intensive use of first person

From all the texts mentioned above, the *passage using the first person most intensively* in Isaiah for the concepts of "servant" and "suffering" is to be found in Isa 49. An unidentified "I" starts to speak in v. 1 and quotes YHWH in v. 3, saying: "You are *my servant*, Israel, in whom I will glorify myself."¹³ Then, in v. 4, the speaker alludes to his suffering and seemingly futile efforts, before returning again to God's speaking, announcing his new, extended role in v. 6.

As a reaction to this and confirmation for the servant, God himself begins to speak, with two introductions to it in v. 7-8. First, in v. 7, he picks up the earlier image with the expression "servant of the ruling ones" and his being despised; then, in v. 8, God switches to speak as "I" about himself and what he does (first person singular occurring until v. 11).

In my opinion, *Isa 49* seems to be the text where the book of Isaiah expressly fulfills the specifications of our theme to *the greatest degree*. Clearly, it is connected by motifs and expressions with the preceding and the following texts (between Isa 41 and 53).

This can provide a *starting point* for analyses and further discussion, going on from Isa 49 especially to the following related texts in Isa 50 ("servant" in v. 10) and 53, among others. – Although there are "riddles of reference" (see above 3, and the problems with the interpretation of "Israel" in 49:3), Isaiah contains a clear message and we have a solid basis for a comparison with Jeremiah.

¹² The plural "servants" alone, without "my," can be found for the first time in Isa 54:17, indicating a shift within the book: Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 393 and 413.

¹³ It seems more prudent to preserve the text as it is, even with its identification of the "servant" as "Israel." The tension with his task for Israel in v. 6 can be resolved by positing for his designation in v. 3 a role of representing a part or an ideal of "Israel."

C "I" AND "WE" IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Having dealt with Isaiah, we can now treat the book of Jeremiah, following, at least at first, the same aspects as above.

1 *First person singular* in Jeremiah:

The book of Jeremiah differs significantly from Isaiah with regard to the use of the first person.¹⁴ The *prophet* Jeremiah speaks a lot about himself in the first person, starting with 1:4, 6, 11-12 and ending with 42:20-21.

Jeremiah very often has *God* speak in "original voice," in first person.¹⁵ It begins with Jer 1:5, 7-10, 12, 15-19, continues throughout the book (Jer 2:2,5), and has its last occurrence in Jer 51:57.

Besides the use of the first person for God and the prophet, "I" can refer in Jeremiah to *various individuals*, like to the unfaithful "woman" (a symbolic figure for the treacherous people, Jer 3:4), to kings (e.g. Jehoiakim in 22:14; Zedekiah in 38:14, 19, 25), to Ephraim (31:18-19), to Baruch (36:18; 45:3), to other groups, to Zion (51:34-35) and even to nations (like Egypt 46:8; the Ammonites 49:4). The reference of the "I" is often unclear, for example in Jer 4:19-26; 8:18; 10:19-20 ... 46:5.

2 *First person plural* in Jeremiah:

The first person plural in the book of Jeremiah occurs for the first time in a reproach to the people in 2:6 who don't ask: "Where is YHWH, who has led us out of the land of Egypt ...?"

This opens a series of quotes in Jer 2 (the last one in v. 35), most of them accusing Israel of distancing herself from God, and held in the singular (with "I"). Another one of them, in v. 31, uses also plural: "We have run freely; we don't want to come to you again."

The *opposition to God* and his ways is also present in passages like Jer 6:16-17, where the people expressly reject God's exhortations, or in Jer 7:10, where they have broken the stipulations of his covenant and nevertheless try to find refuge in the temple.

¹⁴ The book of Ezekiel is also quite different from Isa in this regard, being thoroughly stylized in first person singular for the prophet.

¹⁵ This is a typical feature of Jeremiah, compare e.g. Deut 26:18f. with Jer 13:11; 33:9, or Deut 30:3 with Jer 29:14, and Georg Fischer, "Das Ende von Deuteronomium (Dtn 26-34) im Spiegel des Jeremiabuches," in Georg Fischer, *Der Prophet wie Mose: Studien zum Jeremiabuch* (BZAR 15; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 228-240, especially 239.

