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REPRESENTING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM: LITERARY ARTISTRY AND THE SHAPING OF MEMORY IN 2 KINGS 25, LAMENTATIONS, AND EZEKIEL

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For Moy Moy

beloved sister and friend, my true north

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Chapter 1

Re-presenting and Reinterpreting the Fall of Jerusalem

"The events that led to the fall of Jerusalem are well-known."

> "The rulers of the neo-Babylonian Empire, on the other hand, did not send out military colonists, and Jerusalem remained a heap of ruins. Again, fate or chance directed the course of world history. A Babylonian colony in Jerusalem would have made the Return from the Exile impossible, and there would not have been Judaism, Christianity and Islam."
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> Elias Bickerman, "Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem"[1]

According to Bickerman, the constitutive elements that led to the fall of Jerusalem are already well-known *and* the fall was great enough to direct "the course of world history." Bickerman's claim is not unusual. The fate of Jerusalem is ostensibly well-known: after the Babylonian siege, the city fell, the temple was destroyed, the elite were deported, and only a shell of the kingdom remained. For those few who remained in the land, the suffering was acute, and for those who were exiled, the foreign context was a cultural shock. The destruction of Jerusalem has been portrayed as a pivotal event, both within biblical literature itself and in modern biblical scholarship. The books of Kings, which recount the monarchic period of Israel and Judah, end with an account of the Babylonian invasion against Jerusalem, Judah's capital.

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[1] Elias Bickerman, "Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem," in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* Vol. 46/47, (1976): 69–85; (69, 84).

Lament poetry also dwells extensively on the period following the destruction— Lamentations from the perspective of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who continued to dwell in the land and others, such as Psalm 137, from the vantage point of those exiled to Babylon. Prophetic literature, particularly works like second Isaiah and Ezekiel, pivot around the loss of Jerusalem and the potential for its restoration.

Attentive to this significance that biblical literature attaches to Jerusalem's destruction, modern biblical scholarship has also regarded the destruction of a Jerusalem as a 'watershed' moment that marks a distinct transition in the socio-political and religious life of Judah, and uses it as a way to demarcate periods in Israel and Judah's history: monarchic/post-monarchic; pre-exilic/exilic/post-exilic.[2] The understanding of what composed Judah–the individuals who made up its institutions that signaled the polity–allowed the German scholar W.M.L. de Wette to argue for a radical discontinuity between the period before Jerusalem's destruction and the period after. The influence of Jerusalem's destruction was so strong that the nation that emerged after the exile must be viewed as an entirely different one: "We call the people in this period Jews (*Juden*), and in the period before, Hebrews (*Hebräer*); and what belongs to the post-exilic culture is called Judaism (*Judenthum*), while in the pre-exilic culture it is called Hebraism (*Hebraismus*)."[3] De Wette's binary of Hebraism vs. Judaism was further concretized by Julius

[2] For example, Miller and Hayes write, "The fall of the city and the exile of many of its citizens marked a watershed in Judean history and have left fissure marks radiating throughout the Hebrew Scriptures." See further J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (2nd ed.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 479.

[3] Quoted in James Pasto, "W. M. L. De Wette and the Invention of Post-Exilic Judaism: Political Historiography and Christian Allegory in Nineteenth-Century German Biblical Scholarship," in *Jews, Antiquity, and the Nineteenth Century Imagination* (Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture; ed. Hayim Lapin and Dale Martin; Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2003), 33–52.

Wellhausen, who argued that after the exile, a community that had formerly been lively and creative was changed into theocracy, led by ritual-obsessed priests, whose sole focus was atonement, even after Yahweh's anger had seemingly subsided.[4]

The binary of pre-and post-exile, with the destruction of Jerusalem introducing the exile, has remained insistently present in contemporary scholarship too. Lester Grabbe's statement is illustrative:

> The entity known as 'the exile' has had an extremely forceful influence on Old Testament scholarship. When discussing history and literature, things are measured in 'pre-exilic' and 'postexilic'. The concept of 'sin–exile–restoration' has made a major impact on theological thinking, both in the Old Testament itself and in subsequent theological discussion. If there is a watershed in discussions relating to the Old Testament, it is 'the exile'; the only rival is perhaps the scheme of 'pre-monarchic/monarchic' or 'pre-settlement/settlement'.[5]

Grabbe notes in passing that the exile is set in motion by the destruction of Jerusalem and thus marks one border of the watershed area. It seems that this identification of a 'watershed' is prompted not just by the historical event of exile, but also by the finality of the statement within 2 Kings 25: "So Judah went into exile" (v. 21b). Rainer Albertz, in his 2003 monograph, *Israel in Exile*, echoes Bickerman, arguing that without the exile, Israel would not have made a transition to monotheism:

> I venture to claim that without the experience of the exile, Israel would never have made the discovery of monotheism in the strict sense; without it, Israel would never have transcended the limits of its national religion; without it, the idea of a worldwide mission would never have emerged within Israel. In short, without the exile of Israel, there would

[4] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Transl. Allan Menzies and J. Sutherland Black; New York: Meridian, 1957).

[5] Lester Grabbe, "Introduction," in *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology*. (ed. Lester Grabbe; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 11–19 (11).

be no Judaism, Christianity or even Islam in the distinctive form we know these three world religions.[6]

Crucial in the discussion of the significance of the exile is a prior collapsing of distinct occurrences into a single event. Although the exile was preceded by the siege and then fall of Jerusalem, the city's destruction, and the subsequent deportation of some Judeans, critical scholarship on the topic coalesces these distinct elements into one constitutive, long lasting event.

Oded Lipschits has noted that discussions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the resulting exile have ascribed a kind of "ideological unity" to all the texts that discuss these events, leading to what some have termed a "reification" of the Jerusalem siege.[7] The significance of these observations should not be underestimated. The coalescing of the different narratives surrounding the destruction allows for a totalizing view of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of large sections of its population, creating in effect one coherent account of 'what really happened.' To further this goal, many scholars have also sought to combine archaeological evidence with textual materials in what threatens a tautological alignment of text and material culture. This approach also obscures the individual narratives and the claims they make, while assuming that the texts can be expected to align with the material culture evidence.[8] The impetus to construct a historical account of the past significantly

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[6] Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E* (Studies in Biblical Literature 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 436–437.

[7] Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

[8] Ronald Sack, "Nebuchadnezzar II and the Old Testament: History versus Ideology," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph

undertheorizes the differing ways in which biblical texts both recount and reshape the telling of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The difficulty is that the goal of scholars has largely been one of *history*, while the majority of the material they have to work with is *literature*. The significance of the events of destruction and of exile demands careful study, but it also requires allowance for opposing and incongruous views on the matter to better account for how these events were constructed, shaped, and remembered in literary form.

In my dissertation, I address three kinds of significances that have been accorded to the destruction of Jerusalem, and in so doing, also suggest my own. The first is the significance attributed to the topic within biblical texts themselves, including but not limited to 2 Kings 24–25, Second Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Psalm 137. The second is the significance of the topic in scholarship on the Hebrew Bible and the history of Israel and Judah, which is in large part a response to the importance given to the topic within biblical literature. The third level is the relationship between the significances of the first two levels: how is scholarship itself conditioned and shaped by the textual material?

Contextualizing Scholarship: Binaries and Genres

Scholarship on the destruction of Jerusalem has utilized three primary types of evidence: biblical texts, archaeology of Jerusalem and the southern Levant, and royal inscriptions from Nebuchadnezzar. More recently, the Al-Yaḥudu texts have provided additional information on the lives of deportees to Babylon, generating new perspectives on the effects of the destruction

Blenkinsopp. Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 221–234; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*.

on the exiled population.[9] Biblical literature has, however, been the largest source of information on the destruction, with materials drawn from both historiographic literature such as Kings as well as prophetic and hymnic materials. While historiographic material has often been privileged on the grounds that it is more accurate and reliable, it has also posed problems for scholars who wish to reconstruct the event as it really happened because the details of the destruction are deemed insufficiently informative.[10] For example, 2 Kings 24–25, which provides an account of the siege itself, does not report much after the installation and subsequent revolt against Gedaliah, the Babylonian appointed governor. Information about the deported Judeans is also sparse, and so reconstructing a portrait of the fall and its aftermath from Kings alone is a challenge.

In contrast, prophetic and lament literature dwells at length on the destruction and its aftermath. Lamentations and Psalm 137, which both take the event of the destruction as their launching point, describe the aftermath–in Judah, for Lamentations; and in Babylon for the exiles–as one of great hardship and misery. Using materials from these texts, coupled with

[9] Laurie Pearce, "'Judean': A Special Status" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 267–277; Cornelia Wunsch, "Glimpses of Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," in *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.* (ed. Anjelika Berlejung and Michael P. Streck; Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 247–60; Laurie Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* (Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 28. Bethesda: CDL Press, 2014).

[10] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings* (Anchor Bible 11; Garden City, Ny: Doubleday, 1988).

archaeological data, scholars have attempted to 'fill in' the gaps in the picture presented by Kings.[11]

While biblical scholars and archaeologists continue to debate whether or not the city really remained a "heap of ruins," the idea that the fall of the city is already well-understood, even if some details are patchy, is largely unchallenged. Like Bickerman, Miller and Hayes said rather succinctly and definitively, "The immediate results of the Babylonian conquest are clear."[12] Their claim illustrates conviction that *everyone already knows* what happened during and after the destruction of Jerusalem. Secure in this basic knowledge, studies of the texts pertaining to the city's destruction have thus focused on establishing the more minute details associated with it: the duration of the siege, the historical reasons that the temple vessels might have been carried off, or the people's response to Gedaliah. In their pursuit of these inquiries, scholars have pointed to the brevity of the Kings account and have used it as a way to justify supplementing this narrative with information gleaned from Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and even the Pentateuch.

As Bickerman's comment might suggest, scholars in the past century and a half have held a remarkably consistent view of Babylon and its destruction of Jerusalem. Yet Frahm and Holloway have recently shown how heavily influenced modern scholarship is by current events of their own times.[13] Both demonstrate that ideas of Assyria and Babylon's imperial prowess

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[11] Delbert Hillers, in his commentary on Lamentations states regarding the fall of Jerusalem: "Kings supplies the facts. Lamentations supplies the meaning of those facts." *Lamentations* (2nd ed. Anchor Bible Commentary 7A; Garden City, Ny: Doubleday, 1964), 1.

[12] Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 479.

[13] Eckart Frahm, "Images of Assyria in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Western Scholarship," in *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible* (ed. Stephen W. Holloway; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 75–94; Stephen Holloway, "Introduction: Orientalism,

were greatly informed by nineteenth and twentieth century experiences of colonialism and imperialism. The intellectual paradigms within which scholars operated lead to the creation of sharp binaries that were repeatedly reenacted in ancient texts. A binary of us *vs.* them, repeatedly recast in modernity (for example, Semitic vs. Aryan, Colonist vs. Native, and Metropole vs. Colony) was also applied to antiquity. Frahm demonstrates that the relationship between Judah and Assyria, and subsequently Judah and Babylon, was consistently positioned as a polemical relationship.

Frahm's and Holloway's arguments have great salience for the study of scholarship on Jerusalem's fall, not least because in interpreting these texts, particularly Lamentations, scholars have provided a foreshortened view of history, situating themselves not only as interpreters of a text but as individuals able to share in the experience of the horrors described within the world of the text:

> Readers of these poems who have just witnessed the close of the twentieth century cannot help but read and experience them in light of the Holocaust and the literature of atrocity that our singularly evil epoch in human history has generated… The Holocaust was in every way unique. In it, reality outstripped (and continues to do so to this day) even the most demented and vile contortions of the human mind and thus the overriding goal of much Holocaust literature is to make such an unsayable and unthinkable reality possible for the imagination. By contrast, the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, though singularly important in the history of ancient Judah, was by no means unparalleled in antiquity.[14]

Assyriology, and the Bible," *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible* (ed. Stephen W. Holloway; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 1–41.

[14] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (Interpretation. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), 2–3. At first glance, it seems that Dobbs-Allsopp is suggesting that readers should not compare the destruction of Jerusalem to the Holocaust, even though such a comparison seems intuitive. On the other hand, the very fact that he raises this possibility of comparison suggests that he is doing the very thing he argues against.

Even when the interpreter claims to read without invoking experiences outside what the text immediately suggests, their vocabulary belies their stated approach: "The reader is invited to *ground-zero* [emphasis mine] of the devastation, there to stand dumbfounded by the enormity of the collapse of this once glorious city and of the human tragedy that was left behind in its wake."[15] The term 'Ground Zero' first emerged to describe the point on the earth directly below the detonation spot of the atomic bomb, and was used to refer to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. In more recent history, it has become synonymous with the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The use of such an anachronistic expression imports with it a subjectivity that prevents the interpreter from engaging with the text's own claims and account of the experience of destruction.

The dominance of the Lamentations-style imagination of Jerusalem's destruction, achieved through continuous repositioning of the interpreter alongside the characters within the texts, also prevents the interpreter from achieving objectivity in interpreting other texts that deviate from this 'established' story. Texts such as 2 Kings 24–25, not that much briefer than Lamentations, are dismissed *a priori* by scholars as being too succinct to provide much valuable information, whether as literature or history. Frederic William Farrar, for example, bemoaning the terseness of Kings, instead explains the famine that resulted during the siege in language drawn straight out of Lamentations:

> If we would want to know what that famine was in its appalling intensity, we must turn to the Book of Lamentations... The day came when there was no more bread left in Jerusalem. The fair and ruddy Nazarites, who had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than corals, lovely as sapphires, became like withered boughs, and even

[15] Dianne Bergant, *Lamentations* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 13.

> their friends did not recognize them. The daughters of Zion, more cruel in their hunger than the very jackals, lost the instincts of pity and motherhood.[16]

Two reasons, both heavily influenced by the paradigm of suffering offered in Lamentations, are imported as explanations for the Kings text's brevity, both of which involve speculations on the author's mental and emotional state. The first is that the author of 2 Kings 25 in particular had no time to write at length because he was, quite literally, running away from the smoldering ruins.[17] A second reason is also proffered: "Further comment at this juncture may have been difficult for this historian, who had lived through the destruction and the exile. He, unlike Ezekiel (Ezek 24:27) was struck dumb by the terrible fate which had overcome his people."[18] The assumption of grave distress is, of course, understandable. Especially striking in such claims is the pervasive interest in how the author's mental state may have resulted in a fractured narrative. Noteworthy too is that such depth of understanding and debate over the author's mental state is accorded to no other military catastrophe in the Hebrew Bible. The fall of Samaria, positioned as a well-deserved fate, garners little interest. Neither do predictions about the fall of Tyre. Part of this stems from the text itself—the perspective of the author is a Judean one, and even when describing the fall of Samaria or Tyre, the author does not position himself as part of that group. That positioning embeds itself in interpretations of the narrative. For Haran, Cogan, and Tadmor, the end of Kings, ostensibly history, is an example of bad history writing. It

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[16] Frederic William Farrar, *The Second Book of Kings* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), 452.

[17] Menahem Haran, תהליכי הגיבוש עד סוף ימי בית שני ושינויי : האסופה המקראית (4 vols.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996–2014).

[18] Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 324. Ironically, according to the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet was in fact unable to speak—first because he refuses to speak and later because Yahweh takes away his ability to speak, allowing him to do so only after a refugee arrives from Judah bearing news of Jerusalem's fall.

seems to flout conventions and norms with abandon. The only explanation for such sloppiness is to posit that the author was too hurried or traumatized to write properly.

What "counts" as proper history writing or historiography is of course a fraught question, and it has troubled biblical scholars and historians more broadly for decades. The historian Johan Huizinga famously argued that "history is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past."[19] Responding to this definition, J. Finkelstein suggested that for Assyriologists and other historians of the ancient Near East, what was required was to search for literary forms that corresponded to modern ones in terms of values rather than strict appearances. He argued:

> What we must seek is that form or genre in which the Mesopotamian thinker confronted his experience of the past, with detachment as well as involvement, with the sense of urgency or immediacy as well as with the spirit of an objective quest; in short, in precisely those attitudes that we expect of any inquiry in the Western world that would claim the dignity of serious historiography.[20]

Although Finkelstein's challenge may seem eminently conservative today, it is in fact a fairly common position for historians of biblical texts to hold, even if it is an unstated position. Indeed, when scholars like Tadmor and Cogan state that the author of Kings was too sad to write a coherent account, what they have in mind is something akin to the guidelines Finkelstein lays out. For history writing to be proper, it must be dispassionate and imbued with an "objective quest," presumably of narrating the past. Miller and Hayes, while applauding such an approach as "methodologically sound," point out that, in practice, embedded in biblical scholarship are

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[19] Johan Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History," *Philosophy and History*, Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer (ed. by R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton; Oxford, 1936), 9.

[20] J. Finkelstein, "Mesopotamian Historiography," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (107. 6), Cuneiform Studies and the History of Civilization (1963), 461–472 (461).

many assumptions about Israel and Judah that derive more from tradition than critical scholarship.[21] They write, "We think historians should listen to these voices [folk materials], rather than dismiss them because they fail to meet all the modern standards of objectivity. In short, we think that when examined carefully and critically, there is much of historical value to be learned from the Hebrew Bible."[22] Miller and Hayes are right to resist the call to completely ignore the bible's historical value. At the same time, their approach does not take into sufficient consideration that the historical value of these biblical texts pertains more to the ancient authors' own times rather than the times which they claim to describe.

This issue is particularly important for studying the fall of Jerusalem because rather than being real-time accounts of the fall, the works preserved in the Hebrew Bible are highly charged and ideological representations of the fall. There are two features to be noted here about the scholarship on this topic: the first is that because the goal of modern scholarship on the fall has largely been a historical one, to recover and reconstruct what happened in Jerusalem's final days, modern ideas of what counts as history has colored the relative importance given to the different texts on the fall of Jerusalem. The result is that the Kings narrative is thus privileged as providing the most "proper" account of the fall. As such, it becomes the standard against which to measure the claims made in other texts, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Lamentations. The assumptions of genre have, in other words, created a hierarchy of the texts in the historical information they

[21] Miller and Hayes write, "Almost invariably, at any rate, lurking behind the interpretations of archaeological data that these studies offer, and deeply embedded in their socioscientific explanations, are assumptions about ancient Israel that do not derive entirely from the scientific evidence, but are influenced at least to some degree by the biblical traditions." *A History of Israel and Judah*, 81.

[22] Miller and Hayes, *A History of Israel and Judah*, 82.

provide, but have simultaneously allowed for reading these works in concert with one another.[23] The second and related issue is that although most scholars claim to be using a historical-critical *and* literary approach, in fact the literary reading is frequently subordinated to the historical, and seems to make an overall negligible contribution to the interpretation. This historical-critical approach evaluates the historical claims of the biblical text with the explicit intent of creating a better understanding of the text, its development, and the world it invokes, often through comparative analysis. By focusing so heavily on the text's formation, scholars have often neglected to pay close attention to the claims embedded within the narrative's fictional world.[24]

Underlying the assumptions of Finkelstein, Miller, Hayes, Cogan, and Tadmor concerning how history works is something even more basic, namely, an attempt to make *coherent* sense of the past. The impulse to look for coherence and order is not one that is limited to historians. Indeed, numerous studies have shown that humans are conditioned to look for patterns, coherence, and cohesiveness in order to make meaning, build connections between different pieces, and process different kinds of information.[25] It is this instinct for coherence that

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[23] On the use of genre as a tool for classification and meaning-making, see Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Amy J. Devitt, *Writing Genres* (Rhetorical Philosophy and Theory; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); Roland Boer, ed., *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (SemeiaSt 63; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

[24] For discussion of this same problem in relation to biblical poetry and the question of orality, see Jacqueline Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

[25] Reiter et al.'s 2017 study for example, demonstrates that the medial temporal cortex in the human brain is deeply implicated in the ability to generate coherence and form complex and abstract knowledge to develop contextual relationships between disparate pieces of information. The MTC is implicated in acts of reading, interpretation, and analysis. See further, Reiter, Liaw, Yamawaki, Naumann, and Laurent, "On the value of reptilian brains to map the evolution of the hippocampal formation," *Brain, Behavior, and Evolution* 90 (2017): 41–52.

prompts historians of Jerusalem's fall to read across narratives, aligning them according to the details they provide, and using each to explain the other, rather than building from the ground up the claims made in each text individually before then turning to other works.[26] This impetus also leads scholars to take seriously the genre of the texts as somehow indicating something fundamentally true about the nature of their claims. One example I will give in chapter 4 comes from the opening lines of the Book of Lamentations. There, the work opens with an exclamation, איכה "*êkāh*." The Septuagint's title for the work, *Θρῆνοι*, "laments," trades on this opening, as does Jewish tradition that calls this composition *qînôt*, "laments." Both the Jewish and Septuagint traditions also appear to be influenced by the claim in 2 Chr 35: 25 that Jeremiah uttered a lament for Josiah (laments that were then echoed by singers), and that his words are preserved in writing in "the laments" (והנם כתובים על הקינות). The correspondence of the claim in Chronicles with the expression in the Book of Lamentations generates the notion that this is Chronicles' referent. Yet is it not that the author of Chronicles has made a particular literary claim, and in turn, that Lamentations too announces its participation in a particular genre through its choice of opening? The designation of this work as lament is thus a claim made by the authors and should as such be taken seriously as part of the literary artistry rather than an intrinsic quality of the work.[27] As I will show in chapter 4, the willingness to take at face value the text's claim

[26] This is amply illustrated in works of history on Judah. To name only a few: Mario Liverani, *Israel's History and the History of Israel*; Van Seters, *In Search of History*; Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah*.

