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► **To cite this version:**

Laurent Capron. 2.4.11 Baruch/Jeremiah: Letter of Jeremiah: Christian Palestinian Aramaic. Textual History of the Bible, vol. 2: The Deuterocanonical Scriptures, part 2B, 2019, pp.110-111. 10.1163/2452-4107_thb_com_0202041100 . hal-03551821

HAL Id: hal-03551821

<https://hal.science/hal-03551821>

Submitted on 1 Feb 2022

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Version imprimée

Capron, Laurent, “2.4.11 Baruch/Jeremiah : Letter of Jeremiah : Christian Palestinian Aramaic”, in: *Textual History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *The Deuterocanonical Scriptures*, part 2B, (gen. ed. A. Lange, vol. eds. F. Feder and M. Henze; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 110-111

Version en ligne

Capron, Laurent, “2.4.11 Baruch/Jeremiah : Letter of Jeremiah : Christian Palestinian Aramaic”, in: *Textual History of the Bible* (gen. ed. A. Lange; vol. eds. F. Feder and M. Henze). http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_0202041100 (accès payant en janvier 2022)

2.4.11 Christian Palestinian Aramaic

2.4.11.1 Manuscript Evidence and Modern Editions

The verses 33-63 of the Letter of Jeremiah are preserved in CPA on three leaves of the same manuscript. These leaves survive nowadays as three different fragments: Cambridge University Library, T.-S. 12.745 (vv. 33-44); T.-S. 12.744 (vv. 44-54); and St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Antonin, Ebr. B 958 (vv. 54-63). They are three palimpsests whose upper script contains the Hebrew text of *Bereshit Rabba*. The first two fragments were scarcely deciphered and published in 1900 by Smith Lewis who was not able to identify the text.¹ In 1961, having at his disposal some photographs of the fragments, Baars was able to identify the text and published T.-S. 12.745b and T.-S. 12.744a, but could not read the script on the other side of the pages.² In 1997, Sokoloff, who identified the Russian fragment, and Müller-Kessler gave a complete edition of the three fragments, with a new transcription of the two British ones.³ The original manuscript containing the Letter of Jeremiah seems to have also contained Jeremiah, Lamentations, and presumably Baruch (cf .2.1.11).⁴ Fragment T.-S. 12745 preserves, at the top, the title ܡܠܘܚܘܢ ܕܝܗܘܪܝܡ “from Jeremiah.”

Although the three leaves are quite well preserved, they include some *lacunae*. The verses 44, 46-47, 49, 50, 52, 54, and 63 are partly lost. It is sometimes possible to fill the *lacunae* with certainty, but in other cases, the proposed reconstructions are too hypothetical.⁵

2.4.11.2 Relevant Variants towards LXX and the Latin Translations

The CPA text of the Letter of Jeremiah follows most of the time the Greek text of LXX (cf. 2.4.2), but in several cases, one can observe variants that are found in Latin versions (cf. 2.4.4).⁶

In v. 37, the plural ܡܠܘܚܘܢ “orphans” is found also in Latin (*orphans*; cf. 2.4.4), whereas LXX (cf. 2.4.2) has the singular ὀρφανόν “orphan.” In v. 40, ܡܠܘܚ “from him” renders the Latin *ab eo*, which has no equivalent in LXX. In the same verse, ܕܘܠܘܢ “he will say” can be interpreted as the equivalent of the Latin *loqui* but agrees also with the Greek variant of LXX^A λαλῆσαι “to speak.” The rest of the LXX tradition has instead φωνῆσαι “to speak” being a reading of lower quality. In v. 46, the repetition of ܡܠܘܚܘܢ “workman,” already found in v. 45, can also be found in the Latin but not in LXX. In v. 55, ܡܠܘܚ “to the war” translates exactly the Latin *bello*, while LXX has πολέμοις “to the enemies,” instead. Verse 58 is entirely identical with the Latin version, whereas the LXX presents a different version.

Another case can be found in v. 53, as Baars already pointed out.⁷ The reading ܘܡܘܪܘܢ “their regions” seems to be a translation of the Latin *neque regiones* “and not the regions” although it is not an exact equivalent. LXX reads ἀδικούμενον “the oppressed one.”

1. Smith Lewis, *Palimpsests fragments*, 70-71 (fragment XII), and 91-92 (fragment XXIV).

2. Baars, *Two Palestinian Syriac Texts*.

3. Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament*, 207-12 with plate xix and xx.

4. Baars, *Two Palestinian Syriac Texts*, 77.

5. Some reconstructions by Sokoloff and Müller-Kessler seem dubious and will not be commented on here.

6. The comparison is based on Sabatier, **Bibliorum*, 749-53.

7. Baars, *Two Palestinian Syriac Texts*, 80, commentary to col. b, l. 6/8.

The other variants found in CPA are mainly omissions: *καὶ* “and” in v. 38, *κακὰ* “evils” in v. 48, *γὰρ* “indeed” in v. 53, *ἀπελεύσονται ἔχοντες* “they go away with what they have” in v. 57, and *ἐν οἰκίᾳ* “in a house” in v. 58. In v. 40, the reading ܦܠܦ “or” can be due to a confusion between *οἱ* and *ἡ* after an iotacism in the Greek parent text. In v. 43, ܩܘܡܠܬܐ ܕܘܚܝܐ “one of them” is a masculine form where LXX has the epicene form *τις αὐτῶν* “one of them” that explicitly refers to women. In v. 57, ܕܘܚܝܠܘ “and in wood” is placed after “laid over with silver or gold” while LXX has *ξύλινοι καὶ περιάργυροι καὶ περιχρυσοὶ* “made of wood and laid over with silver or gold.” Then ܘܡܝܢ ܕܘܚܝܠܘ “that is strong” is a singular where LXX has a plural.

In v. 40, CPA includes a translation mistake. It reads ܦܠܘܝܢܐ “at the door” for the *τὸν Βῆλον* “the Bel” of LXX. This is probably due to a confusion with the Greek word *τὸ βῆλον*, deriving from the Latin *velum* and meaning a curtain standing at the place of the door, or with the Greek word *ὁ βηλός* “threshold.”

2.4.11.3 Translation Technique

This CPA text does not show any regularity in translation of identical words. This adds to the difficulty to fill *lacunae* with certainty.

The Greek verbs *ρύσωνται* (v. 35 and 53) and *σώζουσιν* (v. 49), both meaning “they save,” are translated by ܕܘܚܝܠܘ “they save.” On the other hand, *ἐξέλωνται* “they deliver” is translated by ܕܘܚܝܠܘ in v. 35, but by ܕܘܚܝܠܘ in v. 36. The verb ܕܘܚܝܠܘ “to rescue” is also used to translate *διασωθήσονται* “they are preserved” in v. 54 (ܕܘܚܝܠܘ “they are rescued”), but *διασώζουσα* (v. 58) is rendered by ܕܘܚܝܠܘ (both meaning “preserving”). It is therefore impossible to ascertain which verb was used in v. 57 to translate *διασωθήσονται* “they will be preserved,” where the CPA fragment has a *lacuna*.

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