In contrast to this we find *expressions of faith* in the first person plural, a first, long one in Jer 3:22b-25. The two prayers in Jer 14:7-9, 19-22 seem to follow the same line, but are different inasmuch as they are marked by hidden accusations against God.¹⁶

Another frequent aspect in the use of "we" in Jeremiah is the allusions to fear and distress, for example in Jer 4:13; 6:24; 8:14; 30:5. Here, Jeremiah is quite close to the book of Isaiah (see the few indications above in B, 2), and it, too, projects a *development towards a healing*, in a renewed relationship with God. Apart from 3:22-25, it becomes visible also in the pilgrimage to Zion in Jer 31:6: "Rise, and let us go up to Zion, to YHWH, our God!," which unites in veneration the people of the northern region ("mountain Ephraim") with those in the south.

3 The combination of "servant" with a first person

The combination of "servant" with a first person occurs only in the singular ("my ..."), and solely with God as speaker, with *four clear references*: prophets (e.g. Jer 7:25; see also the contrast in Jer 29:15,19), Jacob (denoting the people, in Jer 30:10 // 46:27f.), David (33:21f., 26) and Nebuchadnezzar (three times, beginning with 25:9 MT, missing in the LXX).¹⁷ In particular, the last identification of "my servant" with the king of Babylon in God's speech is provocative and marks a *noteworthy difference* between the two prophetic books in question. The designation of Cyrus, the king of Persia, as "his anointed one" in Isa 45:1, points in a similar direction, attributing to a foreign king a special relationship with YHWH and even vocation,¹⁸ but is nevertheless markedly less offensive inasmuch as Cyrus allowed the return from the exile, whereas Nebuchadnezzar was responsible for leading large groups of the population of Jerusalem into exile.

The combination of a first person with "servant" and "suffering" is present in Jeremiah, too. It applies to the cases mentioned above, namely the first

¹⁶ Cf. Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 1-25* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 477-479 and 486-489.

¹⁷ There is debate about the originality of this designation for Nebuchadnezzar. Whereas Adrian Schenker, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, Hermann-Joseph. Stipp and others see LXX as being original, it seems more probable to me that the Greek translation omitted this provocative title for the foreign king responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple; cf. Georg Fischer, *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 36-37.

¹⁸ Cyrus' role here in Isa 44:28-45:8 is oriented towards Israel, as Ulrich Berges, *Jesaja 40-48*, 390-391 points out.

two references. The prophets sent by God were not heeded (Jer 7:25-26),¹⁹ and Jacob seems to be in anguish and needs help (Jer 30:10).²⁰

Another aspect is connected with the use of "servant" for Israel in the *rhetorical question* in *Jer 2:14* – which by implication indicates that Israel is no slave. Only a few verses later, the same root עָבֵד occurs as verb in a first person singular: "But you said: 'I will not serve!'" (Jer 2:20). The position of these verses, as early as in *Jer 2*, the first chapter in poetry, gives them immense weight for the whole book and foreshadows a central theme of it. Israel is free, not dependent on any human bondage, but it refuses to live up to its relationship with God who has gifted it with this freedom.²¹

4 The suffering of Jeremiah

Although the prophet uses the first person regularly for his discourse, he avoids the designation "servant" for himself; it is even *absent* in the so-called "confessions."²²

Yet one of the most impressive features in the book of Jeremiah is the description of the *prophet's suffering*, both in the aggression directed against him from outside, and in his inward passion. It finds rich expression in passages in the first person, and the main texts are to be found in *Jer 11–20*, the part containing the so-called "confessions." Some phrases from these texts will be quoted below in D) for the comparison with *Isaiah*.

Yet his passion starts *earlier*, beginning with his vocation where we encounter for the first time the phrase אֲהָה אֶדְנִי יְהוָה "Alas, Lord YHWH!" (*Jer 1:6*); it is typical for *Jeremiah* and repeated in 4:10; 14:13; 32:17. In every instance it serves to express some sort of problem, either with the proper mission, or, as in the occurrences in *Jer 4* and *14*, with other prophets.

¹⁹ This idea can already be found in *2 Kgs 17:13–14*, where the expression "my servants, the prophets" in connection with "they did not listen" occurs probably for the first time.