[27] See also Vayntrub for a similar observation with regards to the way in which the biographical sketch of Solomon in 1 Kings 5 as a performer of *mashal* and *shir* generates a coordination with other works attributed to Solomon (Proverbs and Song of Songs). Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality*, Introduction.

obscures the ways in which the poet introduces as he uses the lament form to launch an accusation against the deity.

One of the peculiar features of scholarship on the fall, particularly in Lamentations, is the desire to pin down theological views of the texts. This impulse manifests as a desire to 'find' coherence in and make coherent *theological* sense out of the differing narratives about the fall of Jerusalem. Westermann has identified two trends in this meaning-making endeavor: "Either these laments offer some sort of explanation," or "they point a way out of a crisis." He argues that both trends are attempts at meaning-making but that they miss the point, which is in fact that "the meaning of these laments is to be found in their very expression."[28] Westermann's own approach of course might be charged with the same effort towards meaning-making. Yet his remarks are also true for scholars working on less emotional texts. In discussing 2 Kings 25, Lipschits observed that this text includes no theological commentary or effort at providing a moral teaching. That he noted this absence suggests the possibility that he was looking for it, even unconsciously. There seems a profound discomfort among scholars to suggest the absence of any redemptive value in the text, which is also what prompts so many scholars to latch on to the announcement at the end of Kings that Jehoiachin was restored to the king's favor.[29]

These assumptions and biases have strong implications for the study of the biblical texts. The use of binaries, which Frahm and Holloway observe so characterize the approach of early 20th century scholars, in fact reproduces itself repeatedly in contemporary scholarship on

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[28] Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (trans. Charles Muenchow. Augsburg Fortress Press 1994), 81.

[29] For von Rad, for example, this notice was a sign of messianic hope. See von Rad, "The Deuteronomistic Theology of History in I and II Kings," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh, 1966), 218–221. For further discussion of this issue, see chapter 3.

Jerusalem's fall. Oded Lipschits, for example, identifies one positive and one negative attitude towards Babylon in 2 Kings 25; negatively, either Judah was exiled (v. 21b), or positively, it was not (verses 22 and following).[30] O'Connor argues that Lamentations is either a theodicy or an anti-theodicy. Jerusalem is a thoroughly sinful woman, or she is a pitiable widow.[31] The binaries are entrenched in the way scholars approach these texts.

In the end, we return to Bickerman's claim that the events leading up to Jerusalem's destruction and captivity are well-known. Such claims, I suggest, help explain why the binaries are so potent. Scholars have regularly come to the text with ideas about who Yahweh is, what Jerusalem is, and how they ought to be; binaries have been especially useful in inscribing these views in the text.

Implicit in the scholarly project to uncover the history of Jerusalem's destruction is thus a belief that there is a single stable event that each text is describing, and that the event can be reconstructed like a puzzle: the biblical materials, the archaeological portrait, and the accounts from the Neo-Babylonian chronicles are individual pieces that add up to a finished, single, and coherent picture. The difficulty with this assumption is two-fold: first, it assumes the reliability of the self-professed authority of the biblical material without adequate appreciation of how narratives generate such authoritative arguments; second and relatedly, the insufficient treatment of the literariness of the texts ignores the possibility that they offer divergent perspectives on the events and, crucially, have different purposes for recounting the events at all. Reading texts such as 2 Kings 25 and Lamentations first as historically credible accounts invites scholars to interpret

[30] Lipschits, *Fall and Rise,* 296–297.

[31] Kathleen O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

each text in light of the other because they are narratives about the same stable event rather than works of literature that take the same topic as their matter for exposition.

Even if we consider the broad range of scholarship on the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile in its aftermath, there is a shared assumption that the event that *prompts* the exile—the destruction—is straightforward. As much as the exile has generated a rich conceptual framework for the periodization of Judean history and for thinking about the formation of religious traditions, it is frequently limited to establishing a timeline of the exile and the formation of biblical literature in relation to it. These issues are of course critical, and provide important data about when and how many biblical texts were written, the languages these texts employed, and the socio-political world that produced them. Yet even apart from the difficulty the exile itself poses as an object of study, what remains unchallenged in such inquiries is the supposition that descriptions of the fall are largely unproblematic, even if thin on details.

The question, approach, materials, and methods:

What I argue in my dissertation is that literary representations of the fall of Jerusalem are significantly undertheorized *as literary representations*. In other words, lost in many of these studies is a simple consideration of the literariness of the texts.

So, what if, rather than only asking questions about the real events that the texts refer to, and how those align with archaeological data or other texts, we also ask basic questions about the self-presentation of these texts? For example, what clues do the genres of the various representations offer about the particular perspective advanced regarding the fall? Why it is that a text that uses the lament-genre represents the ongoing effects of the fall as Yahweh's fault? Or we might ask, why does a text like 2 Kings 25 contain no reference to Jerusalem's deity? How is

the Judean king Zedekiah characterized, and what work does that characterization do for the story? Why does the character of Ezekiel recount only Yahweh's speeches to him rather than any of his own thoughts about the past? These questions are not about whether Jerusalem really burned to the ground or not, or whether the prophet Ezekiel truly traveled somehow from Babylon to Jerusalem in a vision. Rather, they are questions about how ancient authors *re*-presented the fall of Jerusalem and used different genres to carry particular kinds of ideological claims about the city's downfall. What I am suggesting, in other words, is that we take seriously the literary nature of these materials and interpret them first as works of literature and only then turn to the question of history and how these texts may or may not adequately account for historical events. Although the impulse to read these texts for historical information is a necessary and important one, what this study will suggest is that analyzing the literary structure of the text is a crucial first step in assessing how the authors reported and represented the events that make up the destruction of Jerusalem.

Here an example from another period in history, though unrelated, proves helpful. After the First World War, war historians sought to establish an authoritative account of what happened, the principal players, the key episodes, and the results of them.[32] These early accounts brought together an impressive array of evidence and showed how the evidence participated in reconstructing the war. Yet, as later scholarship showed, the very ability to establish and identify a beginning, middle, and end, and then label it with a title so monumental as the Great War (for

[32] For an analysis of these efforts, see Daniel Todman, *The First World War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon, 2005).

the title "First" was added yet later) is an interpretive decision and construct.[33] For the people actually experiencing the war, it was made up of far smaller and isolated experiences than the grand narrative later provided.[34]

I use this example because it provides a generative template for approaching a similarly complex situation in antiquity. It suggests that any reconstruction is always something possible only after the fact. The episodes and circumstances that go into the description of Jerusalem's fall are linked together only afterward, when it is possible to see a bigger picture. Yet the example from the Great War also acts as a cautionary tale, that no amount of evidence can allow reconstruction of what really happened because, very simply, no one experienced all of it, and thus it will always be incomplete. The poet Patrick MacGill wrote about the war from the front lines, as a soldier fighting for England despite being Irish; Wilfred Owens as a romantic poet; John Buchan as an author of war-time thriller novels but simultaneously director of the wartime Department of Information. [35] Each engaged the war with a different perspective, sometimes wholly incompatible with another's.[36] In the same manner, the authors of Kings, Ezekiel, and

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[33] William Philpott, "Military History a Century after the Great War," *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* [Online], XX-1; 2015, Online since 01 May 2015; URL: http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/288

[34] David Taylor, *Memory, Narrative, and the Great War: Rifleman Patrick MacGill and the Construction of Wartime Experience* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

[35] Patrick MacGill, *Soldier Songs*; idem, *The Great Push*; Wilfred Owens; John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps.*

[36] Fascinatingly, many authors were actually sent to the Western Front to report directly on real events and use them in literature as a means of spreading information, but their backgrounds as writers frequently resulted in highly embellished representations of the front. These stylized representations offered excellent fodder for fiction and were successful as propaganda but their "truth" value was not altogether reliable. For fictional works that emerged during the war, see Arthur Conan Doyle, *His Last Bow* (1917); H.G. Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (1916); John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps;* idem, *Greenmantle*. In 1915 Edith

Lamentations each saw the destruction of Judah's capital differently, in different political and social contexts, and as such, provided accounts that were generated by their own position rather than as a totalizing interpretation or a desire to accurately describe the events.

My dissertation thus asks *how* the event of Jerusalem's destruction is constituted across different literary texts and genres, and for each text, what the implicit narrative is that stands behind their response. Instead of focusing on a particular genre, this study is topical: the representations of the destruction of Judah's capital as expressed in 2 Kings, Ezekiel, and Lamentations. The combination of texts highlights the difficulty of studying history through literature, not least by demonstrating the numerous ways in which Jerusalem's destruction was reported, imagined, and redeployed. In the process of this topical, literary study, I make an argument about why certain genres were effective carriers for particular representations of the fall of Jerusalem.

I argue that there is no single perspective on the destruction or its aftermath, and no way in which to reconstruct "what really happened." Instead, what is possible is a rich understanding of how different groups experienced the event at different times—the author of Kings as an admirer of the Babylonian empire; the prophet Ezekiel writing some decades after the fall of Jerusalem; and the author of Lamentations, as an indictment of Yahweh and his failure to protect

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Wharton wrote *A Son at the Front* though it was not published till after the war, in 1923. Despite many of these works being largely positive towards the Allied efforts, literature reflected a variety of reactions to the great war. Upton Sinclair's *Jimmie Higgins*, for example, while supportive, nonetheless view the Allied forces as only the lesser of two evils; while H.G. Wells believed this was would result in a new, utopian world in which such wars would never again occur. Henri Barbusse's later works, particularly *Le Feu*, reflected a pacifist view even as it advanced the claim that war with Germany was necessary, but Romain Rolland's *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* (1915) renounced the need for war altogether. On the German side too, literature was similarly multi-vocal: Fritz von Unruh's *Der Opfergang* (written in 1916, but published only in 1919) was deeply critical of the war, while Thomas Mann wrote in great support of German military efforts.

the Judeans. Each text reveals a complex relationship with the concept of "an event," and in its retelling of that event, provides new interpretations of what happened and how to make sense of it. In asking how these texts constitute the event, the project will also address what purpose these texts may have served.

This project thus approaches the problem with a literary- and historical-critical lens, drawing on memory and narrative studies to broaden its theoretical framework. Memory studies, the topic of chapter two, illustrates that memories of events, which are called upon to write narratives about the events, are highly complex systems of encoding that draw on not only the experience of the event itself, but also on prior knowledge and value systems. A memory is thus never pure, and when memories are called to mind, instead of being like a book being taken off the shelf, they must be actively recreated, thus re-encoding the memory, often with slight alterations. The war historian David Taylor has argued that "this reconstruction is not identical to the original but is influenced by the present time in which the act of remembering is taking place."[37] This observation is crucial for thinking about how the transformation from experience to narrative introduces the possibility of marked changes in the factual accuracy of the account. In Taylor's study of Patrick MacGill, the Irish rifleman who fought in World War I, Taylor observed that while MacGill's descriptions of the battlefront remained constant, his conclusions about the events he described changed markedly. Memory is thus highly present-oriented, even as it consistently looks backwards.[38] This is a valuable reminder for examining biblical texts as well, and is perhaps best exemplified in the work of Ezekiel, which is framed as a retrospective looking back on what happened in Jerusalem.

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[37] Taylor, *Memory and Narrative*, 45.

[38] Taylor, *Memory and Narrative*, 54.

Drawing on ideas of how we generate meaning and reflect on the past, the concept underlying this project is very simply that events of this type do not simply "happen." People represent them as events only afterwards, ascribing to them coherence and clear delimitations that are not present when the experience is taking place.[39] The stability of an event is a theoretical position; real life is not experienced that way. The event is a second order move that we do both naturally and thoughtfully; the shaping of the experience is constitutive and becomes the event. What I mean by this is not that "nothing happened," but rather that identifying the beginning, middle, and end, is a matter of interpretation. This constitutive power also suggests that the construction of the event can be tailored to respond to a specific prompt. The prompt that generates the event's retelling may influence how it is told and how the author wishes for it to be understood. Each text that recounts the destruction of Jerusalem is creating an image of the event for a different set of circumstances. By configuring the texts the way they do, the authors of these works make claims about the fall of Jerusalem and use literary traditions and genres that accommodate their views, even as they may also reshape those traditions.

The conclusions this dissertation achieves:

I opened this introduction with a reference to Bickerman's claim that the events of the fall of Jerusalem are well known, a claim that is echoed and reinscribed in the treatments of Judah's history. I made the point that these works re-inscribe binary readings of Judah's history by dividing it into pre- and post-exilic periods, locating the fall and ensuing experience of exile as the point of origin for this division. These binaries partake in a broader desire to fix a text's meaning through comparison with other texts about the same topic, a desire that is consistent

[39] White, *The Content of the Form.*

with the way human beings create coherence and patterns. I made the point that these approaches favor an understanding of these texts purely for their value in shedding light on the historical event of the fall. What I argue, however, is that these texts do less to explain the *actual* fall than to provide insight into the responses *to* and later memories *of* that fall. That is, because Jerusalem's fall has come to us as texts, it is their *representation* in text that must be the point of study for scholars. This distinction between the lived fall and its portrayal in text may seem slight at first, but it has a deep implication: not only do we gain access to a later view of the fall, but we are also afforded insight into multiple, often competing, recollections of the past. The focus on reconstructing the fall as a single event has resulted in diminished attention to the self-presentation of the texts themselves and how *they* constructed particular views on the fall. By focusing on the individual representations, we can also then posit questions about the particular genres chosen as vehicles and why they made sense for each of the particular representations.

This dissertation has three major conclusions: the first is that a study of the literary structure and images in 2 Kings 25 shows significant evidence of Neo-Babylonian influence. The second is that the poems of Lamentations are not for the purpose of seeking Yahweh's forgiveness or praying for a restoration. Rather, through the use of negative images, the author mounts a sharp indictment of Yahweh's fitness to rule Judah and seeks to shame the deity as a failed king. The third is a reassessment of how expectations of genre influence interpreters of the texts. In each text, the authors deeply engage questions of kingship and imperial practice in order to explain, respond to, and construct their own accounts of Jerusalem's fall.

Broadly, this study aims to provide a counterweight to the alleged single "collective memory" of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The texts that will be studied comprise a range of genres—historical narrative, prophetic, poetic—and show that the experience of the

destruction involved a complex array of ideologies and smaller events that resist any single or unchanging interpretation. This means that there is no single "original" event; there are only after the fact definitions. The very idea of talking about an event is interpretive. My study will also engage the broader question of how narratives participate in the creation and shaping of the memory of Jerusalem's destruction and how each telling sought to provide an authoritative presentation of it. For each of these texts, I offer a model by which to construct the implicit narrative that stands behind each representation of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Beyond its specific conclusions, this dissertation makes a scholarly contribution through its application of memory studies to biblical literature. This study shows that theoretical models from cognitive and social memory studies can be applied with productive results to understand the use of narrative in the shaping of memory. Through a careful study of biblical texts about Jerusalem's fall, I show that far from being an ideological unity, the biblical authors exhibited creative and innovative approaches to the representations of Jerusalem's destruction, and that none of these three texts use "the event" as a narrative prompt for the same purpose.

To study these texts, I use all the classical tools of biblical studies—philology, textual criticism, literary and historical criticism—as well as additional tools from the fields of archaeology, Assyriology, and from theoretical studies on empire, gender, narrative, and memory, to offer an account of how three biblical texts, 2 Kings 23:31–25, Ezekiel, and Lamentations, represent the fall of Jerusalem. The multi-faceted nature and complexity of the fall is richly illustrated by these works. As the following chapters show, the idea of Jerusalem's fall is repeatedly reconfigured and recast by different authors. By asking what these authors sought to convey by these configurations, this study generates another kind of representation: an account

of the multiple ways in which ancient authors confronted, grappled with, and disrupted ideas about the destruction of Judah, its political infrastructure, its cultic center, and its deity.

Summary of Chapters

In Chapter 2, *Narrativizing Destruction: Methodological Comments on Memory, History, and Narrative in Jerusalem's Fall,* I focus on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my study. Drawing on the works of Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Halbwachs in particular, I illustrate how phenomenological ideas of narrative and history are in fact deeply intertwined. The import of these theories is further strengthened through the narrative dimension at play in both memory and history. The chapter itself has three parts: in the first, I address the common problematic in memory and history with reference to the fall of Jerusalem. The second part addresses the idea of cultural memory and its more recent nuanced articulations under the rubric of transcultural and transnational memory. I argue that these theories have significant interpretive value for reading biblical texts about the fall of Jerusalem particularly for the analytical work they do in identifying the socio-cultural values that prompt the continued selection of certain memories. Yaël Zerubavel's work on the "turning point" in memory provides a compelling way to think about how memory wars are enacted through competing literary models that represent the past. In the third section, I address how memory studies offer innovative and compelling ways to theorize the frameworks that structure accounts of Jerusalem's destruction.

In Chapter 3, *A New Political Epicenter,* I analyze 2 Kings 24–25, which many scholars have argued provides the primary "historical" account of Jerusalem's destruction. As noted above, this material has been mostly treated as an imperfect mine from which to glean

information about the fall of the city. It has not been taken by any scholar as a work of literary artistry. Nor has any coherent ideology, with the possible exception of some longing for a Davidic throne, been found in it. In contradistinction to these studies, I will suggest that the author of this portion of Kings exhibits a familiarity with Babylonian imperial ideas, and utilizes them within his work. The pattern of engagement with imperial imagery suggests endorsement of the Babylonians and is exhibited through the deployment of juridical, calendrical, and royal views. The manner in which these ideas are deployed within the text implies that there is a Yahwistic imprimatur for the Babylonian conquest of Judah. Through an exegetical, literary, and historical study of the material, I show that the final two sections of Kings—the installation of Gedaliah and the restoration of Jehoiachin's fortunes——are not in fact appendices at all but the culminating proof of the author's claim that Babylonian rule is necessary for Judah's future.

This chapter has three parts: part I establishes Nebuchadnezzar's strategies of rule through an examination of the king's imperial rhetoric, with attention to the portrayal of his role as protector of all people and benefactor of the Babylonian temples. I focus particularly on his self-portrait as temple benefactor and the way in which his inscriptions make use of titles as shorthand summaries of his self-image as provider and protector. This section also examines the portrayal of Babylon as the center of the world and seat of abundance to draw attention to how each of these elements formed a key part of the imperial self-portrait. Part II looks at Babylon's view of itself was received and engaged by a population it ruled over. What this section shows is that 2 Kings 25 is not only a literary whole, but also that there is an intentionality in the images and tropes that it uses. The third part provides a detailed examination of the correspondence of 2 Kings 24–25 with Babylonian imperial imagery along three axes: the portrayal of siege; the use of abundance imagery to highlight Judah's diminished status and Babylon's corresponding

enhanced status; and the ways in which Babylonian practices infiltrated Judahite institutions, from installing kings and governors in power to changing the calendrical means of chronicling events.

This study of 2 Kings 24–25 demonstrates that far from simply being a fractured account of Jerusalem's destruction, the text provides a sophisticated and subversive endorsement of Babylonian ideology. In so doing, it will also help account for the ostensible brevity of the account in its description of destruction, a feature that aligns with Babylonian inscriptional data about military engagements. Rather than being brief because of a lack of time or because of the author's laconic style, I argue that the text's brief attention to the destruction is because a detailed description was never its goal. Freed from this expectation of a factual and historical treatment of Jerusalem's fall, the literary study interrogates the text anew and establishes its goals through a careful study of its narrative claims.

In chapter 3, *Indicting Yahweh*, I examine the representation of Jerusalem's destruction in the Book of Lamentations. Most studies of Lamentations have focused on the troping of the city as female and the attendant associations of such characterization. They have ignored or only secondarily considered the other protagonist of the laments: Yahweh. This chapter argues that such inattention misconstrues Lamentations and misunderstands the clues to its purpose within the text. In contrast to other studies, my examination pays close attention to how the character of Yahweh is drawn and argues that Yahweh is repeatedly and explicitly depicted as a royal male, yet the characteristics ascribed to him suggest a failure of "good" masculinity.

To show that Yahweh is characterized as a failed male king, I describe the expectations Lamentations relies upon that are associated with male rulers. These expectations are grounded in the notion that the king is the protector and provider for the entire land, and that it is his

responsibility to maintain security and safeguard the land's abundance. This idea, nearly always articulated by the king himself, occurs in multiple forms of royal ideology, such as royal inscriptions, treaty agreements, and public monuments. The success of a ruler is demonstrated visually and textually through accounts of success in agriculture, population, and military safety.

In Lamentations, rather than showing the successful fulfillment of these roles, the work draws a picture of an entirely failed society, a situation that resulted from Yahweh's inaction and direct assaults on the city. The repeated appeals to Yahweh in the work, I argue, should be interpreted as a sign that he is the one responsible for fulfilling these roles. In contrast to royal inscriptions in which a king boasts of his ability to fulfill these criteria of good rule, in Lamentations the king's voice is entirely absent. Rather, the voice is of Jerusalem itself, the narrator, and for the third lament, a figure within Jerusalem. These voices draw on the same categories as royal inscriptions but invert them, using them to showcase how badly Yahweh has failed at kingship. Attention to this failure provides an alternative possibility to the claim that Lamentations is an extended confessionary prayer. Instead, Lamentations is a series of texts that quite thoroughly indict Yahweh for his excessive use of force against his own people and land. I argue that the poems are designed to draw Yahweh's attention to the crisis by shaming him for Judah's pitiable condition. In contrast to Near Eastern documents in which deities are responsible for ensuring that kings act appropriately, within Lamentations, Yahweh is both king and deity, and as such, petitions for reversal of the king's behavior must be directed to the deity himself.

This chapter has three major parts: the first is on the constitution of imperial masculinity in the Ancient Near East; the second a poem-by-poem analysis; and the third, a re-examination of key passages from Lamentations that show Yahweh is unable to fulfill the three basic requirements of imperial masculinity: provision, protection, and inheritance. As will be shown

through these treatments, imperial rhetoric relies and continually redeploys gendered language in order to highlight the king's masculinity, which is intricately connected to one's success as a ruler. Lamentations takes up these associations, which are found in multiple texts within the Hebrew Bible as well as other Near Eastern texts, and creatively redeploys them by using them as a standard for evaluating Yahweh's behavior.

These conclusions from gender studies will be of great value when studying Lamentations, which seems to repeatedly draw on and invert ideas of masculinity. Examining the poems in light of imperial masculinity in particular will shift the interpretive focus away from Lamentations as a text that relies primarily on feminine images, and that focuses primarily on Jerusalem. Instead, this study shows that attention to masculinity and its attendant associations locate the center not as Jerusalem, but rather in a critique of Yahweh and his failure. Yahweh, as a royal male, is expected to fulfill the same requirements as kings elsewhere in the ancient Near East, but his pattern of destructive behavior claim that with regards to Jerusalem's position post-invasion, he has failed repeatedly and spectacularly. The laments seek to draw Yahweh's attention to this failure by showing him how severely the people are suffering with regard to three particular areas: food provisions, physical protection, and future inheritance.

One component of my analysis is particularly noteworthy, for it directly contradicts every scholarly interpretation of the work thus far; namely, that the "pinnacle" of the Laments in the middle section of Lamentations 3, in which the speaker proclaims that despite his suffering and terrible experiences, he has faith in the daily renewal of Yahweh's mercies (Lam 3: 21–36). I show that this should not be read as earnest but rather as sharp sarcasm. Two factors strengthen my claim that these verses are not earnest. First, the context surrounding them is entirely negative. The proclamation of continued faith in Yahweh contradicts the entire surrounding

complaint, and indeed, the fact that the lament continues and reverts to its litany of sorrows suggests that this does not mark a turning point in the speaker's response to the situation. Second, a sarcastic reading participates in the broader claims of the laments, namely, that Yahweh, the one who is ostensibly slow to anger, abounding in mercies and loyalty, can in fact *not* be counted upon to do what is expected of him.[40]

In Chapter 5, *In Defense of Yahweh*, I turn to the representation of Jerusalem's destruction in the Book of Ezekiel. Numerous scholars have convincingly argued that the work was composed in Babylon and is the product of an author who was acculturated to Babylon, who drew on both Babylonian and Judean imagery in his work, and who used it not only to describe the environs in which he was working but also to critique his own community. Ezekiel is thus mustered as an example of the possibility that a Judean author could engage with Babylonian imperial worldviews and redeploy them for his own use. Ezekiel offers a generative example of how memory plays a critical role in the execution of narrative. By this I mean that the work of Ezekiel, with its emphasis on retrospective evaluations of Jerusalem and the prophet's position as a mnemonic witness to the destruction, offers an unusual test case for considering the ways in which the destruction of the city was represented and engaged with repeatedly, in different ways, over the course of the work.

In the conclusion, I offer closing remarks on the interplay between memory, literature, and history in Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Kings. I pay particular attention to how these works utilized their genres to assert authority for their own claims.

[40] On irony and sarcasm, see especially the seminal studies of Booth, *Irony,* 1975; Hutcheon, *Irony,* 1994; Colebrook, *Irony,* 2004.

In the epilogue, I turn to the topic of afterlives of these biblical works, drawn from art and literature of the Great War. Drawing on theoretical treatments of memory and narrative, I show that the fall of Jerusalem has become an "event type" to describe new destructions of cities and iconic infrastructure. Put differently, the biblical accounts of Jerusalem's fall generate a transnational mnemonic symbol that becomes the paradigmatic example of destruction, and thus acts as a kind of prosthetic for describing subsequent urban demolitions. This analysis looks forward to how biblical representations are reimagined in the present moment, but also backwards as a way of theorizing how the biblical texts themselves may have drawn on another mnemonic symbols and forms to develop their own narratives.

When inherited historical and conceptual frameworks are applied automatically to biblical literature, numerous details and features of the texts are obscured or misrecognized. Instead of reading biblical texts about the destruction of Jerusalem with the assumption that they reflect real facts about the fall, this study instead pays close attention to the literary structure, the genre, and the unfolding of each text. The idea that these texts are literary *representations* of an event demands that we interrogate our own assumptions about history writing and its interplay with memory. Through reading Kings, Lamentations, and Ezekiel as works that each advance particular claims about the fall of Jerusalem, this study aims to bridge the distance between memory, narrative, and history.

Chapter 2

Narrativizing Destruction

Methodological Comments on Memory, History, and Narrative in Jerusalem's Fall

> For historiography, an actual recording of historical events, is by no means the principal medium through which the collective memory of the Jewish people has been addressed or aroused.
>
> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi [1]

> A common problematic, in fact, flows through the phenomenology of memory, the epistemology of history, and the hermeneutics of the historical condition: the problematic of the representation of the past.
>
> Paul Ricoeur [2]

Although Yerushalmi was speaking about Jewish history and memory, he makes a claim that is true of biblical literature as well: historiography, if understood in Yerushalmi's terms as an actual recording of events, is by no means the principal medium through which Judean authors wrote about the fall of Jerusalem. Ricoeur connects the desire to remember with the desire to record by suggesting that a common problematic underlies both memory and history, namely, a concern for representing the past. The question is not what the biblical authors *know* or where they got their information *from*, but rather a deeper one: *what* do they represent? What elements about the destruction are selected and included in each telling? What might motivate these selections and to what ends are they put in the individual works? Why does Lamentations focus on Yahweh rather than the Judean king Zedekiah? How is Yahweh's relationship to Judah drawn

[1] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, Wa: University of Washington Press, 1996), 5.

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xvi.

in Ezekiel? Why end the narrative in 2 Kings 25 with a description of the Babylonian king Amel-Marduk "lifting up" Jehoiachin from prison?

In the previous chapter, I argued that the scholarly endeavor to study the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem has been a primarily historical one that seeks to ascertain the facts of the fall: when it happened, who the principal actors were, what changes resulted in Judah after the sacking of its principal city. The difficulty, as I noted there, is that the majority of the material that speaks about the destruction is literature, and is positioned as retrospective. These works, as I will show in the following chapters, do not necessarily aim to provide factual accounts, although they may draw on facts and real incidents. Rather, these works narrativize the fall, and in so doing, they impose a sense of coherence and make certain value judgments. They are selective in what elements they choose to narrativize, and how they choose to configure them. As such, they are constructive in nature. In other words, as highly ideologically charged views of the situation they describe, they are fundamentally *mediated*.

Jerusalem's fall and the city in the aftermath of its fall have been described in manifold ways in the Hebrew Bible. The three texts studied in this dissertation illustrate this variety: the city is a fallen woman or a mother bereft of her children; the aftermath is an opportunity for a total makeover of the temple complex or a putative end to the city. Even texts like Kings that purport to recount the fall from a real-time perspective, do so after the fall has happened, and as such, rely on memories of the fall, whether the author's own or those of people around him. Memory in Ezekiel occupies center stage: the entire work is presented as a retrospective, and the action oscillates between two lead characters, Ezekiel and Yahweh. In Kings, Jerusalem's fall is presented in a staccato style, lending a sense of proximity of the narrator to the event. In Lamentations, the fall is assumed by the narrator, and the poems seek to reframe a prominent

tradition of "sin and sanction" by arguing that the deity has been overzealous in punishing Jerusalem.[3] The work positions Yahweh less as a deity than as a king, and through that royal framework, criticizes Yahweh for not fulfilling his role properly.[4]

The difficulty for biblical scholars then lies in the challenge Ricoeur and Yerushalmi noted: how should historians reconcile the seeming divide between memory and history, both of which are expressed in literature? Attention to this question is critical for analyzing about how the past was imagined, communicated, and engaged with.

In this chapter I suggest that memory studies hold significant explanatory power when it comes to interpreting texts about the destruction of Jerusalem. The constitutive power of literature in shaping views has been well-documented in the field of memory studies, and thus offers a compelling way to think about the way in which Jerusalem's fall was recounted and engaged with in these various works. My claim, I reiterate, is not that Jerusalem was never destroyed in reality, but that the *representation* of this event in literary form is one that may not reflect factual details and cannot thus be read as a wholly accurate representation of the past. Rather, certain details have been selected, and narrativized. What I mean by this is that each of these texts has constructed a story about the fall of Jerusalem: each is a literary representation of reality, and as such, has imposed a coherence to the destruction.[5] Yet, because of the nature of its

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[3] Karel van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica. Vol. XXII; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum,1985).

[4] I do not see this as alternatives to each other. Rather, what I am arguing is that Lamentations focuses more on the royal characterization of Yahweh in its presentation of his role.

In addition to the scholarship cited in chapter 4, see also Ian D. Wilson, *Kingship and Memory in Ancient Judah* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[5] The "destruction of Jerusalem" can thus refer to both a specific local event that happened in the past, as well as one that has recurred and been reimagined since, beginning

narrativity, isolating the "facts" from these texts is especially challenging, and as I will argue, ultimately a misplaced endeavor. Such an interpretation neglects or fails to even notice, the significant differences between the text by favoring cross-textual coherence rather than attention to the kinds of fictive worlds each work sets up. Additionally, this kind of "patchwork quilt" interpretation obscures how the differences between the texts indicate important ways in which people comprehended and made sense of the destruction. I thus turn to memory studies because its multidisciplinary approach has focused on theorizing the varied ways human beings recount their past through literature, and how portraits of the past are selective representations that engage ideas and issues central to the remembering communities.

Drawing on recent scholarship from the field of memory studies, I will argue in this dissertation that the "memory" of Jerusalem's fall is not stable but inherently mobile, multiple, and dynamic, formed as much by the differential "memorable" elements of the event as by the individual or group doing the remembering. By focusing on the transcultural, prosthetic, and selective dimensions of memory's "mobility," I will draw attention to the complexity of studying textual representations of Jerusalem's fall wholly in isolation or aligning them too quickly because of their shared interests in the city's fall. This chapter thus lays the methodological groundwork for the kind of analyses and approaches I will offer in three key biblical texts that represent Jerusalem's destruction. In the chapters that follow, I will show that each of the texts examined constructs and advances its own perspective on the fall of Jerusalem, a perspective that is not always concerned with the literal facts of the situation but the responses to it. I will argue that these representations offer dynamic, competing models of how to conceive of Jerusalem's

already in biblical literature itself. For elaboration of the argument that the imposition of coherence in effects "creates" the event, see White, "The Value of Narrativity."

destruction, and in so doing, generate multiple "memory cultures." One important implication of these different memory cultures is that the event has been coded and categorized in such a way that the texts that reflect and remember Jerusalem's past make markedly contradictory claims.

Cultural Memory

"Memory" is not simply a repository of one's past. Scholars in memory studies have argued that it is better understood as a mental practice in which one's experiences are processed, connected, evaluated, and moralized. Maurice Halbwachs argued cogently that culture was critical in providing a value framework and network of other associations that shaped memory. "Processing" an event, according to cultural memory theorists, is a practice of selection and categorization according to one's cultural and epistemological frames of reference.

Cultural memory, *kulturelles Gedächtnis*, was a term coined in the early 1990s by Jan Assmann.[6] Assmann's notion of *kulturelles Gedächtnis* developed as part of a binary: it stood in opposition to what Assmann called "communicative memory," which referred to in-person and informal communications pertaining to lived experiences. In contrast, cultural memory takes place at the level of the entire community or group, when the experience in question is already mediated in such a way that it has a readily identifiable and limited expression of stories and images that provide normative identities to the group. Assmann's definition of cultural memory limited itself to a "body of texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."[7] Ann Rigney has recently

[6] Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125–133.

[7] Assmann, "Collective Memory," 132

suggested that his notion of cultural memory might instead be more precisely named "canonical memory." Predictably perhaps, this idea of a binary opposition between the two forms of memory has not been widely accepted; as Rigney observes, recollection and mediation are now understood to be deeply intertwined, rather than two separate stages in the production of memory.[8]

Yet Assmann provided a terminological label that has continued to find purchase, even as it is has been nuanced and redefined.[9] For our purposes, Assmann's theory illustrates the potentiality for studying the biblical texts as literature that shape ideas and perspectives about Jerusalem's destruction. [10] I would argue, however, that we might locate these literary exemplars as situated between cultures, both diachronically and synchronically.

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[8] Rigney, "Cultural Memory Studies: Mediation, Narrative, and the Aesthetic," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory* Studies (ed. Anna Lisa Tota, Trevor Hagen; New York: Routledge, 2016), 67; Astrid Erll and A. Rigney, (eds) *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

[9] Ann Rigney notes in a recent essay that in its contemporary application, cultural memory has a "double" genealogy. It was first used in German theory, developed there both as a response and rebuttal to Maurice Halbwachs's influential theory of "collective memory," and subsequently in Anglo-American cultural criticism, where it refers primarily to a fine-grained study of individual phenomenon, such as a single cultural artefact, from an "etic" position in the present. In contrast, Assmann focused more on the processes that generated cultural memory and did so from an "emic" position. I draw on both these fields of reference when I suggest here that cultural memory is a productive analytic for engaging biblical representations of the fall of Jerusalem. See further, Ann Rigney, "Cultural Memory," 65.

[10] Cultural memory, in its broadest sense, has found particular resonance among biblical scholars, who have attempted to identify the memory that stand behind the production of literary texts. The difficulty with this term however is that its rather capacious, fluid frame has allowed for it to be applied in numerous ways without careful definitions of its scope, and in some cases, simply becomes a replacement category for what was previously seen as an oral-written divide. Where scholars previously appealed to "oral" traditions to explain written phenomena, they now refer to some vague, amorphous "memory." See Barry Schwartz, "Rethinking the Concept of Collective Memory," 9–21 in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory* Studies (ed. Anna Lisa Tota, Trevor Hagen; New York: Routledge, 2016).

Transnational and Transcultural Memory

Because "culture" has been understood so broadly, as having to do with language, the individual in society, the society writ large, region, nation, ethnicity, even political affiliation, the conceptual world of cultural memory is vast, and so scholars have tried to specify what elements of cultural memory they are drawing on when they develop their theories. As a result, cultural memory has become an umbrella-term that covers numerous, more specific theories and terminology. Because of the particularities of world events in the last century, the nation has formed a particularly fertile venue for studying the production and proliferation of group memories.[51] Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, "sites of memory," focused the attention of memory scholars on "national" memory in particular (itself a development of Halbwachs's theory of cultural, collective memory) and the manner in which it promoted a collective identity through commemorative acts often by centering on locations and objects.[52] Yet the growth and increasingly popularity of post-colonial studies provided an effective counter to this emphasis by examining how national memories, particular commemorative processes, repressed or ignored competing ones, ones that the post-colonial approach sought to reinvigorate. Although biblical scholarship remains tethered to the early stages of memory studies, the push to decenter the nation as the primary site for the negotiation of memory suggests interesting methodological possibilities for thinking about how Judah imagined itself as a polity or group after the destruction of its principal city.

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[51] Rosanne Kennedy and Maria Nugent, "Scales of Memory: Reflections on an Emerging Concept" *Australian Humanities Review* 59 (2016): 61–76.

[52] Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

The transnational turn in the humanities has prompted new directions and theoretical debates in memory studies, particularly through a consideration of the "scales," at which memory has been understood to operate. De Cesari and Rigney have argued, for example, that the critique of nationalism has prompted the interrogation of "the idea of scale and of the unspoken hierarchies of scale implicit in our research practices." Transnationalism, they suggest, "allows us to grasp the *multi-scalarity* of social-cultural processes and the fundamental 'mutual construction of the local, national and global' in the contemporary world."[53] As globalization becomes more and more expansive in its scope, the scale of memory studies has similarly stretched to incorporate the changing ways in which people experience, reflect on, and engage events. As Levy and Sznaider have noted, global media plays a significant role in these changing articulations of memory as they "consolidate" memory around particularly provocative or iconic photos and events like the Holocaust or the protester in Tiananmen Square.[54] What these scholars argue is that memory has moved beyond the borders of the nation and in so doing, facilitates the formation of a transnational sense of belonging.

Closely linked to this idea of a transnational memory is the notion of "transcultural" memory. Astrid Erll has defined transcultural memory as "the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms, and practices of memory, their continual 'travels' and ongoing

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[53] Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney "Introduction," *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (De Cesari and Rigney, eds; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014): 1–25, (5); Nina Glick Schiller, "Transnationality, Migrants and Cities: A Comparative Approach" *Beyond Methodological Nationalism* (Anna Amelina, Devrimsel D. Nergiz, Thomas Faist and Nina Glick Schiller, eds.: New York: Routledge, 2012). 23–40, (23).

[54] Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5.1 (2002): 87-106 (88).

transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders."[55] Transcultural memory, she contends, is a "research perspective … which is directed towards mnemonic processes unfolding across and beyond cultures."[56] Both transcultural and transnational memory have analytic value for conceptualizing how the destruction of Jerusalem was represented in biblical literature, and how these representations have persisted as models for making contemporary destructions coherent.[57] They are particularly helpful in explaining why certain events or genres, such as the city lament, are deemed portable and transferrable.

A third analytical lens that is of particular value for my study is that of transgenerational memory. This approach emerged largely out of Holocaust studies and attempts to identify and evaluate the mechanisms that allow for intergenerational transmission of memory. The key question this approach seeks to answer is how violence affects not only the immediate victims but also subsequent generations. These studies have focused on the experiences of children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors as the heirs to a deeply traumatic and excruciating experience, despite having never undergone the original trauma themselves. Perhaps the most

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[55] Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17.4 (2011): 4-18 (11).

[56] Erll, "Travelling Memory," 9; see also Kennedy and Nugent, "Scales of Memory," 66.

[57] Sheldon Pollock has approached this issue from the perspective of the local and the use of the vernacular language as an active choice by the text-producing community. He writes, "Choices underlie the production of literary texts, whether vernacular or cosmopolitan and in their interplay they constitute an intricate social phenomenon that necessarily comprises an element—however hard to capture—of cultural identity formation. Writing entails choosing a language (or often creating a language by the very production of texts), and thereby affiliating oneself with a particular vision of the world. While language choice itself is no small matter, choosing a language for literary text production most importantly implies affiliating with an existing socio-textual community, or summoning a potential community into being, and thus has defining social signification. Bur it has, equally, defining political significations…" Sheldon Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity 1000—1500," *Daedalus* 127.3 (1998): 46.

significant theorists of this approach are Marianne Hirsch, who termed this sort of generational recollection, "post-memory,"[58] and Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory, that is, the development of conditions, often through media like film and literature, that allow people to sympathize with events they have never undergone (the post-Holocaust novel, for example, produces a kind of sympathetic or prosthetic memory).[59] Given what we know from these theories about the "production" of memory *after* an event by individuals and groups who were not necessarily present at the event itself, what can we say about that production? How does that kind of literary "post-memory," reveal the epistemological field—the knowledge, positions, values, and interpretive frameworks of the author (in our case)?[60] The literary expression offers insight into this epistemological field, and the possibilities for different perspectives.