²⁰ This verse, out of the "scroll of consolation," is generally recognized as being close to the language of the so-called "Deutero-*Isaiah*," especially *Isa 44:2* and *43:3*; see Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases* (SBLMS 51; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 119–125.

²¹ Reckoning with a late formation of the book of *Jeremiah*, *Jer 2* could pick up the portrayal of the "servant Israel" in *Isa 41–53* and play with it, showing right from the beginning the people's refusal to live up to their vocation. Compared with *Isa* (see above B, 2, and note 11), *Jeremiah* tackles the question of the infidelity of a "we"-group immediately.

²² A widespread classification comprises *Jer 11:18–12:6; 15:10–21; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–13* (or -18) as the confessions of *Jeremiah*.

Apart from this emphasis on the prophet's suffering in Jeremiah, there are some texts which leave the *identification of the "I" open*, like Jer 4:19-21; 8:18; 10:19-20; 23:9. Some of them share a similar motif with the prophet's complaints, namely corporal expressions of pain.²³ This seems to indicate a certain solidarity in the suffering, including the unidentified persons / groups and the prophet himself. – Jeremiah too, like Isaiah, contains "riddles of reference," among others by its multiple, varied use of "I" and "servant."

Up to now, in parts B and C, we have been able to detect *special profiles* of the respective books.²⁴ Jeremiah tends to favour the first person singular for the prophet. Isaiah stands out with its often unidentified use of "my servant"; a strong emphasis lies on the texts dealing with him in Deutero-Isaiah which show his suffering. Jeremiah, on the other hand, uses this term also for a group of prophets and even for the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, but never for Jeremiah himself. Yet, his person is marked out by the amount of his pain and grief and by its expression in the first person singular.

D POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE BOOKS OF ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH?

Now we have collected all the material relevant to our theme. In Isaiah the first person figurations of servant and suffering can be focussed on the "servant songs" in Isa 49 and 53; in Jeremiah the "confessions" seem to come closest, because the combination of expressions in the first person (singular) with suffering is there most intense. For this reason I choose for our further investigation some verses first (1) from Isa 49 and then (2) from 53 that could hint at a relationship with Jeremiah, before addressing the question of their possible relationship (3).

1 A comparison of the servant's / prophetic mission

The "second servant song" in Isa 49 contains important information about him and his task. In a similar way, passages in Jeremiah speak about the prophet's mission. They can be compared with regard to

(i) their *beginning*:

Isa 49:1: "YHWH called me *from* the womb (בָּטָן) ..."

Jer 1:5: "*Before* I formed you in the womb (בָּטָן) ... " + to know + to sanctify

²³ "My bowels" in 4:19; "my heart" in 8:18 and 23:9; compare his bodily reactions e.g. in 20:9.

²⁴ The survey of both prophets with regard to the use of "I" and "we" provides a useful background for our theme, as it shows the insertion of the texts now to be compared within the language and characteristics of the individual prophetic books.

(ii) complaints about lacking "success":

Isa 49:4: "But I, I said: 'I have laboured in vain, I have consumed my strength for nothing and vanity ...'"

Jer 15:18: "Why has my pain become unceasing, and my wound incurable?"

Jer 20:7: "You have deceived me, YHWH, and I let myself be deceived, you have overcome me and prevailed; I have become a ridicule all the day, everyone is mocking me."²⁵

(iii) their *sphere of action*:

Isa 49:6: "..., and I will make you (וְנִתְחַדֵּךְ) a light for the nations (גּוֹיִם) ..."
(// 42:6);

Jer 1:5: "I make you (נִתְחַדֵּךְ)²⁶ a prophet for the nations (לְגּוֹיִם)." "

The comparison shows some similar motifs and even sometimes the same words, especially for the range of the mission.²⁷ This could indicate a literary connection. Yet the failure of the servant in Isaiah and of the prophet in Jeremiah is very differently expressed. There Jeremiah moves even to accusations against God (e.g. Jer 20:7), which is absent in Isaiah and can be a sign of a more developed struggle in the relationship with him. A cautious interpretation of this and of the beginnings of the mission, where Jeremiah's vocation not only starts *in* the womb, as it does in Isa 49:1, but even *before his conception* (Jer 1:5),²⁸ could perceive the book of Jeremiah as surpassing the book of Isaiah, *making even more radical* its concepts of God's sending.