Memory and Biblical Scholarship

Cultural memory has been increasingly implicated as an object of inquiry in biblical scholarship. Halbwachs's important insight that culture plays a critical role in the development of a society's recollection through the use of texts, monuments, languages, and rituals, offers

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[58] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[59] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[60] For the phrase "epistemological field" I am drawing on Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, about which he writes, "… it is rather an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory become possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori*, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear…" and "what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility." Foucault, *Order of Things*, xxiii–xxiv

historians an innovative way to contextualize the way in which texts are created and shared, with attention to the social and cosmopolitan dynamics that shape memory practices and enable the movement of written and oral discourse.[61] At the same time, the appropriation of "memory" as term has become a kind of "buzzword," and a synonym for older ideas of tradition history without careful theorization of what the term means in its conceptual usages or how its conceptual framework can be applied to biblical materials.[62] There is a danger, then, that it becomes so capacious a term as to have no real analytic value. As Klein succinctly put it, the use of the term memory results in "no theoretical aim other than improving our prose by varying word choice."[63] Although "memory" has become increasingly common in biblical studies, its use as an analytic lens for biblical literature is still largely undertheorized.[64] How does it relate to

[61] Pioske notes additionally that cultural memory has also gained acceptance because it "values the material means by which cultures create shared recollections," and has in this emphasis on the concrete, offered a compelling alternative to the more ambiguous and abstract concepts of memory.

[62] For examples, see Amihai Mazar. "Remarks on Biblical Traditions and Archaeological Evidence Concerning Early Israel," in W. Dever and S. Gitin (eds.), *Symbiosis, Symbolism and the Power of the Past: Canaan Ancient Israel and their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestine* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003): 85–98; sp. 86–87; Mario Liverani, *Israel's History and the History of Israel* (trans. C. Peri and P. Davies; London: Equinox, 2005): esp. 6, 176; Ron Hendel "The Archaeology of Memory: King Solomon, Chronology, and Biblical Representation," in Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J.P. Dessel (eds.), *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006): 219–30; idem, "Cultural Memory," in R. Hendel (ed.), *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 28–46.

[63] Kerwin Lee Klein, *From History to Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011): 115.

[64] Though see the recent and elegant work by Daniel Pioske, *Memory in a Time of Prose: Studies in Epistemology, Hebrew Scribalism, and the Biblical Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); idem, "Retracing a Remembered Past: Methodological Remarks on Memory, History, and the Hebrew Bible" *Biblical Interpretation* 23 (2015): 1–25.

history as a means of representing the past? Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's insights into the relationship between memory and history,[65] I begin with a brief survey of how cultural memory has been engaged by scholarship on biblical historiography, with particular attention to the works of Mark Smith,[66] Ehud Ben Zvi[67] and Philip Davies.

In an expansive treatment of memory in the Hebrew Bible, Mark Smith examines the experience of the divine in connection with memory. He focuses especially on the identifying the kind of literary discourses within biblical texts, and how its discourse about the past relates to modern notions of historiography.[68] He suggests that memory is one way in which to think about the problems of studying biblical texts as history. A particularly insightful section of his work is his reading of the Sinai theophany as being "remembered" differently in different time periods and environments that results in different portrayals. Such a reading seems obvious: of course, people's theology can change over time, but the application of this insight to the way in which this is worked out and expressed in literature is significant.

At the same time, it is hard to tell where Smith's reading differs from something like tradition history or historical-critical work more generally. He writes:

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[65] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), esp. 133–280, 384–411.

[66] Mark S. Smith, "Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion" *CBQ* (2002) 64: 631–51; idem, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

[67] Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Study of Forgetting and the Forgotten in Ancient Israelite Discourse/s: Observations and Test Cases," *Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis* (P. Carstens, T. Hasselbach, and N.P. Lemche (eds.); Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts 17; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press): 155–74.

[68] Smith, *The Memoirs of God,* 125.

With these massive alterations in the memory of Sinai, we see a deliberate process of modifying the past. The changes in cultural memory here function in a rather deliberate, programmatic manner. Perhaps some changes may have been less deliberate, but on the whole these literary alternations bear the marks of conscious reformulation of cultural memory. In this way, cultural memory recreated Israel's origins in the image and likeness of its later commemoralists. The Sinai complex is a stunning example of programmatic change in cultural memory. For in adding collections to the Sinai event, Israel's later priestly and Deuteronomic writers would attribute to an ancient revelation what had developed later during the monarchic, exilic, and post-exilic periods.[69]

Many of the claims made in Smith's work can easily be replaced by with familiar terms like "editing" or "compiling," and it is not altogether clear in his study what interpretive gains are made by turning to cultural memory.[70] In contrast to Smith's longitudinal approach is the one offered by Ehud Ben Zvi, who focuses on how memory was implicated in the formation of a particular kind of group identity in the Second Temple period. He suggests that there was a highly selective process in which certain kinds of memories about pre-monarchic Judah were manipulated and cultivated in order to foster a certain self-portrait for Judeans in the Persian era.[71] Ben Zvi's approach, while significantly different in temporal orientation than Smith's,

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[69] Smith, *The Memoirs of God*, 150.

[70] Along with Smith's work, we may include Ron Hendel as pursuing a similar approach to use of the memory studies in analyzing the figure of Moses as a cipher for memory traces of Egyptian hegemonic control in the levant. See further Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press), esp. 57–73; also see Wilson's brief critique in *Kingship and Memory*, 32.

[71] Ben Zvi, "On Social Memory and Identity Formation in Late Persian Yehud: A Historian's Viewpoint with a Focus on Prophetic Literature, Chronicles and the Dtr. Historical Collection," in L. Jonker (ed.), *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature*

nonetheless shares a conviction that how the past is conceived has influence on the ways in which ideas take root and reflect the realia of the remembering community as much as the past that they recall.

Daniel Pioske's 2015 essay on the interpretive value of memory in biblical studies responds to the kinds of issues exhibited the works of Smith and Ben Zvi. Commenting on Smith's approach, Pioske observes that from this approach one can say that attention to the role of memory might also be understood as attention to the way in which ideas, beliefs, and cultures, are "preserved, transformed, or forgotten among new generations over time."[72] Yet Pioske argues that the difficulty with both studies is that they fail to properly treat the problem of whether or not biblical "memories" have any relationship to lived historical experiences and figures. The question Pioske asks, in other words, concerns the value these texts have for historical reconstructions if they are expressions of memory. How should historians assess the referential claims of these literary works?[73] From a less-epistemologically grounded position, Philip Davies also attends to this question, particularly in regards to the pitfalls of placing too

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Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiation in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts (FAT II, 53; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2011): 95–148, esp. 99–101.

[72] Pioske, "Retracing a Remembered Past," 6. Pioske notes that Smith's work can be compared to the *Annales* school in regard to its interest in mapping the long-term changes in the religious and national memories of a community.

[73] To identify this question is not entirely new: Provan, Long, and Longman, for example, rather than from a cultural memory-based approach, focus on the question of how reliable the recollections are, and argue that no matter how skeptical the historian may be, they are still reliant on their source materials as representatives of the past ought to maintain "epistemological openness" to their source material and the past it recounts. Iain Provan, V. V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), esp. 43–50). However, despite this call for openness, the method to do so remains elusive. Indeed, even in their own work, Provan et al., seem to conflate issues of "openness" with authenticity. See also Pioske, "Retracting a Remembered Past," 8 for further treatment of this observation.

much faith in the potential for ancient documents to hold "true" recollections of the past. He argues that the process to distinguish between true and invented is near impossible, because of the paucity of independent attestations of claims made in texts of the Hebrew Bible. Unlike Pioske, however, Davies argues that the modern historian is frequently "unable to produce historical knowledge… because so much of the time what the biblical narratives cover, and what the archaeological and epigraphic remains attest, is irretrievable."[74]

Striking in Davies' assessment is the lack of attention to the fact that the biblical texts, as literature, do produce history, but not in the narrow terms within which he seems to define it. By reading the biblical texts as narratives and poetry emerging out of a particular social and political context, we do in fact gain significant insight into the kind of group that might *produce* the text and engage in discourse about ideas central to them, such as kingship, empire, and law. For the purposes of this project, what is important in Davies's work is its warning about the ways in which communal memory may be distorted or misremembered, and thus any attempt to read these works as presenting historical facts must proceed with great caution. Davies thus challenges the historian who wishes to articulate and identify historical knowledge, and it is with that challenge in mind that I argue in this chapter for a more nuanced theorization of the ways that memory, history, and narrative work together to produce interpretations of the past. Pioske responds to this challenge, but does so slightly differently than my text-centered approach: although Pioske dismisses Davies's call for multiple independent attestations to

[74] Philip Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History – Ancient and Modern* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008): 142. Earlier in the work, on p. 115, Davies offers this plaintive observation: "The issue remaining, and likely to be debated ad infinitum, is just how much of these memories is indeed genuine recollection and can be converted into our notion of history and how much is not. And how far can we actually decide, either way?"

"verify" biblical texts, he opts for a rather traditional answer of triangulation, in which the scholar reads these works alongside other "ancient referents," such as monuments and archaeological remains:

> What is sought through this critical assessment of a remembered past is not then certainty regarding a particular reference's historicity, but rather the plausibility or implausibility of a memory's claim when triangulated with an assemblage of other past traces. In the absence of well-documented events from antiquity, the question the historian poses to that past claimed through cultural memory is whether its references offer a persuasive account of a given occurrence in light of what other material and textual referents suggest about the place and time being recounted.[75]

Ultimately, Pioske's method of triangulation is not terribly novel nor is it clear what work memory does for his interpretation of biblical texts beyond acting as a replacement for tradition history.[76] Yet even as his work too suffers from a desire to find the historical "kernel," it is important for the conceptual grappling it does with the epistemological issues of memory and history. Pioske aims to confront what Ricoeur labeled the "enduring competition" between memory and history's epistemological claims. This enduring tension between these two forms of mediating past-ness results, as Pioske and Ricoeur both note, from the tension between the shared desire to represent the past and the often-incongruent means of doing so. As Halbwachs and others have observed, cultural memory's mode is collective: memory occurs in a social

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[75] Pioske, "Retracing a Remembered Past," 17.

[76] One may indeed level the same criticism against Pioske's work as he did against Smith's, that ultimately, the import of "memory" as a category does not in fact seem to have much interpretive reward.

arena. Even individuals remember in ways that are inflected by values and beliefs developed through social networks. Collective and group memories are transmitted across generations through stories, monuments, and environmental surroundings. Such memory does not demand that material evidence be present for the story to be told or a memory to be shared. Yet for historians, the task is not simply to tell a story but to draw together materials and texts in order to reconstruct a likely portrait of the past. Pioske writes of the historian's work, "An effort is made that is absent from the act of remembering: namely, the attempt to offer an argument about what once actually occurred in the past through the evidence solicited and cited."[77] In contrast to this is the work of cultural memory: "The aggregation of older experiences that have been bound up with the concerns and aspirations of those subsequent communities that have made these memories their own."[78] Understood in this way, cultural memory is a complex performance of preserving the past while "adapting" it for the present. The difference between history and memory, then, at least in Pioske's model, seems to be how one conceives of the data of the past that is assembled and evaluated.[79] As such, it is not something external and independently recognizable but rather an interpretive decision of the individual examining the data or experience.

Yet, on the one hand, one cannot justifiably collapse memory and history and treat them as making the same kinds of claims. On the other, separating them entirely, particularly for

[77] Pioske, "Retracing a Remembered Past," 13.

[78] Ibid., 13.

[79] As Jeffrey Stackert has observed, Pioske's analysis suggests that the same object might be viewed as either data or a marker of experience, and if that is indeed the case, there is ultimately little difference between memory and history. *Personal Communication*, June 27, 2019.

historians of antiquity, is an equally unjustifiable position. What is needed in biblical scholarship, then, is two-fold: a deeper consideration of how cultural memory and history are co-constitutive and a closer study of how the texts *present* the past, and in so doing, reveal certain ideas, frameworks, and epistemes that govern their portrayals. Below I suggest that by beginning with narrative and narrativity, one can accomplish both these steps, and through them, offer meaningful and plausible theories about how these works conceptualize their past.

Memory and Narrativity: A Very Good Place to Start

From the perspective of a historian studying ancient texts, the deeply intertwined nature of memory and history is manifested most clearly in the literary worlds of the texts themselves. This is because both memory and history approach the past through narrative discourse. More basically, both are temporally cognizant: though differently expressed, both the process of recounting and remembering are discursive meditations on time—past, present, and future. Memory and history situate past experiences on a temporal plane, draw associations to subsequent recollections, and forms new connections and patterns. In this section, I will explain why I think treating narrative as one element of this memory process is important and possible. This will lay the groundwork for turning to the question of how Judeans remembered the destruction of Jerusalem through narrative.

Both individuals and communities define themselves and communicate their identities through stories. Olick and Robbins have suggested that identity can be understood as a continual process of "construction in narrative form."[80] Robert Bellah, Ann Swidler, Richard Madsen,

[80] Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105–140, esp. 122.

Steven M Tipton, and William M Sullivan write, "Communities have a history—in an important sense, they are constituted by their past—and for this reason, we can speak of a real community as a "community of memory," one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative"[81] As Ian D. Wilson has argued, if the shaping of identity is linked to the shaping of narratives about the individual or group, then narrative construction is a locus for understanding the constitution of identity.[82] Put differently, by studying narratives and their constructions, we gain appreciable insight into how individuals and groups think about themselves and about the communities they inhabit and engage with.[83]

The question of how narrative and historiographical, mnemonic discourse are linked has been treated extensively by Hayden White.[84] White studies how historiographic documents for their narrativity (how they narrativize and recount events), and argues that the form (narrative) of such documents has content (narrativity) that in turn generates meaning. White's claim, that human beings make sense of their own place in regard to the past through a discourse of

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[81] Robert Bellah, Ann Swidler, Richard Madsen, Steven M Tipton, and William M Sullivan, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 153.

[82] Wilson, *Kingship and Memory*, 34.

[83] Narrative study has indeed been used as a means to study social and cultural memory. For example, see James V. Wertsch, "Collective Memory" in *Memory in Mind and Culture* (eds. Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch; Cambridge, U.K. Cambridge University Press, 2009), 117–37; Barry Schwartz, "Frame Images: Towards a Semiotics of Collective Memory," *Semiotica* (121): 1–40.

[84] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); idem, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory 1957–2007* (ed. And introduction by Robert Doran; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

historical narrative, builds on Ricoeur, who argues that humans seek to locate themselves within time.[85] Wilson has persuasively demonstrated the value these claims hold for biblical narratives: he argues that the production of meaning in mnemonic discourse is "a function of narrative emplotment," and of its movement from the past to the present.[86] What he means by this is that the narrative's overall direction—what he calls its "telos"— by means of a carefully articulated progression is crucial for the organization of social memory.[87]

Wilson's claims center around issues of personality and contribution but hold salience for my own inquiry into the literary memories of Jerusalem's fall: how did people understand its progression? Where did they locate the cause of its downfall? Ricoeur has argued that the system of emplotment in narrative unites events into a temporal system and, as such, moves the reader towards a logical telos. In existing scholarship on the destruction of Jerusalem, this "logical telos" has been generated by scholars, who have read multiple, different texts together and generated from them a common denominator of sorts. What my study aims to do is to resist this instinctive elision and to re-focus attention on each text's individual system of emplotment to identify the different kinds of responses, "remembrances" that were possible regarding the destruction of Jerusalem within biblical literature. In other words, I am foregoing an active

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[85] Jan Assmann states, "Memory enables us to orient ourselves in time and to form out of the stuff of time a "diachronic identity." Assmann, "Memory, Narration, Identity: Exodus as Political Myth," in *Literary Constructions of Identity in the Ancient World* (ed. Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 3–18; esp. 14.

[86] Wilson, *Kingship and Memory*, 36. Wilson also suggests that characterization as a narrative feature is secondary to emplotment in within historiographical discourse.

[87] To explain this, Wilson draws on the social memory being constructed around Steve Jobs, of Apple Inc. After Jobs' death, despite it being commonly known that Jobs was a difficult person to get along with, social memory has focused on his ultimate contribution to technology and social networking capabilities, diminishing, in the process, his less desirable personal traits. For Wilson, this shows the "emplotment" of memory. Wilson, *Kingship and Memory*, 37–38.

scholarly construction of the past, as has oftentimes been attempted, in favor of its literary representation on the terms presented in the texts themselves. As noted already, my goal is not the past but its (*re*)*presentation*.

Following Ann Rigney's recent articulation of cultural memory, I suggest that we understand memory as an ongoing effort to remember the past through "changing perspectives in the present."[88] Stephen Greenblatt argued that memory is constituted by "social energy," an energy that emerges from the production, alteration, and transmission of stories about a community's past.[89] Underlying these descriptions of memory is the claim that acts of remembrance are selective; not everything about a given past is recalled each time that past is invoked. Rather, certain details are highlighted, ignored, forgotten, or made prominent.[90] This also sheds light onto what scholars mean when they say that memory can be "reshaped" in the present: this reshaping may be understood as a synonym for selection. By choosing (or even creating) different elements of the same past, narratives about that past may look very different.[91]

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[88] Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking: Memories of the Nation Revisited" *Nations and Nationalism* 24 (2018): 240–257.

[89] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Like Greenblatt, Olick and Robbins describe this constituted memory as the result of "mnemonic practices," which they understand as narratives that address current issues by appealing to the past. Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies,"1998.

[90] Drawing on medical terminology, memory theorists call such forgetting "aphasia."

[91] Koselleck has described this selectivity as having access to a "space of experience" towards which one's current "horizon of expectations" establishes the direction in which to proceed within that space. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). Assmann (2008) observes that this means society's 'working memory' is always only a fraction of its potential remembrances. Olick and Robbins (1998) also note that the selectivity of orientation may at some point disregard certain elements of the past and then later those very disregarded elements may become prominent and the focus of mnemonic acts.

Rigney has argued that mediation is key to the formation of memory. That is, memory becomes a cultural product when it is shared and made available. Relatedly, she raises the issue of differential memorability, namely, the issue of certain events being remembered more than others. She suggests that memorability is not an inherent feature of any collective event; rather, whether or not an event will be remembered in the long term is contingent on "people's ability to articulate their experiences and convert them into a transferrable form."[92] The more "carriers" that are available for an experience, the more resilient memory of that event or occurrence will be. By carriers, she means media (print, film, theatre etc.) and cultural forms (the epic, the play, the eyewitness testimony). Drawing on Erich Maria Remarque's novel *Im Westen nichts neues* (1928), its cinematic adaptation by Louis Milestone as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), Lutyens's monument to the missing at Thiepval (1932), and the *In Flanders Fields* Museum in Ypres (established in 1998), she observes that the collective memory of World War I has been so powerful and entrenched because there have been so many cultural carriers to commemorate and recall it. Memory is thus a dynamic process that moves horizontally through different cultural and social forms and vertically through different generations.

What is noteworthy too, about Rigney's study is that it provides insight into how memory formation can change over time in concert with changing social values. Noting, for example, that the "memory culture" of World War I was one that prioritized and emphasized triumph, victory, and bravery, but that the memory culture of World War II is one that is characterized by mourning, suffering, and trauma, Rigney argues that what counts as appropriate commemorative

[92] Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking," 2018, 243.

practice reflects moral registers particular to the remembering communities.[93] This claim builds on that of Halbwachs, who argued that only those things that are deemed to have social relevance or importance are transferred. Put differently, when the makeup of a community or its values change, what and who matters also changes.[94] This idea underlies my interpretation of Ezekiel's positioning of himself towards the exiled Judeans in Babylon. In his recollections, Ezekiel positions the exiled Judeans as "chosen" by Yahweh for an eventual return and restoration. The work frames this as a response to an unstated belief that the Judeans who were left behind in Jerusalem somehow were better off. Ezekiel argues that, in fact, those Jerusalem-Judeans would be entirely decimated in the eventual destruction of the city, whereas those who had been exiled at first were in fact being preserved. In other words, as the makeup of the Judean community changes into the Jerusalem Judeans and the Babylonian Judeans, a new framework of accounting for the fall is needed. More importantly, perhaps, is the work that this text does in offering a case for the continued relevance of Yahweh as the Judean deity.

These dynamics of memory are particularly fraught in the aftermath of conflict because the conflict itself represents the clash of opposing ideologies and perspectives. As a result, its afterlives may continue that conflict through "memory wars" through competing narratives.[95] The possibility that one narrative may be denied or falsified may also prompt the creation or entrenchment of other, competing narratives. Yaël Zerubavel has also offered a compelling theory of understanding the replacement of one narrative by another. She termed this

[93] Rigney's theory of differential memorability builds on Maurice Halbwachs' argument that social frameworks shape how people remember by assigning differing significance to them.

[94] Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking," 245.

[95] Rigney points to the complicated legacy of the Spanish Civil War and the competing models that aim to explain and remember it. Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking," 246.

replacement a "turning point in memory," that is, when a dominant narrative no longer functions as a way to persuasively explain the past, there is a vacuum in which an alternative narrative can take root.[96] One important implication of Zerubavel's and Rigney's respective arguments is that memory—the interpretation of the past—is a culturally produced meaning.[97]

A vital conduit for the transfer of interpretations within a culture or nation and among other groups is literature because it has the capacity to create fictionalized worlds that resemble one's own. As such, it becomes a critical tool through which to create affective responses. Literature also offers other mnemonic communities expressive forms to draw on; this is indeed the basis for Landsberg's term, "prosthetic memory." Rigney has analyzed the way in which mnemonic discourse around Bloody Sunday developed and observes that "Bloody Sunday" became a mnemonic symbol that traveled from Ireland to Selma, Amritsar, Chicago, Istanbul, among other places. She argues that Bloody Sunday enables "the ongoing transfer of a multi-sited, specifically *urban* memory that connects one city to another through the shared experience of state violence against an active citizenry." Yet in each iteration, the symbol undergoes significant alterations to accommodate the new social context of its application. What was for Derry, Ireland a term to mark police attack on a Catholic protest's demand for greater civil

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[96] Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[97] For example, the role of colonized soldiers fighting on behalf of the British Empire in the first and second world wars was rarely mentioned in early accounts of the wars. Yet as post-colonialism has forced confrontation of the past, the role of these soldiers has been reframed as a critical contribution to the strength of the British armed forces and its success. Rigney refers to the example of the Irishmen who fought in World War I who had previously been "passively forgotten" but who now occupy a place in the official commemoration of the Irish Republic. Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking."

liberties was previously applied to the 1905 demonstration in St. Petersburg where unarmed protestors marched to deliver a petition Tsar Nicholas II but were attacked by the Imperial Guard. In Amritsar, the term Bloody Sunday referred to the British-led massacre of a hundreds of Indians in an enclosed field. The nomenclature of Bloody Sunday came to refer to instances of massive, disproportionate responses of the state towards unarmed civilians.

For my purposes, Rigney's argument has significant explanatory value for assessing Lamentations's use of the ancient Near Eastern city lament tradition, particularly with regard to the use of the symbol as a specifically urban phenomenon. Although Lamentations, like other ancient Near Eastern laments, positions the deity as the agent responsible for the destruction of the city, it turns the form of lament into one of accusation, and uses it to inculpate Yahweh of having failed to adequately protect his people. In so doing, Lamentations introduces an alternative understanding of the city's destruction and the locus of responsibility. It offers a competing model of memory to the kind offered in the Book of Ezekiel, which although assigning responsibility of the destruction to Yahweh, does so in a way that positions him as having no choice because the people sinned so greatly. Lamentations's presentation of sin is only obliquely given and markedly muted in contrast to its sustained, relentless recounting of Yahweh's vicious actions.

Through her analysis of various "Bloody Sundays," Rigney also makes the case for a phenomenon called "differential memorability," which suggests that not all events, even when similar in nature, are afforded cultural and literary afterlives. She argues that it is not simply that some events pertain to groups that the majority of people are largely indifferent to, (though she

admits this is often the case) but that events of "slow violence"[98] are harder to put into the form of a story and so massacres and other short, concentrated events, particularly "critical eruptions of violence," command more attention.[99] Because they are typically unexpected, and aberrations from normal, daily life, they become sites of reflection and inquiry. I find this a compelling way to think about the sequencing of action in both Kings and Lamentations. In Kings, the action is fairly continuous and quick paced. In Lamentations it is the destruction that is fast-paced and the poet's critique suggests not only that the suffering has gone on too long but that it has failed to command Yahweh's notice. It aims to challenge this idea that slow violence is easier to neglect. At the same time, it participates in many of the formal elements of the city laments because they provide a formal framework for reconfiguring structural concerns about the deity's inaction and ruthlessness.

These varied approaches to thinking about the formation of memory and memorability thus provide innovative and compelling ways to better understand the enabling role of literature in shaping and forming memories and conceptions of the past. In the chapters that follow, I analyze three prominent works that address Jerusalem's fall. As I mentioned in chapter 1, my approach is a literary and historical one, but I draw widely from memory studies as a way to better articulate the kinds of claims that these works are making. It seems to me that memory studies writ large offer a compelling array of conceptual tools for reading and analyzing these competing works.

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[98] Rigney borrows this expression from Rob Nixon's work, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[99] Rigney, "Differential Memorability and Transnational Activism: Bloody Sunday, 1887–2016," *Australian Humanities Review* 59 (2016): 77–95, esp. 89.

Chapter 3

A New Political Epicenter: Babylon and 2 Kings 25

> Despite the significance and importance of the fall of Jerusalem for the ideology and theology of biblical historiography, and perhaps precisely because of this, the biblical description (2 Kings 25) is characterized by brevity and a dry style, with no theological commentary and no offering of historical lessons. The description is purposeful, focusing on the destiny of the king, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fate of the people who lived in the city. On the basis of this brief description, a Babylonian military campaign against Jerusalem may be reconstructed, including the setting of a siege against Jerusalem and the building of a wall around it. Apart from a description of the dire circumstances that prevailed in Jerusalem at the end of the siege due to starvation, no additional details are provided.[1]

2 Kings 25 is a seductive text. It captivates its reader with its fast-paced story. Its alluring historiographical writing has persuaded most scholars that it is a largely reliable, factual account of Jerusalem fall. Lipschits' quotation above captures well a broader view that the brevity of 2 Kings 25 is a crucial indicator of its reliability and its "purposefulness." He assumes that on the basis of this text, one can reconstruct a historical event. Yet, as I will seek to show in this chapter, his claims rely on an ultimately false equation between brevity and reliability, and that this assumption of reliability in turn generates a confidence in reading this work as a factual report. While this text does indeed correlate with evidence from archaeological excavations and Neo-Babylonian inscriptions and administrative text, it is still a literary text that is carefully stylized and seeks to tell an ideologically charged story.

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[1] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 72–73.

Although recent scholarship has renewed attention to the work, particularly in its description of Judah's demise, studies have not led to any consensus as to how the text constructs a portrait of Judah's fall. Rather, "the fall" is assumed to be relatively stable and accurate[2] and it is only some details that require further analysis. A survey of scholarship shows opposing views on the relationship between the episodes in the narrative, particularly the installation of Gedaliah in 2 Kings 25:22–26 and the elevation of Jehoiachin in Babylon, in 2 Kings 25:27–30, and the relationship of this material to the real practice of Babylonian imperialism. In presenting their theories and positions, scholars have addressed a range of critical questions such as, What is the relationship of these final sections of Kings to the "rest" of the work? Do the descriptions of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah reflect real historical circumstances? If not, what motivates the portrayal? For an event of such monumental consequence within biblical literature, why is there so little detail about the siege? Why does Jehoiachin rise above the other imprisoned kings in Babylon? Is Jehoiachin's rise a signal of the eventual resurrection of Davidic kingship? What happened to Judah after the destruction of its institutional infrastructure? Was the land really emptied of people, or did anyone remain? In answering these questions, scholarly literature has confined itself largely to the study of individual episodes, lexical items, or very broad characterizations of the text as a whole.

The focus of this dissertation is the different ways in which biblical authors responded to and conceptualized the event of Jerusalem's destruction. Put differently, this study stages an inquiry into Judah's experience of the Babylonian empire. In this chapter, through a historically

[2] For example, Hillers began his commentary on Lamentations with a quotation of 2 Kings 25: 8–12, and then pronounced, "Thus the book of Kings states the facts about the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Lamentations supplies the meaning of the facts."

informed literary analysis, I investigate one such response: 2 Kings 23:31–25:30[3] through a systematic study of its literary structure, the tropes, idioms, and images. This approach holds significant promise for expanding our understanding of the differing ways in which Judah responded to Babylon's project of imperial power. Through this study, it becomes possible to trace the ideas and episodes that the author identifies as significant, which in turn can generate insight into the conceptual worldview advanced through the text. I will argue that the text of 2 Kings 23:31—25:30 exhibits a sophisticated and strategic engagement with both Judean and Babylonian imperial ideology. In its presentation of Judah's final years as an independent polity and the few years after the exile of its local rulers, the narrative is suffused with images of Babylonian world view, not for the purpose of subversion but rather for endorsement. This simultaneous support for Babylonian hegemony is expressed in its description of Nebuchadnezzar's assault and interference in local government as well as in the recasting of the imperial project into a local idiom—an attack brought about by Yahweh, who uses the Babylonian emperor as his earthly agent.

Attention to representations of Babylonian imperial ideology in 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 is critical for understanding seemingly disjunctive elements within the narrative: the list of temple accoutrements taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the calendrical innovations, and the notice of Gedaliah's appointment to a position of status. In this chapter, I concentrate on these representations of Babylonian royal and juridical rhetoric and argue that the pattern of engagement with imperial imagery suggests that the author of 2 Kings 25 utilizes elements of the

[3] The story of this text may not map neatly on to a "real" historical background but, as I seek to show in this chapter, demanding a strict correlation between the real event and its literary rendering is unnecessary. By this, I do not mean that the fall of Jerusalem did not happen, but rather, that this particular telling has created a full story-world of its own, one that is largely coherent on its own terms.

Babylonian culture to endorse the changes and to suggest a Yahwehistic imprimatur for the Babylonian conquest of Judah. The final verses of 2 Kings 25 seem in particular to advocate capitulation to Babylonian power in order to ensure the religious and political continuity of Judah.

This chapter has four parts: Part I provides a narrative summary of the unit under study and an overview of critical scholarship on it, identifying areas for further inquiry and reinvestigation. Part II transitions to a discussion of the strategies of rule employed by Nebuchadnezzar, the monarch who leads the invasion of Jerusalem, and who thus occupies a crucial role in 2 Kings 24–25. It shows how ideas of protection, abundance, and the centrality of Babylon formed critical elements in constituting an imperial grammar. I will show how the king's self-portrait as temple-benefactor and provider for all humans has implications for how we should understand his portrayal of Babylon as the center of the world. Furthermore, the emphasis on Babylon as the center of the empire also serves as an anchor for the author of 2 Kings 25. In Part III, I identify and evaluate implicit and explicit refractions of Neo-Babylonian in 2 Kings 23:31–25. The evaluation takes place along three main axes: the portrayal of siege; the use of abundance imagery to highlight Judah's diminished status and Babylon's corresponding enhanced status; and the ways in which Babylonian practices infiltrated Judahite institutions, from installing kings and situating individuals into prominent positions of power, to changing the calendrical means of chronicling events. In Part IV, I consider the implications of 2 Kings 24–25's representations of Babylon and offer concluding comments on the purpose of endorsing Babylonian imperial rule. This final section also briefly outlines the potential bearing the study has on discussions of Judah's status under the Babylonians, particularly whether or not

the state was made into a province or allowed to fall into disrepair after the extraction of its material resources.

1.1 Narrative Structure of 2 Kings 23:31–25:30

	23:31–24:6 Egyptian Hegemony: Jehoahaz and Jeohoiakim	24:8–25:7 Babylonian Hegemony: Jehoiachin and Zedekiah
Duration of reign Capture & tribute; removal to exile Replacement of King	A. 23: 31–35 Jehoahaz • Reigns 3 months (23:33) • Pharaoh Neco takes captive Jehoahaz at Riblah and collects tribute (23:33) • Neco replaces Jehoahaz with Eliakim and gives him a new name, Jehoiakim • Neco removes Jehoahaz to Egypt, where he dies (23:34)	A. 24:8–17 Jehoiachin • Reigns 3 months (24:8) • Babylonian army besieges the city; King of Babylon takes Jehoiachin & elite captive and collects tribute (24:12–15) • Nebuchadnezzar replaces Jehoiachin with Mattaniah & gives him a new name, Zedekiah (24:17)
Duration of reign Capture & tribute; removal to exile	B. 23:36–24: 6 Jehoiakim • Rules for 11 years (23:36) • Rebels against the King of Babylon (24:1)& Groups of Chaldeans, Arameans, Ammonites, and Moabites come against Judah • *Narrator draws inference about Yahweh's anger* (24:3–5)	B. 24:18–25:7 Zedekiah • Zedekiah rules 11 years (24:18) • Rebels against the king of Babylon (25:1) • Yahweh rejects Jerusalem and Judah (24:20) • Nebuchadnezzar and army besiege the city • Zedekiah taken captive by the king of Babylon, and

Replacement of King	• *Egypt's power is diminished by Babylon* • Jehoiakim dies and Jehoiachin comes to the throne	sons are killed in front of him at Riblah (25:6–7) • Jerusalem pillaged and destroyed • Poor people remain in the land (25:12) • Judgment at Riblah • Appointment of Gedaliah as replacement

1.2 Narrative Summary of 2 Kings 23:31–25

2 Kings 23:31–25 presents an account of Judah's final years before the destruction of its institutional infrastructure, and the exile of its kings and elite inhabitants. After the close of Josiah's reign, the kingdom of Judah undergoes a protracted demise. The narrative is structured such that the accounts of the last four Judahite rulers parallel one another in multiple ways. [4] Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin each reign for only three months (2 Kings 23:31 and 2 Kings 24:8, respectively), Jehoiakim and Zedekiah reign for eleven years each (2 Kings 23:36 and 2 Kings 24:18, respectively). Pharaoh Neco removes Jehoahaz to Egypt (2 Kings 23:34), while Nebuchadnezzar takes captive both Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:12, 15) and Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7) and brings them to Babylon. The reigns of these last four kings are peppered with revolts that prompt imperial retribution, the imposition of tribute, and the forcible extraction of skilled craftsmen and goods. There are two notices of Babylonian sieges in Jerusalem, and another of an

[4] For a discussion of these parallel portrayals, see Robert Cohn, *2 Kings* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, Mn: Liturgical Press, 2000).

assault by an alliance of Chaldeans, Moabites, Ammonites, and Arameans. References to Yahweh's involvement and presumed endorsement of the Babylonian-led incursions are sprinkled throughout the account of these events. Some of these references are explicit statements, while others seem to be inferences drawn by the narrator on the basis of the events he describes. The narrator in 2 Kgs 24:2 states:

וישלח יהוה בו את גדודי כשדים ואת גדודי ארם ואת גדודי מואב ואת גדודי בני עמון וישלחם ביהודה להאבידו כדבר יהוה אשר דבר ביד עבדיו הנביאים

Now Yahweh sent against it bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of his servants, the prophets.

Yahweh's involvement, repeated more forcefully in verse 3, אך על פי יהוה היתה ביהודה "Indeed, according to the word of Yahweh it happened to Judah..." establishes divine sanction for the foreign foe's actions, much as Marduk himself approved Nebuchadnezzar's actions in the king's own inscriptions.[5] This notice creates the impression on the narrator's audience that the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem was not only something Yahweh endorsed but one that he predicted and perhaps even orchestrated. The repetition of the formulaic references to Manasseh's sins in verses 3b and 4, provides an early indication of the narrator's stance: the Judean monarchy was no longer fit for ruling and its kingdom was being appropriately and understandably punished by Nebuchadnezzar.

Cursorily, however, the narrator reverts to a formula used elsewhere in Kings and announces the death of Jehoiakim and that his son Jehoiachin ascended the throne. This new

[5] See Rocío da Riva, *Neo-Babylonian Inscriptions*.

king's actions, referenced only through stereotypical language, cause Nebuchadnezzar to once more come up against Judah, and this time, instead of enforcing Judah's vassal status, the city is besieged. Jehoiachin submits with his household along with massive tribute from the temple, and he and all the elite of the city are deported to Babylon. The pointed reference to craftsmen as being among those deported aligns with the claims found in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions, in which the deportation of populations corresponded with their abilities to work on renewing Marduk's temple, either as skilled labor or cultic functionaries. In Nebuchadnezzar's Etemenanki cylinder inscription, for example, the king claims that he brought workers from multiple foreign cult sites to renew Marduk's temple in Babylon.[6]

The narrator does not comment at any length on violence done to the city, focusing instead on the list of goods given to the Babylonian emperor, all cultic accouterments. The list of captives taken underscores the sweeping nature of the deportations—the deported include not only the elite, but also skilled craftsmen and artists. The narrator specifically mentions that only the poor of the land remained. In Jehoiachin's place, Nebuchadnezzar installs a new king, Mattaniah, whose name means "gift of Yahweh," and gives him the throne-name Zedekiah, "Yahweh is his justice" (2 Kings 24:17). Although it is difficult to know how much meaning to ascribe to the choice of names for the last four rulers, and whether or not to read them as charactonyms, the names do call attention to themselves as satirical. Mattaniah is no gift to the people—unlike a "good" king, his actions bring on an attack, not security, and he runs away when his city is attacked. Jehoiakim was not raised up by Yahweh but by Pharaoh Neco, and Jehoiachin "Yahweh establishes/ founds" is not enthroned by Yahweh either. Yahweh allows

[6] See F. H. Weissbach, *Die Inschriften Nebuchadnezars II im Wâdi Brîsā und am Nahr el-Kelb* (WVDOG 5; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1906), for copy.

Jehoiachin to be deported, the very opposite of being a foundation! These names undermine the role the characters play in the narrative, highlighting the irony of disjunction between their names and their actions, and simultaneously offering privileged information to the audience, that despite the particulars, the one controlling the plot is Yahweh. This latter option is strengthened by the three-fold assertion of Yahweh's anger at the kings' misdeeds and his approval of the kingdom's demise (24:2, 3–4, 20).

Like his predecessor, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah too "does what is evil" and prompts Yahweh's anger, rebelling against Babylon (2 Kings 24:19–20). Yahweh's anger continues until the people are removed from his presence. In response to Zedekiah's rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar and his army come up against Jerusalem and besiege the city once more (2 Kings 25: 1ff). In contrast to the siege against Jehoiachin, which seems to have ended quickly, at least according to the narrative in 2 Kings 24, the siege against Zedekiah goes on long enough that the city's food supplies dwindle and a severe food shortage prevails (2 Kings 25: 3). It is at this point that the city walls are broken and the king, rather than capitulating, flees with his men (2 Kings 25: 4).

The Chaldean army follows in hot pursuit and captures Zedekiah, who seems to be alone by the time he is caught, as his army scatters in the pursuit (2 Kings 25:5). Echoing the situation of another ruler who had been assessed at Riblah by another emperor, Zedekiah finds himself before Nebuchadnezzar, who "gives judgment" on him (2 Kings 25: 6). The content of the judgement is not explicitly stated, but is immediately followed by the killing of Zedekiah's sons, after which the Judean ruler is blinded, bound, and transported to Babylon (2 Kings 25:7). The implication is that the judgement involved seeing his own sons be put to death and having that be the last vision of his life, before he was blinded. This blindness doubles back to remove him also from the eyes of the audience, as he ceases to play any role in the narrative thereafter.

Although the king has been deported by 2 Kings 25:7, the siege does not come to an immediate end. In verse 8, another episode of the siege is told: Nebuchadnezzar's chief officer comes to the city and burns to the ground all the great houses, and exiles more people of the city.[7] The only people left in the land were the poor. This episode marks the third incursion of Nebuchadnezzar into the city (24:10; 25:1; 25:8) and the fourth of the Babylonians if one counts the statement in 24:2, but it is in fact the only instance in which full-scale destruction of the *city* is recounted, suggesting that Babylonian interest in the city–expressed by the amount of tribute and goods that could be extracted–had reached its limit: while some of the temple's treasures had been taken during the reign of Jehoiakin, as well as a large number of the city's elite, there was yet further to be taken: in 25: 9–17, the narrator describes how all the (non-impoverished) people and remaining items in the temple are carted off to Babylon. While Nebuchadnezzar's servant carries out these deportations and seizures of temple goods, Nebuchadnezzar remains at Riblah. Nebuzaradan rounds up the temple priests and the few royal officials who had not been exiled, and brings them before Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah. Their quick death marks for the narrator the end of Judah as it was known (verse 21).

The narrative, which seemed to be about Judah's demise and ought to be finished, in fact continues further, to describe Nebuchadnezzar's installation of an official named Gedaliah[8], over the few people who remained (presumably the poor mentioned in 25:12). Yet Gedaliah's tenure as imperial appointee was short-lived. He exhorts the people to be servants of the Chaldeans and

[7] Presumably the poor, and the women and children left behind after the previous round of deportations, which seemed to target primarily the upper strata of the society and the warriors.