2 *Parallels in suffering with the last "servant song"*

A series of close relationships between Isaiah and Jeremiah becomes visible in the middle part of Isa 53, with passages in Jer 11 and 15. Four of them deserve special attention:

(i) Isa 53:6: "..., but YHWH has let encounter (פָגָע hip'il + בְּ) him the iniquity of us all."

²⁵ Cf. also Jeremiah's complaint in Jer 6:10 that nobody lends an ear to him.

²⁶ Although the form of the verb in Jer is very close to Isa, there is a big difference between them. Isa talks about the future, whereas God's utterance in Jer has a performative meaning, i.e. by his words he constitutes Jeremiah, as such, a prophet for the nations.

²⁷ There is a discussion about the appropriateness of Jeremiah being called a "prophet for the nations," but there are several good reasons for accepting this designation as justified: Jer 1:10,15 continue this international orientation, and so do 2:10, 18, 36 and many other passages throughout the book.

²⁸ God's call for Jeremiah, in his very first verse, contains, with "to know" and "to sanctify," two other important concepts, with far-reaching implications.

Jer 15:11: "... if I not let encounter (פָגַע *hip 'il* + בָ) you ... the foe."

- (ii) Isa 53:7: "... he did not open his mouth, like a lamb led to slaughter (לְטָבָח *iybil*, ...)"
Jer 11:19a: "And I was like a tame lamb, led to slaughter (לְטָבָוח) ..."
- (iii) Isa 53:8a: "By oppression and judgement he was taken away (לִקְחָה) ..."
Jer 15:15: "Don't take me away (תִקְחֵנִי) through your forbearance!"
- (iv) Isa 53:8c: "..., for he was cut off from the land of the living (מִארֶץ חַיִם), ..."
Jer 11:19e: "... and let us extirpate him from the land of the living (מִארֶץ חַיִם), ...!"

There are obviously *close connections* between Isa 53:6–8 and the first two "confessions" in Jeremiah, namely Jer 11:19 and Jer 15:11,15. The first two motifs (a, b) are "exclusive links,"²⁹ the others very rare. This suggests the probability of a literary relationship and should be investigated further (see 3 below). In Isaiah these expressions are concentrated within three verses, in Jeremiah they are dispersed throughout the two chapters (11 and 15), and over a wider area of text in Jer 15. As in i) above, *Jeremiah appears to be sharper* in all instances:

- (i) God himself (Jer 15:11)³⁰ or the prophet (as in [ii] and [iii], Jer 11:19a; 15:15) are speaking, instead of an unidentified group or narrator.
- (ii) The comparison with the lamb fits into the context within Isaiah. There it is used only for the servant holding his mouth shut, whereas in Jeremiah it is applied to the prophet himself, and in addition enhanced by "tame" (Jer 11:19a).
- (iii) Isaiah 53:8 presents the suffering of the servant as already accomplished, not indicating who inflicted it.³¹ Jeremiah, on the other hand, admonishes God not to become responsible for his premature death (Jer 15:15, in the line of the accusation seen above in 1), and thus contains a serious, theologically provocative warning.
- (iv) The last comparison differs in the verb in Jer 11:19 and shows a change in its form, as in the previous example.³² Isaiah leaves open who did it;

²⁹ This term signifies that the relevant expressions can only be found in these two indicated places, and nowhere else. If there are a number of such exclusive links, the probability of a literary relationship arises.

³⁰ For this feature of Jeremiah, see also note 13 above.

³¹ The verb is in a passive stem, namely *pu^{al}*.

³² From a passive stem (*nip^{al}*) in Isaiah, to a cohortative (*qal*) in Jeremiah.

in Jeremiah the men of Anathoth, Jeremiah's home village, still intend to get rid of the prophet.