[8] This may be another clever characteronym meaning "Yahweh is great," from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective. I am grateful to Professor Chavel for drawing my attention to this.

attempts to persuade them that serving the king of Babylon will insure that things go well for them, but his efforts fail quickly, and he is put to death by a cohort of militaristic Judeans who flee to Egypt. The appearance of this group of four individuals—described as holding military titles— and their men seems contradictory to the claims in 24:14 and 16 and even 25:19 that all the warriors of the land had been exiled or killed. The narrator leaves this unresolved, much as he does the claims of deporting all of Jerusalem in 24:14 but then deporting yet more individuals in 25:11. It is possible that the group that attends Gedaliah in Mizpah is not in fact from Jerusalem but rather another Judean town, one that had been spared the Babylonian attack.

While the narrative may appear finished: the king has been exiled, the city destroyed, and an official appointed over the remaining individuals, it in fact continues, providing a resolution of the fate of Jehoiachin, who had been taken to Babylon in 24:15. What prompts this turn may in fact be Gedaliah's statement, that serving the king of Babylon results in one's prosperity, or at least wellness. Below, I will examine this brief episode in greater detail, arguing that Jehoiachin's elevation in Babylon provides evidence of fulfillment of Gedaliah's claim, and in so doing, also reinforces the reliability of the narrator. I will argue that Gedaliah's statement is signaled as a critical component by another means as well: in contrast to the narrative in 2 Kings 22–23, which described Josiah's reign through numerous direct speech acts (22:4–10; 13–14, 15–20; 23: 17–18, 21, 27), in 2 Kings 23:31–25 direct speech is employed only once, in Gedaliah's statement in 25:24. Throughout this text, the characterization of the participants in the story is explicitly controlled by the information imparted through the voice of the narrator. The single speech act in 25:24, in which a seemingly minor character speaks briefly, demands the audience's attention, both to the content of its speech and to the implications behind it:

ישבע להם גדליהו ולאנשיהם ויאמר להם אל תיראו מעבדי הכשדים שבו בארץ ועבדו את מלך בבל ויטב לכם

> Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials; live in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you."

The varied syntax the narrator has adopted until this point has functioned primarily to describe the events of the story being told (with the possible exception of 24:3–4 and 20, where the narrator opines that Judah's behavior angered Yahweh enough to cause him to expel the inhabitants of the land into exile).[9] As a character within the narrative that the narrator recounts, Gedaliah is not at the level of the narrator, that is, he does not know how things will ultimately unfold in the story, nor does his speech recognize that it holds significance for the unfolding of the plot as a whole. He makes a prediction, that things will go well for the people if they subordinate themselves to the Babylonians and serve them, but he himself does not know that his own service will be rendered ineffectual when he is killed only shortly after. On the other hand, the narrator uses this statement of Gedaliah's to create a sense of suspense: what does it mean that things will go well by serving the Babylonians if the speaker of that prediction himself is removed from the narrative? The narrator resolves the suspense by fulfilling the prediction in an unexpected way. It is not Gedaliah that the narrator is ultimately interested in, but rather the exiled king Jehoiachin. Instead of being relegated to non-existence in the story after his exile, he is in fact revealed by the narrator to be alive and well, elevated by the Babylonian king Amel-Marduk, to a position above the other imprisoned kings in Babylon (2 Kings 25: 28).

[9] Seymour Chatman offers an excellent study of the varied ways in which speech and narration convey different kinds of information depending on the syntax, style, and function of the sentences. See further, Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (New York: Cornell University Press Paperbacks, 1980), 161–195.

1.3 Scholarship on 2 Kings 23:31–25:30

In this section, I will briefly examine some of the major scholarship on 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 on the basis of the questions and themes examined. While there is significant overlap in the method of inquiry among scholars, my division into the prominent *questions* they address is beneficial for understanding the ways in which this material has been framed and investigated.

The End of Kings and the Deuteronomistic History

Scholarly treatments of 2 Kings 24–25 have often placed the text within a broader study of Samuel–Kings, as the end to the Deuteronomistic History or as the event which sets into motion the 'exilic' period. Within these studies, the end of Kings is read alternately as exhibiting profound despair at the end of the Judahite kingdom or a kernel of hope.[10] What emerges as a constant in these treatments is that the material in 2 Kings 25 provides "background" or tangential information to either the exile or the Deuteronomistic History. The predominant view is that the text is brief, fractured, or laconic, and often composite, lacking in any coherent worldview.

In 1957, Martin Noth published his influential thesis suggesting that Kings was part of a unified work that begins with the speech of Moses to the Israelites in Deuteronomy, just prior to the people's entry into the land. The Deuteronomistic History, according to Noth, spans from the

[10] For expression of despair, see Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (2nd ed. JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 189–99, 141–42; English trans. of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Gesichichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 18. Jh. H. 2 Bd. 1; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1943, repr. 1957); for hope, see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Louiseville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). Engl. Trans. of *Die Theologie der geschichtelichen Überlieferungen* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957). Cogan and Tadmor take a more neutral approach arguing that this was "merely an epilogue by an exilic writer who brought the narration of Jehoiachin up to date." Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 330.

moment just prior to the entry, and extends to the demise of the kingdom and the people's exile from the land. The Deuteronomistic Historian, as the author of the work was called, was responsible for all of Kings and composed the Deuteronomistic History in Mizpah, the administrative capital after the destruction of Jerusalem. The geographical location of this historian is prompted by the comment of the narrator in 2 Kings 25:23

וישמעו כל שרי החילים המה והאנשים כי הפקיד מלך בבל את גדליהו ויבאו אל גדליהו מצפה וישמעאל בן נתניה ויוחנן בן קרח ושריה בן תנחמת הנטפתי ויאזניהו בן המעכתי המה ואנשיהם

When all the leaders of the army, they and their men, heard that the King of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah; Ishmael, son of Netanyah, Johanan, the son of Kareah, and Seraiah, the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Je'azniah, the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

In this verse, Gedaliah, the man appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, is in Mizpah when a group of military officials comes to meet him. Noth takes this as evidence of Mizpah being the center of administration even though Gedaliah is put to death shortly thereafter, and the text makes no mention of an ongoing outpost following his death. For Noth, this Historian was engaged in a primarily negative project: it was to explain how the kingdoms of Judah and Israel came to an end, and thus examines how Moses' speech holds the theological 'key' to understanding their long history, namely that only "unbroken loyalty", that is, strict observance of Yahweh's law would allow the Israelites to occupy and retain the land. Kings is thus an explanation of how the people continually sinned, with the result that they were ultimately expelled from the land.

Noth's theory emerges out of a long tradition of seeing a cyclical pattern in the history of Israel and Judah, perhaps itself generated by biblical texts such as the Book of Judges. As early as de Wette, there was a notion that the Israelites repeatedly behaved in destructive ways that would require salvation from Yahweh. Ultimately, however, in de Wette's model, destruction ensued with the collapse of Jerusalem.[11] Such a devolutionary model has been shown to have connections to the scholar's own historical context and thus sheds some light on how the end of Kings has been viewed as describing a tragic, but inevitable fall.[12] Other scholars have challenged Noth's largely pessimistic view on the purpose of the Deuteronomistic History, basing their counterclaims on the final verses in Kings. Gerhard von Rad and Hans Walter Wolff both argued that the point was to express hope at how Judah would still continue despite its seeming demise. For von Rad, this was best expressed in the ending of 2 Kings 25:27–30, which announces Jehoiachin's release from prison and his subsequent position of prominence above the other kings in Babylon.

ויהי בשלשים ושבע שנה לגלות יהויכין מלך יהודה בשנים עשר חדש בעשרים ושבעה לחדש נשא אויל מרדך מלך בבל בשנת מלכו את ראש יהויכין מלך יהודה מבית כלא[28] וידבר אתו טבות ויתן את כסאו מעל כסא המלכים אשר

[11] Hayim Lapin, "W. M. L. De Wette and the Invention of Post-Exilic Judaism: political Historiography and Christian Allegory in Nineteenth Century German Biblical Scholarship," in *Jews, Antiquity, and the Nineteenth -Century Imagination* (ed. Hayim Lapin and Dale B. Martin; Potomac, Md: University Press of Maryland, 2003), 41.

[12] For a study of this devolutionary paradigm and how it reflects concerns of scholars' own times, see Steven Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Benjamin Foster "The Beginnings of Assyriology in the United States," in *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible* (ed. Stephen Holloway; Hebrew Bible Monographs 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 44–73; Eckart Frahm, "Images of Assyria in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Western Scholarship, " *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible* (ed. Stephen W. Holloway; Hebrew Bible Monographs 10. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 75–94.

וארחתו ארחת תמיד נתנה לו מאת המלך דבר [30]ושנא את בגדי כלאו ואכל לחם תמיד לפניו כל ימי חייו [29] אתו בבבל

יום ביומו כל ימי חיו

[27] Now in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Amel-Marduk, king of Babylon, in the year he began to reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, out of prison. [28] He spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the thrones of the kings with him in Babylon, [29] changed his prison grab, and he ate bread continually before him all the days of his life. [30] And his allowance was a continual one, given to him by the king, a daily portion for every day, all the days of his life.

To von Rad, this section was sure a sign of messianic hope for the Davidic kingdom.[13] Wolff, on the other hand, argued that the hope offered to readers of Kings was that divine judgment is not just a pronouncement of doom and destruction but also a call to repentance, which will in turn prompt Yahweh's compassionate return.[14]

In further disagreement with Noth's notion of a single author responsible for the entire Deuteronomistic History, Frank Moore Cross argued that the so-called Deuteronomistic History was actually a product of a two stage-redaction and that a later exilic editor, 'DTR-2', added the

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[13] von Rad, "The Deuteronomistic Theology of History in I and II Kings."

[14] Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historical Work," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Gordon J. McConville; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1975), 62–78. Repr. from *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (ed. Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975).

current ending to Kings (2 Kgs 23:25b-25:30). Cross argued the first edition extended only through Josiah and did not presuppose the exile.

According to Cross' theory, Kings had two dominant themes: the sin of Jereboam and the promise to David. The exile was a theme that developed as secondary to these prominent two only once the destruction of Judah took place and the people were exiled to Babylon. Cross suggested that Kings had a definitive program "to rally Israel to the new possibility of salvation… (under) the new David, King Josiah," created by the earlier Deuteronomistic author, Dtr^1.[15] After the destruction of Jerusalem and the demise of the kingdom of Judah, a second, later editor updated the history, who introduced the notion of the exile as an operative theme, particularly in the narrative about Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1–18) in order to account for the failure of salvation under Josiah. Judah's destruction came about, according to Dtr^2, on account of Manasseh's idolatry, which could not be remedied even through Josiah's reforms. Richard Nelson elaborated and clarified some of the details of this double redaction, but while arguing that Dtr^2 was responsible for all of 2 Kings 25 (including verses 27–30), Nelson only explained it with a cryptic comment that modern sensibilities of literary "taste" do not equate with those of antiquity and so "the release of Jehoiachin from prison makes a very believable motivation for the exilic editor's activity."[16]

Richard Elliott Friedman, while largely agreeing with the double-redaction model, argues that the re-editing of Dtr^1 was aimed at addressing the issue of exile. He suggests the possibility

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[15] Frank Moore Cross, "The Themes of the Books of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–289, 285.

[16] Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 89.

that Dtr^2 was composed not in Babylon, as many scholars have argued, but rather in Egypt. In his reading, Egypt is a persistent preoccupation of Dtr^1, and so Dtr^2 takes up this interest, setting the end of Kings in Egypt itself, "the setting of the last and worst of the Deuteronomic curses."[17] Friedman disregards 2 Kings 25: 27–30 as the work of Dtr^2, and instead attributes it to an unknown member of the exilic community in Babylon. His assessment also seems to be prompted by the notice in 2 Kings 25:26, which states that after the death of Gedaliah, everyone who had remained in Judah fled to Babylon because they were afraid of the Babylonians.

Friedman, following Wellhausen, understands the notice of Jehoiachin's release in the 37th year of his exile (2 Kg 25:27) is taken as evidence that Kings is a late exilic work, a revision of the "original contents of the tradition" that had transformed the narrative into "a great confession of sins of the exiled nation looking back on its history".[18] For others, such as Montgomery and Gehman, the end of Kings is at Josiah's reforms, which produce a "national history" in which the reference to Jehoiachin is "regarded as a postscript."[19]

Cogan and Tadmor have argued the notice of Jehoiachin's release from prison is an appendix to the Deuteronomistic History, and Cross has suggested that while the material is too short to see any signs of a Deuteronomistic "message", the expression of hope accords well with the "work of the Josianic Deuteronomist".[20] Fritz also argues that these verses are an epilogue,

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[17] Richard Elliot Friedman, "From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr1 and DTR2," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. 1981), 191.

[18] Wellhausen *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Trans. Allan Menzies and J. Sutherland Black; New York: Meridian, 1957), 272-280.

[19] James A. Montgomery and Henry Snyder Gehman, *Kings I and II* (ICC 10; Minnesota: Bloomsbury Academic, 1951), 44.

[20] Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 329–330; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 277–89.

one that is based on a folk tradition, to the Deuteronomistic History.[21] Kiel and Delitzsch read this final part as a "comforting sign to the whole of the captive people." Lipschits astutely notes the possibility that it demonstrates a positive attitude towards the Babylonians, even if retaining the possibility of Davidic kingship.[22]

While agreeing that this passage forms an epilogue of sorts for the Deuteronomistic History, Sweeney, building on the work of Noth, cautions against interpreting it as a "glimmer of hope," arguing instead that it is pointing to the "demise of the house of David as the ruling monarchy of Israel/ Judah in Jerusalem."[23] He strengthens his argument with attention to the text's relative silence about the possibility for the temple's restoration, and argues that this must be read in connection with 2 Samuel 7, in which Yahweh claims that he has no need for a temple, but that he prefers to be mobile. For Sweeney, this suggests two claims, one literary, and one historical: the first is that freed from the ties to the physical temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh's sphere of activity can extend to Egypt and Babylon. Second, the description of Jehoiachin's release from prison and subsequent elevation in Babylon suggests a setting in the Persian period, in which temple leaders such as Nehemiah and Ezra function under the auspices of the Persians.

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[21] Vokmar Fritz, *1 and 2 Kings* (trans. Anselm Hagedorn; Minneapolis, Mn: Fortress, 2003), 425.

[22] C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, *1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 523; Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 296–297. Although Lipschits and I agree about the positive attitude towards Babylonian in this section, Lipschits sees this as isolated element within the narrative. I argue however, that this attitude of approval in fact pervades the entire narrative.

[23] Marvin Sweeney *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press

2007), 462–64.

Lipschits offers the intriguing comment that this portion of the text concerning Jehoiachin's elevation in Babylon evinces a positive attitude towards the Babylonians, even if it also retains the possibility of Davidic kingship. While Lipschits does not analyze his hypothesis in great detail, I will show in the material that follows that it in fact bears closer scrutiny and finds support elsewhere in the text as well. These final portions of the text have thus been marshalled as evidence for opposing arguments about the date of composition of Kings and the work's relationship to the broader Deuteronomistic History. What is missing in this approach however, has been a systematic study of the text as a literary unit that exploits certain themes and issues to create a single, unified narrative about the end of Judah. Instead, on account of an unconscious coupling between ideas of genre and the episodic nature of the material, scholarship on 2 Kings 23:31–25 has not considered in a sustained manner the literary ideas that structure the narrative and generate this setup. Theories of its compositeness are developed on largely historical grounds rather than primarily literary ones, which may or may not align with what actually occurred.

2 Kings 25 and the Question of Brevity and Historicity

A primary goal of critical scholarly work on the end of Kings has been a historical one, namely, to understand the fall of Jerusalem as a decisive moment in the history of Judah. Two elements are particularly crucial: the first, that there is in fact a stable event that can be reconstructed by and large on the basis of the sources we have, and second, that the narrative in Kings is a historical one, albeit one with gaps or abbreviated discourse. This is in large part due to the nature of the primary source: 2 Kings 25, which self-consciously presents itself as a history, prompts the interpreter's expectation that it will follow certain (perhaps modern)

conventions of history writing, namely, a factual account that presents an event described in neutral terms, culled from a variety of perspectives.[24]

The perfunctory style of the author has generated numerous speculations about the possible reasons for it and how to utilize its details as reliable witnesses to the destruction. Expectations generated by the hypothesized genre of the text prompt particular approaches to the material that exclude others. In the scholarship on 2 Kings 24–25, the notion of a historically minded author has led scholars to be perplexed by the apparent deviations from the expected form. When Haran examined this material, he felt it was too brief a report for an event the magnitude of Jerusalem's fall and so suggested that the author must have been too busy running away from the city to give a coherent, rational elaborate account of the city's fall. In other words, he had an idea of what a history text purporting to report a major event ought to look like, and so had to account the deviation from this imagined form when he studied Kings. Cogan and Tadmor argue that the brevity of the end of the work, filled with lacunae, is on account of the author's distress at the destruction of Jerusalem.[25] Oded Lipschits, offering a more nuanced reading of the brevity observes, "Despite the significance and importance of the fall of Jerusalem for the ideology and theology of biblical historiography, and perhaps precisely because of this, the biblical description (2 Kings 25) is characterized by brevity and a dry style, with no theological

[24] As Hayden White has demonstrated however, history writing is rarely so straightforward, and often has ideological influences that govern how the event is recounted. The notion of a cohesive "event" is a second-order construction that requires the ability to synthesize the various happenings and identify a beginning, middle, and end to it. Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," Critical Inquiry 7 (1980): 5–27; Idem, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[25] Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 1988.

commentary and no offering of historical lessons.[26] For Lipschits, the brevity and terseness is a deliberate move to focus attention on three elements: the king's fate, the city's destruction, and the people's future. The absence of theological commentary suggests to him a reliable account, free of religious ideology and didactic summary, and thus a trustworthy set of information with which to reconstruct a Babylonian military campaign. Striking in his statement is the false equation between conciseness and reliability. Like Cogan and Tadmor, Lipschits recognizes the brevity of the Kings account but far from viewing that as complicating a historical reconstruction of events, sees it as advantageous. Underlying Lipschits' assessment is the assumption that history, when done correctly, is terse and to the point.[27] There is no consideration of the possibility that the author might be making a set of choices precisely to subvert expectations of his audience.

This is not to say that the author of 2 Kings 25 invents from whole cloth a story about Jerusalem's fall at the hands of the Babylonians. Rather, it is to draw attention to the fact that even writing that looks straightforward can be heavily inflected with implicit and explicit ideologies that shape the telling of the narrative. While numerous texts in the Hebrew Bible have been subjected to careful philological, literary and historical critical study, 2 Kings 24–25 seems to have evaded such rigorous analysis. What I am suggesting is that we take seriously the literary and narrative aspects of the work as a mark of the artistry of its author, and use those claims to generate a notion of the conceptual worldview of the author. This is a basic step towards an assessment of any ideology that might be promoted within it.

[26] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 72–73.

[27] Ibid, 72–73.

The succinctness of the unit and lack of "additional details" have pushed Lipschits and others to focus on individual details of the text, particularly for reconstructing real imperial practices of the Babylonians. These studies have made significant contributions to our understanding of imperialism in its various forms in the Levant. A drawback of this has been, however, to downplay the significance of the artistic arrangement of the material to convey particular ideas of the author. At least two claims of the text have proved particularly exciting to scholars wishing to establish the historical veracity of the material: first, the litany of temple accoutrements that Nebuchadnezzar's forces carry off, and the second, the statement in verse 21b that Judah was carried off from its land. Cogan and Tadmor, for example, provide a detailed consideration of the list of temple treasures but ultimately dismiss it as simply "pedantic."[28] In contrast, Jacob Wright argues that the attention to removal of temple objects, over and above attention to other aspects of the siege and destruction, is in keeping with ancient Near Eastern royal practice of recording the capture of booty but is used symbolically in this work to emphasize the undoing of Solomon's achievements.[29] This interpretation builds on Walter Brueggemann's assessment of the seizure being a political embarrassment and a symbolic destruction of the Davidic dynasty.[30] Gray, equally keen on this passage, compares it to the list of temple objects in 1 Kings 7 and suggests that the author of 2 Kings 25 has forgotten that Ahaz

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[28] Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 1988.

[29] Jacob Wright, "The Deportation of Jerusalem's Wealth and the Demise of Native Sovereignty in the Book of Kings," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Concepts* (ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 105–134.

[30] Brueggemann *1 and 2 Kings* (Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary 8; Macon, Ga: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2000), 594.

had already removed many of the items (2 Kings 16:17). Gray himself fails to note that the temple objects have passed through numerous hands by the time they are given away by Ahaz and finally into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar some decades later. At play in his quick connection to 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 16 is an expectation colored by genre: because Kings is purportedly telling a history, the reference to temple items must be interpreted as having a historical referent, instead of the possibility that it is fashioned to function as a literary device within the passage to make a particular claim. While there is some attention to the rhetorical function of the list, the general conclusion is that it is purely to embarrass the Judean ruler in the eyes of the audience.[31] By focusing too minutely on the historical plausibility of the text, we risk losing sight of what the text can reliably offer: a portrayal of the worldview of its author, and possibly, insight into the elements that have shaped, influenced, and constituted it.

The second textual example scholars have scrutinized is 2 Kings 25:18–21, which recounts the slaughter of prominent members of Jerusalem: the priests of the temple, guards, and leaders of the military, who are all killed at Riblah by Nebuchadnezzar. This description of slaughter is followed by a brief notice in verse 21b, "So Judah was exiled from her land." For most scholarly treatments of Kings, the half-verse marks the 'real end' of the work:

The last clause of this sentence is the climax and conclusion of the theme of the Deuteronomic redactor's continuation of the historical narrative of the Deuteronomic compiler of Kings. This is the real end of the book and the rest consists of two appendices.[32]

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[31] Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*; Wright, "The Deportation of Jerusalem's Wealth."

[32] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 701.

Gray's statement is mirrored in the works of Brueggemann, Cogan and Tadmor, Lipschits, Cohn, and others.[33] Brueggemann claims that the terseness of this statement highlights the enormity and brutality of the destruction of Jerusalem.[34] The more minimal the text, the greater the void within which to fill meaning. Scholars draw the filling from other texts, such as Lamentations, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, which do portray, in greater detail and with more vivid imagery, the effects of the destruction and the exile. To my mind, this risks conflating the issues of history as it really happened and history as it was subsequently revised and remembered.

Lipschits, also interpreting this half sentence as the original ending to the work, argues that the "message is unequivocally pessimistic."[35] He also distinguishes within 2 Kings 25 two opposing attitudes towards the Babylonians, which correspond with the generally accepted division of the chapter. The first, found in 2 Kings 25: 1–21, is a negative one. The Babylonians are depicted looting and plundering, and "their cruel treatment… is blatant".[36] In contrast to this is the attitude shown in verses 22–30, which depict the appointment of Gedaliah and the governor's promise that serving the Babylonians will result in things going well for the Judeans. Lipschits draws further differences within the narrative on the basis of the attitude towards the remnant population. On the one hand, the destruction narrative does not describe any remnant

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[33] Ibid. 701. For a representative sample of the same view, see Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 1988; Robert Cohn 2000; Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*.

[34] Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*.

[35] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, , 297.

[36] Ibid., 296.

population. Indeed, verse 21b suggests that no one remained in the land after the destruction of the city. On the other hand, this assumption is quickly contradicted by verses 22–26, which describe the organization of the "remaining population" under Gedaliah.[37] On the basis of these differences, Lipschits concludes that 2 Kings 25 reflects two separate layers: the first, the work of Dtr^2, spans 2 Kgs 25:1–11, 13–21 (this is a continuation of 2 Kgs 23:22–23, 26–37; 24:1–12, 15–20) and was created in Babylon. It reflects the concerns of the exiled population and paints a picture of the Babylonians as ruthless and cruel. The second part consists of "appendices" that were added approximately one generation after the exile, showing "the people's reconciliation with the Babylonian authority…[and] encourage the possibility of continued life under Babylonian rule, both in exile and in Judah."[38] These appendixes were also composed in Babylon.

2 Kings 25: 21

The Question of the Exile and the Status of Judah after its destruction

[37] Lipschits does not consider here the statement in 2 Kgs 25:12 which states that the poor of the land were left behind to be vinedressers and tillers. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 296–297. But see also Lipschits, O., Gadot, Y., Arubas, B., and Oeming, *What are the Stones Whispering? Ramat Raḥel: 3,000 Years of Forgotten History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017), in which he offers new interpretations based on the excavation finds from Ramat Raḥel. For a very different view of the destruction, see Avraham Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonion Period: The Archaeology of Destruction*. The literature on the archaeology of the Levant in and after the Neo-Babylonian period is extensive. See, for example, Lawrence E. Stager, "Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction: Kislev 604 B.C.E." *Eretz Israel* 25 (1996), 61–74l; Ephraim Stern, "Is There a Babylonian Period in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel?" in *Is it Possible to Define the Ceramics of the 6th Century B.C.E. in Judah?* (Ed. Oded Lipschits; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1998), 19–20; David Vanderhooft, "New Evidence Pertaining to the Transition from Neo-Babylonian to Achaemenid Administration in Palestine" in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era* (Ed. Rainer Albertz and B. Becking; Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003), 219–35.

[38] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 297.

Lipschits proposes that two further additions were made to the text of Kings when the exiled population returned to Judah: 2 Kings 24:13–14 and 2 Kings 25:12, which reflect returnees' perspective that the people who remained in the land were nothing more than "a small group of paupers whose continued existence in Judah is of little importance." (Lipschits, 2005: 304). The goal of minimizing the remnant in this way was not a confrontation over who had rights to the land or a concern over the reason for the punishment of exile. According to Lipschits, the reason is a disagreement over who has economic and political power: "a struggle regarding the role of the elite, who were trying to return and assert themselves over those who remained," and is evidence that the Judean remnant was "unwilling to accept the leadership of the returnees".[39] Lipschits' caution in noting that this was not a conflict over the right to the land stems from a long tradition of scholarship that debates the tradition of the exile and argues the notion of the "empty land" was a deliberately crafted myth to justify a later takeover of the land.[40]

While Lipschits' study has been the most comprehensive attempt to study the biblical texts in connection with the archaeological picture, others have also sought to ground their textual analysis in archaeological findings**.** Lipschits notes that the marked break in occupation levels in Jerusalem during the sixth century suggests that the Babylonians may have concentrated

[39] Ibid, 359.

[40] This interpretation has gained traction within the last seventy-five years, particular in the modern conflict over the Israeli state and the continued existence of Palestinian communities in the land. The question of whether or not the land of Judah was emptied entirely after the Babylonian attack is fraught because of the difficulties of the archaeological record and literary evidence. Scholars who maintain that the land was largely empty are frequently criticized for their implicit participation in the contemporary debate. See discussion in Hans Barstad, "After the 'Myth of the Empty Land': Major Challenges in the Study of Neo-Babylonian Judah," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 3–20.

their efforts in Jerusalem and its immediate vicinities, while the regions of Benjamin and the northern Judean hills were spared destruction.[41] Lipschits originally interpreted this data to mean that the majority of exiles to Babylon were residents of Jerusalem. The selective depopulation of this city alone coupled with the lack of any evidence of deportations from the Benjamin region and Judean hills suggests that the Babylonian assault was concentrated in Jerusalem.[42] Lipschits and others have suggested too that the lack of mass destruction outside Jerusalem leave open the possibility that center of Judean administration shifted from Jerusalem to another location, such as Mizpah or Ramat Raḥel. Hans Barstad pointed to the discoveries of a large number of stamped jar handles, particularly with those of lions inscribed on them, as strengthening the case for a continued Babylonian presence in the region even after Jerusalem's fall.

Also noteworthy in the archaeological portrait of Judah is the lack of evidence of a large return of exiles at the end of the sixth and beginning of the fifth centuries BCE. In contrast to the picture presented by the biblical texts, the archaeological record shows no large-scale influx of people or change in settlement pattern.[43] Lipschits argues that this is evidence of the

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[41] Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*.

[42] See also Faust, *Archaeology of Destruction*, for his interpretation of the evidence. Faust argues that although the traditional view is that Jerusalem and its surroundings were decimated, findings over the last twenty years have posed a significant challenge to this view. He reexamines the original data and brings new evidence to bear on the question of Judah's status, particularly the rural sector of Judah, and argues that the traditional view in fact best accounts for the evidence and claims that Judah's urban and rural regions were entirely destroyed after the Neo-Babylonian assaults. The recovery from this devastation did not happen quickly but rather took place slowly over centuries.

[43] This does not validate, however, Barstad's claim that "most of the population" remained in Judah. He argues that the society consisted not only of peasants but also priests, scribes, prophets, and was a "functioning society within many of its political institutions still intact." See further Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), esp. 18–19. Archaeological material provides no substantial evidence for his claim about their being a fully functional society. Faust has argued that efforts to coordinate biblical texts

thoroughness with which the Babylonians decimated Jerusalem–the city remained underpopulated and was unable to regain its status as a major city until the Hellenistic period.

The archaeological portrait of Judah in the Babylonian period is a highly fractured and contentious one. The lack of administrative documents, military garrisons, and pottery markers, make it difficult to establish a clear case for the establishment of a Babylonian province in Judah. At the same time, evidence like the lion seals suggest that ideas and symbols of rule traveled from Babylonia to the western periphery of the empire and were incorporated into Judahite administrative iconography.

2 Kings 23:31–25:30 and the Discourse of Empire

In much of the scholarship addressed above, there is a concern to align the narrative in 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 with history "as it really happened," often through a comparison with Neo-Babylonian texts, archaeological finds, and other biblical texts, particularly within the Deuteronomistic History and the prophetic literature. These inquiries have yielded advancements in our understanding of the archaeological and linguistic picture of the ancient Levantine region and the compositional history of Kings but have yielded less in the way of analyzing how this text functions as a literary exemplar of a subordinate kingdom's experience of empire. Yet, when viewed as a response to imperial rule, new possibilities emerge for interpreting the text in Kings. This approach, focusing less on an assessment of compositional integrity or historical foundation, offers access to the ideas that structure the material and insight into the conceptual

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with archaeological data risks agenda-driven analyses that can taint one's interpretation of materials, even if the two (biblical studies and Levantine archaeology) are closely related. He argues that the archaeological study of this period would be better off if it focused only on tangible archaeological findings and concepts such as abandonment of sites, processes of collapse, etc. (Faust, *Archaeology of Destruction*, 253).

worldview of the authors. Below, I will show that the text can be profitably analyzed alongside Neo-Babylonian comparative material to identify points of interaction and disagreement with imperial rhetoric and ideology. Such an approach is helpful in evaluating the degree to which the imperial rhetoric of the Babylonian empire is successful at conveying its self-portrait to the subordinate populations.

David Vanderhooft already developed this approach in his study of representations of the Neo-Babylonian empire in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible.[44] Vanderhooft's work emerged out of a broader mode of inquiry among historians of the ancient Near East, in which imperial language or discourse is treated as a complex system of ideas that is used to entrench and encode authority both among the authors of the ideology as well as the recipients of it. Vanderhooft's study draws particularly on the work of Mario Liverani, who observed that if we were to schematize the kinds of participation in the ideology of empire, it would seem initially that "the beneficiaries… are the authors of the ideology, that the agents are its receivers, and the victims (the external populations that are being conquered) remain unaffected by it."[45] But he argues that such a view is reductionist, since even the authors of the ideology require self-convincing, and that the receivers of the propaganda are the entire populations of the empire. He also notes that identifying "centres of ideological diffusion other than the capital" is critical for understanding the empire's reception of ideology.[46] Liverani notes that after a struggle between

[44] David S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire.*

[45] Mario Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (Mesopotamia 7; ed. M.T. Larsen; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 297–317.

[46] Liverani, "Ideology," 299.

competing ideologies–-the empire and the conquered—a slow process of acculturation (or "de-culturation" as he calls it) results, following military defeat and subsequent subjugation:

The breaking down of the ideologically active centers (temples, palaces) in the peripheries of the empire, and their replacement with terminals which repeat the central ideology, bring about an impoverishment and a levelling out of culture throughout the empire, fostered by measures such as deportations, linguistic unification, provincial administration.[47]

In this breakdown, accomplished through a diverse set of political and military tactics, the empire's periphery is mobilized to reproduce elements of the center's ideology. Such reproduction may happen at the ideological or practical level and relies on the several binaries to structure the imperial—particularly Assyrian—ideology. These binaries include center–periphery; enemy– king; chaos–order, and inside–outsider. They provide a way of thinking about the conceptual organization of the empire and lend coherence to its portrayal. Imperial discourse also relies on the repetition of themes and images to convey meaningful statements about its self-conception. The combination of themes, images, and binaries (what Liverani terms "oppositions") together make up a kind of imperial language, "an ideological grammar." He defines this grammar as a "closed and coherent system of all the "rules" used to write a Neo-Assyrian royal inscription" that is "'correct' at the level of political ideology."[48] Underlying the idea of a coherent ideology is the notion that diversity justifies and even demands exploitation and imbalance of power.[49]

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[47] Liverani, "Ideology," 300.

[48] Ibid, 305.

[49] Liverani offers examples from numerous sectors, including economic, spatial, human, and commercial which allow for such articulation of ideology. He categorizes each sector into

The division of the world into a center–periphery binary also conditions imperial attitudes towards trade: material goods are depicted as consistently flowing from the external reaches of the empire towards the center. Liverani observes that this results in a "centralization of the peripheral products "in exchange" for a diffusion of the political and cultural services."[50] He rightly notes that this exchange is deeply unequal and he is careful to distinguish between the presentation of this flow as an "exchange" and the actual reality that may lie behind it, which may involve coercion and acquisition. In its representation however, the material goods are exchanged for ideological ones such as justice, security, or enhanced order. This type of exchange is manifested not just in the relationship between center and periphery but also mimicked and replicated within stratifications of the center itself, such as between the king and his court, and the palace and people.

While Liverani developed his framework for an Assyrian imperial system, it has salience for understanding other ancient Near Eastern royal systems as well. The Babylonian empire, which followed on the heels of the Neo-Assyrian also coded its imperial goals in a kind of grammar. Although it did not follow its predecessor's strategy of setting up provincial centers outside the capital, the empire's ideology was nonetheless refracted and repeated in terminals on the periphery. Liverani's argument that the spread of imperial ideas results in a breakdown of other ideologically active centers in the empire's periphery presents an interesting hypothesis to

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static and dynamic elements. Static elements are those that lend themselves to a stable representation of the world. Thus for example, static spatial elements include landscape features like mountains and plains, central and peripheral regions etc. The dynamics result when there is a forced interaction or overtaking of one type of space by another. Thus, the cultivation of a formerly desolate region, the construction of roads, etc., all act as dynamic assertions of power and dominion. Liverani, "Ideology," 305ff.

[50] Liverani, "Ideology," 313.

consider in the case of Judah, which attests widespread engagement with Babylonian ideology and rhetoric, even as the polity itself is physically destroyed. [51] Instead, Judahite authors incorporate Babylonian idioms, ideology, and imagery into their own portrayal of empire but do not replace their own local traditions wholesale.

My examination of how such an adoption is enacted in 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 builds strongly on the work of David Vanderhooft, who examined the ways in which prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible engaged with and reflected Neo-Babylonian imperial ideas.[52] Underlying the use of 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 as a case-study is my conviction that even texts that purport to tell a history, do so from particular ideological positions and represent particular interests and biases of the author. That is, while texts like Kings and Nebuchadnezzar's royal inscriptions each offer concrete information about specific historical situations, they also communicate the conceptual world of empire and kingship their authors operated within.[53]

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[51] Liverani observes, "The breaking down of the ideologically active centers (temples, palaces) in the peripheries of the empire, and their replacement with terminals which repeat the central ideology, bring about an impoverishment and a levelling out of culture throughout the empire, fostered by measures such as deportations, linguistic unification, provincial administration." See further, Liverani, "Ideology," 300.

[52] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*. As Vanderhooft noted in his own work, this kind of comparative approach—using biblical texts to gain insight into imperial systems—is not wholly a new one. Peter Machinist, for example, argued that the biblical texts provide important insights into the reception of Assyrian ideology, pointing to examples from Isaiah and Nahum. His study offered persuasive evidence for a positive adoption of some of the Neo-Assyrian self-representation within literature from the Hebrew Bible, and highlighted the efficacy of the imperial propagandistic machine. Machinist and Vanderhooft's studies provide generative templates upon which to build my own study.

[53] Oppenheim argued, for example, that historical inscriptions "reflect a dialogue that took place continuously at the court of the king between the ruler and those who helped him determine the policies of the realm and reconcile political and economic realities within the traditional aspirations of Mesopotamian rule over an ever-expanding empire." Leo Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," in *Propaganda and Communication in World History* Vol. 1 (ed. H. D. Laswell, D. Cerner, and H. Speier; Honolulu: University Press of

Although my claim that most authors write from particular, ideologically-charged vantage points is one that most historians would agree with, what is peculiar about 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 is the relative inattention its conceptual and ideological worldview has received. This inattention has crucial implications for how scholars use this text as a kind of historical barometer for interpreting archaeological data and reading other texts about Jerusalem's destruction. This chapter thus seeks to focus attention on establishing how this text works as narrative: what is the story it tells? What is the plot, and who are the principal characters? What kind of views does the narrator advance through the story? This literary-informed study thus lays the foundation for inquiry into the text's engagement with Neo-Babylonian imperial ideas.

To understand the conceptual world that underlies the construction of this narrative in Kings, two basic questions structure my inquiry: first, how did Babylonian rulers view themselves? What kinds of images and idioms did they use to convey this view? Second, how does literature from populations they interacted with—militarily, politically, and economically—respond to and even reflect this self-portraiture? Focusing on the refraction of Neo-Babylonian ideology through a close study of the narrative in 2 Kings 23:31–25:30 in its portrayal of Judah's complicated relationship with Babylon, my study offers a new analysis of the framework that structures the narrative and reveals the success with which Babylonian imperial rhetoric permeated Judean literary traditions.[54]

Hawaii, 1979), 118. Put differently, royal inscriptions function as imperial shorthand for the ideology of kingship.

[54] Lavan, Payne, and Weisweiler have recently argued that the endurance of imperial power depends upon the degree to which its ideology is permeable to outsiders—those on the periphery of the empire, who although not the authors of the ideology, play a crucial role in its dissemination and reproduction. See further discussion in Myles Lavan, Richard Payne, John Weisweiler, "Cosmopolitan Politics: The Assimilation and Subordination of Elite Cultures," in *Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Universal Rulers, Local Elites, and Cultural Integration in the*

Vanderhooft's work calls for an examination of how language "encodes the imperial assumptions of the authors," with regard to both Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions and biblical texts, and it is this call that is taken up in this chapter.[55] In the course of pursuing the challenge, this study also contributes to the ongoing effort to analyze the differences between Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian administrative policies in the Levant. While there are elements of continuity in the way in which these powers acted towards the Western reaches of their empires, a close study of 2 Kings 23–25 will also illustrate the important ways in which these powers differed from each other. In so doing, it will also have implications for discussions of the status of Judah under the Babylonian imperial system.[56]

This is primarily a literary and historical critical study that emphasizes the importance of an integrative model in its use of comparative material. By integrative, I mean an approach that takes seriously the possibilities that institutional and conceptual categories were exchanged between empires and states in trans-regional and trans-cultural encounters encounters.[57] This is a

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Ancient Near East and Mediterranean (ed. Lavan, Payne, Weisweiler; Oxford Studies in Early Empires; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 1–12.

[55] While Kings was treated only tangentially in Vanderhooft's study, his work has broad significance for this project, particularly with regards to the methodology used, and his analysis of Nebuchadnezzar's self-portrait and imperial rhetoric.

[56] The question of Judah's status after Jerusalem's destruction is a fraught one, as discussed in the previous section. See further, David Vanderhooft, "Babylonian Strategies of Imperial Control in the West: Royal Practice and Rhetoric," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 235–262.

[57] Such encounters can be seen at a cultural level in the imagery found in texts like Ezekiel 17, which draws on an explicitly Babylonian image and creatively innovates it. For discussion of other concrete exchanges and appropriations, see Pierre Briant, "Sources gréco-hellénistiques, institutions perses et institutions macédoniennes: Continuitees et bricolages," *Achaemenid History 7* (1994): 283–310; Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 1998; Rollinger "From Sargon of Agade and the Assyrian Kings to Khusrao I and Beyond: On the Persistence of Ancient Near Eastern Traditions," in *Leggo! Studies Presented to Frederick Mario Fales on the*

step beyond a simpler comparative approach which treats its subject matter as circumscribed political systems that have "autonomous trajectories… whose trans-regional encounters can be downplayed in the analysis."[58] This study thus identifies and examines the engagement and integration of Babylonian world views into a Judahite *literary* environment that operates at a transcultural level.[59]

2. Imperial Ideology in Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar's Self-Portrait and Strategies of Rule

Babylonian imperial rhetoric and ideology finds its clearest representation in its royal inscriptions, which provide insight into the ideas and self-conception that structure the empire's image of itself. The inscriptions, which catalogue achievements of the ruler, showcase the ways in which rulers perceived themselves and the image they wished to project outwards. Other texts from the Neo-Babylonian royal sphere, such as Babylonian Chronicle, aid in providing information about the administrative procedures deployed by the rulers, but it is the inscriptions which provide access to the ideological conceptions that shaped those procedures.[60]

Occasion of his 65th Birthday (ed. G. B. Lanfranchi, et al.; Weisbaden, 2012), 725–43; Laurianne Martinez-Sève, "Remarques sur la transmission aux Parthes des pratiques de government séleucides: Modalités et chronologie," *Ktèma* 39 (2014): 123–42.