Another point is the *fate of the servant*: In Isaiah he receives a grave, and stays together with rich ones after his death (Isa 53:10-12), whereas in Jeremiah the prophet disappears in a foreign country, without even a notice of his passing away or a grave.³³

3 Questions of literary dependence and direction

The closeness of the expressions shared between Isaiah and Jeremiah is beyond dispute. The discussion about their dependence and, above all, their direction,³⁴ is *open and ongoing*.

This is a delicate issue, and in my opinion, it is *mostly dominated by preconceptions*. Among the most pervasive – and misleading – of them are the “classical” *datings* of these prophetic books, or parts of them, like the so-called “Deutero-Isaiah,” normally attributed to an exilic or early post-exilic time. With this assumption in the background and further reckoning with “original” words of the prophet Jeremiah going back to his time around 600 B.C.E., the result cannot be otherwise than seeing passages in Isa 49 and 53 as dependent on Jeremiah.³⁵

Yet, as recent research has shown, probably large parts of these prophetic books have only been compiled at a much later time, so that we can no longer start uncritically from the assumptions mentioned above. This leads to *another type of investigation* that is more solidly grounded on other, mainly literary criteria, although they and their interpretation often remain ambivalent.

³³ The death in a foreign country and the ignorance of the prophet's tomb are further traits connecting Jeremiah to Moses, as already his vocation establishes by marked links in Jer 1:7,9 with God's announcement of a “prophet like you” (= Moses) in Deut 18:18. But there is also a strong contrast between them: Moses left Egypt, oriented towards the Promised Land; Jeremiah was forced to leave the Promised Land (Jer 43:5-6), and taken to Egypt to die there.

³⁴ We might call this “riddles of reference,”² indicating a second level of the title's meaning.

³⁵ This position can be observed in earlier authors and, more recently, in Gottfried Glaßner, *Vision eines auf Verheißung gegründeten Jerusalem: Textanalytische Studien zu Jesaja 54* (ÖBS 11; Klosterneuburg: Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1992), 238-240; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Allusions and Illusions: The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. Roy F. Melugin; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996), 156-186, especially 161-170, 176, and Benjamin D. Sommer, “New Light on the Composition of Jeremiah,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 646-666, here 647, 664; Patricia T. Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBLDS 161; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 137-243 *passim*; Ulrich Berges and others.

The results of these new analyses seem to indicate that sometimes even "Deutero-Isaiah," and also "Trito-Isaiah," can be the source for texts in Jeremiah.

In recent years some authors have dared to confront the majority position along these lines. Angelika Berlejung³⁶ showed that Jer 10 is dependent on Isa 44. Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor³⁷ understood a number of oracles in Jeremiah as being based on Deutero-Isaiah's language, especially Jer 46:27f. // 30:10-11, and Jer 31:35c, as picking up Isa 51:15b. Dalit Rom-Shiloni³⁸ interpreted Jer 32:36-41 as being familiar with Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. My research on the intertextual relationships of Jeremiah led me to conclude that the author of Jeremiah had access to the whole book of Isaiah,³⁹ among other scrolls forming part of what would become later the Hebrew Bible.

In this field, the publications of Richard L. Schultz and Marvin A. Sweeney (2003; 2007) are also worth mentioning. Schultz⁴⁰ shows the influence of Isa 15-16 on Jer 48. Sweeney makes Isa 5 as background for Jer 6 probable⁴¹ and understands Jeremiah as a "fundamental rereading" of the older Isaianic tradition.⁴²

Coming back to the texts compared (above in 1 and 2), they show, in my opinion, that the book of Jeremiah draws on Isaiah. The *portrayal of the prophet Jeremiah*, especially in his confessions, but also in his vocation (Jer 1), can be seen as a *realisation of the suffering servant*, as he is depicted especially in Isa 49 and 53. My own considered opinion is that Jeremiah accentuates still

³⁶ Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder* (OBO 162; Fribourg: Universitäts-Verlag, 1998), 391.

³⁷ Parke-Taylor, *Formation*, 119-125 and 216-217

³⁸ Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "The Prophecy for "Everlasting Covenant" (Jeremiah XXXII 36-41): An Exilic Addition or a Deuteronomistic Redaction?" *VT* 53 (2003): 201 – 223, here 223.

³⁹ Fischer, *Jeremia 1-25*, 68; Fischer, *Jeremia*, 142-143; Georg Fischer, "Partner oder Gegner? Zum Verhältnis von Jesaja und Jeremia," in "Sieben Augen auf einem Stein" (Sach 3,9): *Studien zur Literatur und Geschichte des Zweiten Tempels* (ed. Friedhelm Hartenstein and Michael Pietsch; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 69-79, especially 75-78; Reprinted in Georg Fischer, *Der Prophet wie Mose: Studien zum Jeremiabuch* (BZAR 15; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 188-199.

⁴⁰ Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets* [JSOTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 307-329; see also Parke-Taylor, *Formation*, 130-140.

⁴¹ Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Truth in True and False Prophecy," in *Truth: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Pluralist Age* (ed. Christine Helmer and Kristin de Troyer; Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 9-26, here 23-24

⁴² Sweeney, "Truth," 25, and Marvin A. Sweeney "Jeremiah's Reflection on the Isaian Royal Promise: Jeremiah 23:1-8 in Context," in *Uprooting and Planting* (ed. John Goldingay; LHBOTS 459; New York: T & T Clark, 2007) 308-321, 319 and 321.

more some already striking features of the servant songs,⁴³ as he does with a lot of other texts, too.⁴⁴ In my view, the "riddle of reference" has to be solved in this way, by taking the whole book of Isaiah as a source for Jeremiah.

E CONCLUSION

Leaving aside the questions about the dependence between Isaiah and Jeremiah and its direction, there are at least three major aspects that remain undisputed and thus can be taken as results from the analysis of our theme:

- Any further research on the relationship between these great prophetic books has to address the *issue of the criteria* for the comparison.⁴⁵ Only a critical reflection on the employed methodology and its arguments is able to lead to firm results that escape the traditional preconceptions and their circle of continuing disputed positions.
- The texts adduced above show how *close* Isaiah and Jeremiah are in their interests, in some expressions, and statements. This points to a *shared orientation*, at least in particular fields.⁴⁶ But the differences are still more important; see the use of Mic 4:1-3 in Isa 2:2-4, as against Mic 3:12 quoted in Jer 26:18 – the "optimistic" position of Isaiah stands in opposition to the critical stance of Jeremiah, especially with regard to Jerusalem and its temple.⁴⁷
- Above all, Isaiah and Jeremiah have a *message in common*: God is preferably at work through his servants, and their mission may include suffering, and even death. This goes contrary to the traditional connection of God's sending with "success." The use of the first person singu-

⁴³ There is no need to pick up *all* their features; e.g. the concept of the servant being a **מַנְאָה**, "guilt offering, atonement," unique to Isa 53:10, is not present in Jeremiah. But this does not allow the conclusion that Isa 53 presents a later stage in the development of a prophet's or servant's mission; it is not picked up in other, still later texts, either.

⁴⁴ A systematic research of the intertextual relations of Jer brought me to believe that its author is familiar with a lot of already existing scrolls, among them all the books of the Torah and the Former Prophets, the same with Amos, Hosea, Micah from the Book of the Twelve, and also with Isaiah and Ezekiel; see Fischer, *Jeremia*, 134-143.

⁴⁵ For some indications cf. Fischer, *Jeremia*, 131-133.

⁴⁶ Ulrich Berges spoke of "overlapping interests of prophetic circles" in his paper in Atlanta. The closeness of some expressions and the number of common motifs between many of the prophetic books certainly point in this direction.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, both quotes taken from Micah follow one another there: Mic 3:12 immediately precedes 4:1-3. The longest quotations of Isaiah and Jeremiah are, in a similar way, typical for their contrasting orientation: Isa 36-39 draws on 2 Kgs 18-20, a passage reporting the salvation of Jerusalem; Jer 52 repeats 2 Kgs 24:18-25:30 nearly *verbatim*, emphasizing its destruction: Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 657-658.

lar by the servant in Isa 49 and the prophet in the "confessions" in Jeremiah is a kind of "personal" testimony for this.

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Georg Fischer SJ, Theological Faculty of the University of Innsbruck, Department of Biblical Studies and Historical Theology, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, 6020, Innsbruck, Austria. *Email*: georg.fischer@uibk.ac.at.