[58] Lavan, et al. "Cosmopolitan Politics," 7–28.

[59] It is unclear where the author of 2 Kgs 23–25 is located. The extent of engagement with Babylonian imperial rhetoric and Akkadian idioms suggests a Babylonian setting for the composition, but this is speculative.

[60] For a discussion of how trans-cultural contact can be identified, and how imperial ideology was consciously shaped in literature, see Caroline Waerzeggers, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity* (eds. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 131-146; idem, "Facts, Propaganda, or History? Shaping Political Memory in the

Understanding this self-image is a critical step in examining its afterlives as refractions in Judean literature.

The royal inscriptions follow a relatively stable pattern, first reconstructed by Stephen Langdon, who argued that the Neo-Babylonian type was based on an earlier Sumerian version.[61] Such inscriptions begin with a titulary, which ends with a predicative clause *anāku*, "I," and is followed by a temporal conjunction *inūma,* "when," in which the king recounts his selection by the gods. Some inscriptions expand this section, recounting the various achievements of the king prior to the one being commemorated within the inscription itself. This section is followed by a further specification of temporality *inūmīšu*, "at that time," which introduces a description of the main significant building project embarked on by the ruler being memorialized in the inscription. The text typically concludes with a prayer, requesting divine intercession for the king. As more inscriptions were studied with this typology in mind, it was found that not all the inscriptions matched the prototype exactly. In his presentation of a revision of Langdon's original typology,

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Nabonidus Chronicle," in *Political Memory in and after the Persian Empire* (eds. Jason M. Silverman and Caroline Waerzeggers; SBLANEM 13; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 95-12; idem, "Babylonian Kingship in the Persian Period: Performance and Reception," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (eds. J. Stökl and C. Waerzeggers; BZAW 478; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 181–222.

[61] Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonische Köngsinschriften* (VAB 4; trans. R. Zehnpfund; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), see esp. p. 6. Langdon's collection is still the most comprehensive one of Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, though the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (RINBE) project at Ludwig Maximillians Universität, München is currently compiling all the inscriptions that have been discovered since Langdon's publication. The project anticipates the publication of a fully-annotated, three-part work on the royal inscriptions of the NB empire. Rocío da Riva has already published a significant number of NB inscriptions, and offers some significant changes to Langdon's typology. See further da Riva, *The Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions: An Introduction* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), esp. 68–69; idem, *The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amēl-Marduk, and Neriglissar* (Boston; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013).

Berger presented a simpler, three-part system comprising a titulary, report, and hymn.[62] These three categories accounted for the various differences in the formulae used to lead from one section to the next, while preserving the distinctive nature of each section.

My examination of the imperial grammar in these inscriptions takes place along three axes: the titulary employed by Babylonian rulers; the presentation of the relationship with the subject people; and the portrayal of Babylon as the center of abundance. Imperial rhetoric is tightly woven, crafting an image of Babylon as the epicenter of political activity and its ruler as the guardian of all people, not just Babylonians. Babylon and its monarch's position are sanctioned and commissioned by the gods, and their support is made manifest by the flourishing of temples in Babylon.[63]

2.i. Titulary

The Neo-Babylonian rulers exhibited a keen interest in the past, as seen by their regard for ancient inscribed bricks, archaic language, and copying of early texts.[64] In Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, this interest is overtly displayed in the preoccupation with common archaic titles, such as *iššakku*, "city ruler," used in Sargonic times and *šakkanakku*, "governor general," from

[62] Paul-Richard Berger, *Die neubabylonischen Köngsinschriften: Köngsinschriften des ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches (625–539 a. Chr.*) (AOAT 4/1; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener, 1973).

[63] See also discussion in Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire,* 13–59. Vanderhooft also treats by the inscriptional rhetoric of Nabopolassar and Nabonidus, and studies their patterns in comparison to Neo Assyrian rulers.

[64] Irene J. Winter, "Babylonian Archaeologists of The(ir) Mesopotamian Past," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* Volume 2 (ed. P. Matthiae et al.; Rome: Dipartimento di scienze storiche, archeolog- iche e antropologiche dell'antichità, 2000), 1785–1800.

the Ur III period.[65] David Vanderhooft and P-R. Berger have both convincingly shown that title *šar Bābili*, "king of Babylon," ubiquitous in Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, reflects the adoption of a royal title that goes back to the second millennium.[66] The use of archaic titles is not itself unusual—indeed Assyrian rulers also draw on archaic epithets— but what stands out is the reuse of titles that are introduced by Hammurapi in the Old Babylonian period. Vanderhooft has argued that this interest reflects a conscious effort of the royal scribes to style the Neo-Babylonian kings as the envoys of an Old Babylonian royal tradition.[67] This allows the rulers to lay claim to a lengthy lineage and the legitimacy that goes along with it. This also aligns with the interest in recovering artifacts of the past such as inscribed bricks, seals, and steles.[68] Vanderhooft observes that multiple Old Babylonian epithets used in these titularies is further noteworthy because they appear only in the Old Babylonian and Neo-Babylonian periods.[69] That is, they are not epithets adopted by the Assyrian rulers. He argues that in selecting such titles, the Neo-Babylonian rulers may be explicitly signaling their difference from their Assyrian neighbors and instead claiming a stronger resemblance to the Old Babylonian traditions of rule.

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[65] CAD, Š/1 176, s.v. *šakkanakku.*

[66] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 16–17; R. Berger, *Königsinschriften;* W.W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis* (AOS 43; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1957).

[67] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 17. Vanderhooft notes that in addition to the laws of Hammurapi, numerous royal inscriptions of Hammurapi were recopied in Neo-Babylonian script during the 1st millennium. One Neo-Babylonian copy, for example, is specifically of the prologue of the Laws of Hammurapi, which contain lengthy lists of the king's titles. Such evidence suggests, according to Vanderhooft, intimate knowledge of Old Babylonian royal epithets. See also R. Borger, *Babylonisch-Assyriche Lesetücke*, 2nd ed., AnOr 54 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1979).

[68] Irene J. Winter, "Babylonian Archaeologists of The(ir) Mesopotamian Past."

[69] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 17.

Vanderhooft identified a series of these titles. An analysis of the conceptual circles to which they belong suggests a royal profile marked by humble piety, wisdom, and forethought: *ašru*, "humble," *bābil igisê rabûtim ana…* (the recipients are deities or temples, or both), *emqu*, "wise one," *etel šarrī*, "prince of kings," *mugarrini karê bitrûtim* "the one who stores barley in huge piles,"[70] *muštālu*, "judicious one."

The use of the most common royal title in these royal inscriptions, *šar Bābili*, is also reflected in Biblical Hebrew texts that discuss Babylonian incursions and assaults in Judah. What suggests that this was a specific reference to the king's title, and not just a generic reference to his position over the Babylonian people is that when referring to Babylonians, the texts in the Hebrew Bible consistently refer to the "Chaldeans," and there are no instances in which the king is described as being the "king of the Chaldeans." In 2 Kings 25: 1, for example, Nebuchadnezzar appears with the Hebraized version of this very title, נבכדנאצר מלך בבל, and is referred to solely by the title in many of the verses that follow, suggesting that the title was not only a ubiquitous one in royal inscriptions but also in texts that discussed the monarchs.[71] To use this title also activates a constellation of expectations attendant on the term "king," chief among

[70] Interestingly, Joseph is also described as storing up huge quantities of grain in Genesis 41.

[71] This is also true of the representation of Assyrian rulers in biblical sources. In 2 Kings 18, for example, the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib is consistently referred to solely by his title, "King of Assyria." Assyrian rulers who controlled Babylon adopted some of these Babylonian titles, the most common of which was *šar Bābili*. Sargon and Esarhaddon both refer to themselves with these titles, while Sennacherib, notably antagonistic towards Babylon, "claims no Babylonian epithets." See discussion in Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 19; J. Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967), esp. 14. This title is not among those by which Neo-Babylonian rulers sought to distinguish themselves from Assyria, as those mentioned on pp. 38.

which are those concerning building and expansion of the empire's borders, and securing or establishing peace and stability in the empire.[72]

In Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, language about imperial expansion is notably subdued in comparison to Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.[73] Vanderhooft has persuasively demonstrated that emphasis is instead placed on building activity and the responsibility of the kings to restore temples and refurbish them. While Assyrian inscriptions too boast of the king's ties to the cult, their emphasis is more forcefully on military expeditions and accomplishments of the ruler. In Neo-Babylonian inscriptions that do attest to expansion, it seems to be presented only as a necessary step in order to accomplish building or refurbishment activities.[74] That is, it is an ancillary mention in a process whose end goal is the reconstruction of cultic centers. In Nabopolassar's inscriptions for example, the gods select him for a two–part task: to rule the land (*ana bēlūt māti*) and to provide for cultic centers and renew shrines (*ana zanān māḫāzī uddušu*

[72] See discussions in Mario Liverani, "The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings" *CANE* IV (ed. Jack Sasson, et al.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 2353–66; Douglas Green, *"I Undertook Great Works," The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions* (FAT II/41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); A.L. Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," 111–44. In different time periods, certain expectations have been enhanced and emphasized while others may be suppressed. In the Neo-Assyrian period, for example, which focused heavily on imperial expansion, literary narratives highlighted the military exploits of the rulers.

[73] Contrary to E.J. Bickerman's argument, there is little evidence to suggest that the Neo-Babylonian rulers simply "inherited" Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology. Cf. E.J. Bickerman, "Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem" in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, (Jubilee Volume [Part 1] (1979 - 1980), 69-85.

[74] As Vanderhooft has argued, this is in sharp contrast to the Assyrians for whom Assyrian expansion was essential not only for supporting building activity but also as a fundamental tenet of Assyrian "imperial creed" that, required by Aššur, aimed at making the whole world into the image of Assyria. Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 41.

ešrēti).[75] The same is true for Nebuchadnezzar II, whose inscriptions also express a widening sphere of geographical influence. Noteworthy is the absence of any accounts in these inscriptions of military campaigns (though the Babylonian Chronicle certainly attests to military activity)– in the "call" portion of inscriptions, deities simply "give" and "hand over" territories to the rulers, creating an image of a rather benign takeover of territory.[76]

In Nebuchadnezzar's Etemenanki cylinder inscription, the ruler provides specific descriptions of the mustering of foreign labor forces for renewing Marduk's temple in Babylon, many of whom come from prominent cult centers outside Babylon.[77] The narratives these inscriptions present is one in which the ruler is primarily just and benevolent, and that his motivation for commanding resources and manpower from foreign cities is only to fulfill the divine order to restore and provision Babylonian temples.[78] As I will discuss below, the list of

[75] VAB 4 64 (Npl 2=Zyl II, 1) I 6-7. Also see discussion in Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 23–33.

[76] Machinist has shown that this is in distinction to Assyrian practices; in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, kings were at pains to both demonstrate the "otherness" of the populations they conquered, and to demonstrate divine approval for their actions. Machinist notes in particular the example of Sargon II who explicitly states that others had to be taught to be like Assyrians in order to be incorporated into the empire. Where or not such practices were followed by the Babylonians in reality, their inscriptions remain silent on the subject. Peter Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C.," in *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike, die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* (ed. K. Raaflaub and E. Müller-Luckner,. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1993), 77–104, see esp. pp. 95–96; Also see Hayim Tadmor, "Propaganda, Literature, Historiography, Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *Assyria 1995* (eds. S. Parpola, Robert M. Whiting; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project 1997), 327.

[77] F.H. Weissbach, *Die Inschriften Nebukadnezars II im Wâdī Brîsā und am Nahr el-Kelb* (WVDOG 5. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1906).

[78] See also Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 41: The Etemenanki cylinder "enumerates regions within the empire by name precisely because they provide personnel for corvée or raw materials… for the construction of Marduk's ziggurat."

items taken by Nebuchadnezzar presented in 2 Kings 25 lists primarily cultic and temple accouterments, suggesting the possibility that even narratives by subjugated populations participated in the dissemination of this idea of temple-centered policy of resource extraction.[79]

2.ii. Relationship to the Subject People: Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, King of Justice

Nebuchadnezzar's historical inscriptions highlight his commitment to renewing and furnishing the temples in Babylon. The other major component of kingship was the requirement *ana bēlūt māti*, "to rule the land." In addition to the spatial component of governing the physical land, this requirement also necessitated a relationship with the people who lived in the land. As Vanderhooft notes, evidence for the type of relationship Nebuchadnezzar envisions comes from a variety of sources, mostly notably his inscriptions. In one well-known inscription, Nebuchadnezzar states:

"As for the widespread peoples whom Marduk, the lord, gave into my hand… I continually strove for their welfare. (In) a just path and correct conduct I directed them…. I stretched a roof over them in the wind (and) a canopy in the tempest. I brought all of them under the sway of Babylon. The yield of the lands, the abundance of the mountain regions, the produce

[79] Nebuchadnezzar, for example, repeatedly emphasizes the goods that are flowing into Babylon. The ideological goal here is to reinforce the idea that Babylon is the center of the world and that the city is a symbol of the divine sanction for Nebuchadnezzar to rule. See further, Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 45–49. See also Michael Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Israel, and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974), 118; A.K. Grayson, "Assyria and Babylonia," *Or* n.s. 49 (1980): 140-94. On the importance of temple building in ancient Israel and the bible, see Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup; 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

of the countries, I received within it (Babylon). Into its eternal shade I assembled all the peoples for good."[80]

Like other royal inscriptions, this too participates in broader conceptions of kings being divinely appointed. Yet, as Vanderhooft has noted, it expands the existing metaphor, from having responsibility for the inhabitants of Babylon itself to the world at large. The message of this passage is that to be under the control of Babylon is to have access to the king's protection, benevolence, and justice.

Coupled with this rhetoric of Babylon's eternal shade are other phrases from inscriptions of the emperor such as *haṭṭu išartu*, "the just scepter," granted to the ruler by the god *Nabû ana šutētšur kal dadmē u šummuhu tensetim* "to lead all the inhabited regions aright and to make humanity thrive."[81] In other instances, Nebuchadnezzar claims that he causes people everywhere to prosper and that he is the good shepherd who directs them in the proper path and way of life. Vanderhooft observes that the imperial ideology here portrays conquest as something that can be viewed positively because the "eternal shadow of Babylon" is cast as "as a restorative one."[82] Nebuchadnezzar refers to his royal scepter as *šibirru mušallim nišī,* "the scepter for keeping the people well," a transformation from the idea that the scepter is a weapon to be feared to an idea that it is an instrument of guidance and protection.[83] The language used to describe the bringing

[80] Landsberger Review of Unger, *Babylon, ZA* 41 (1933): 292–99); Unger, *Babylon* 283 ii 6–21; Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire,* 42.

[81] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire,* 42

[82] Ibid,, 43.

[83] Ibid, 43.

together of peoples to Babylon thus highlights the purely positive aspects of Babylonian rule, omitting references to forced deportations or military subjugation. This is not to say that this rhetoric is an accurate representation of reality—the deportations and archaeological record prove otherwise, but it is a reflection of how Nebuchadnezzar wished to be viewed.

Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions also reveal an abiding concern with the pursuit of justice. Lambert published an inscription attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II, which described a series of legal reforms in which the king issues a series of *riksātu* "regulations."[84] One section reads:

[22] He was not negligent in the matter of true and righteous judgement, he did not rest night or day, [23] but with council and deliberation he persisted in writing down judgments and decisions arranged to be pleasing to the great lord Marduk, [24] and for the betterment of all peoples and the settling of the land of Akkad. [26] He drew up improved regulations for the city, he built anew the law court. [27] He drew up regulations… his kingship forever… [85]

Column II 23:27 of this inscription ascribes to this unnamed "just king" a code of laws, which Lambert suggests portrays the king as a second Hammurapi. This positions the king as participant in an old tradition of the monarch's role as upholder of justice in the land. Lambert claims that the theme is not in the least distinctive.[86] However, Vanderhooft argues to that contrary to Lambert's assessment, Nebuchadnezzar is innovating upon an old tradition by claiming responsibility not only for his Babylonian subjects, but also for non-Babylonian ones. Imperial power has extended its benevolent shade beyond Babylon itself. Vanderhooft's

[84] Wilfred G. Lambert, "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Justice," *Iraq* 27 (1965): 1–11.

[85] Ibid, 8.

[86] Ibid, 4.

argument is strengthened by attention to Nebuchadnezzar's penchant for archaic language as fodder for his imperial vision, which significantly expands upon Old Babylonian ideals. While Hammurapi furnishes the parameters of successful kingship, Nebuchadnezzar broadens their scope.[87] By including non-Babylonians in his list of responsibilities, he lengthens the empire's reach and lays claim to a universal sovereignty.

Vanderhooft's additional support for Nebuchadnezzar's innovation in imperial reach and responsibility is particularly instructive for recognizing his conscious effort to shape imperial practice. Nebuchadnezzar uses two specific phrases: the first, *šar mīšarim* "king of justice," a title first created by Hammurapi and resurrected by Nebuchadnezzar, and the second, the statement "I directed them in the proper path and the correct way of life," which occurs elsewhere only in Hammurapi's laws, and there, applies only to Babylonians.[88] Nebuchadnezzar's scribes drew on an old tradition about the king's responsibility for upholding justice, but creatively innovated it by extending its reach from citizens proper to the empire at large. Within the claim, "I continually strove for their welfare. (In) a just path and correct conduct I directed them…," Nebuchadnezzar recalibrates imperial beneficence to suggest the

[87] In analyzing how empires draw on past traditions to legitimize their own rule, Sheldon Pollock observes, "one thing a comparative history of empire demonstrates is that it is only by looking at past empires that people have learned to be imperial at all, since empire is a cultural practice and not some natural state." He also notes that imperial practice is "continuously re-created through historical imitation, a process that seems to have run along two axes: vertically in time (through historical memory), and horizontally across space (perhaps through what archaeologists have named peer-polity interaction." See full discussion in Sheldon Pollock, "Empire and Imitation," in *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (ed. Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore; New York: The New Press, 2006), 59–80. See especially pp. 76–78.

[88] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 44.

possible integration of all people (including, one assumes, deportees) into a larger imperial framework.[89]

Noteworthy also is his emphasis on leading the people on the "right path." This image draws on the notion of a royal shepherd who leads his flock safely. Coupled with the repeated statements of goods and tribute continuously flowing into Babylon, the narrative creates a powerful image of stability, peace, and economic prosperity under Nebuchadnezzar's rule. Significant too is the ability of such rhetoric to create a potent set of identity politics that ostensibly includes all people, even though it consistently privileges the Babylonian metropole.[90] This stands in sharp contrast to other royal inscriptions which continually emphasize that the benefits of ruler accrue only to the king's own people and not the empire at large. In the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, as well as West Semitic ones such as Karateppe and Kilamuwa, rulers

[89] This willingness, at least rhetorically, to integrate all people seems to stand apart from the Neo-Assyrian approach. The Neo-Assyrian rulers adopted a two-pronged strategy in dealing with subject populations: for those in or near the Assyrian heartland, local identities were erased and alliances dismantled. All people within this region were referred to as Assyrians, not in the spirit of inclusion but rather as a means to undo bonds of geographical and traditional identities. For regions on the periphery of the empire, the Assyrians established an exacting system of client tributaries. Although they were permitted to retain their identities, they had to swear allegiance to the Assyrian king, an allegiance which was concretely expressed in the payment of tribute. See Peter Machinist, "Palestine, Administration of (Assyro-Babylonian)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. 5 (ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 73. Also see Karen Radner, "Assyria and the Medes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran* (ed. Daniel Potts; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 442–56.

[90] This contrasts the overt, explicit efforts of the Assyrians to assert their cultural and political superiority of their subjugated populations. Nebuchadnezzar's seemingly consciously tries to resist the use of such language. While Sargon II boasted of conquering people by the might of the sword and forcing deported populations to *pâ ištēn ušaškinma*, "be established as one mouth," Nebuchadnezzar's hyper-insistence on Babylon being the center of political, religious, and social control is no less prescriptive, only less explicit. For a discussion of Sargon II and other Assyrian imperial strategies of control, see Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria," 95–96, and Mordechai Cogan, *Assyria, Israel, and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974) 49–50.

draw a distinction between their own people and the populations of the acquired territories.[91] At the same time, even as Nebuchadnezzar articulates an imperial vision that encompasses all people under his sway, their subordination is entrenched as he requires them to acquiesce to his position of authority and rule over them. He engages the periphery without creating an infrastructure that will sustain an enduring territory. Although the people come under Babylon's protective shadow, the shadow also requires an extraction of resources—both material goods and human capital. Nebuchadnezzar's cosmopolitan vision is thus extremely complex in the way it both incorporates and assimilates a vast swath of people groups but also subordinates them to a broader normative framework that positions Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon at the center.

2.iii. Networking Abundance: Babylon as Nucleus

Examination of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions reveals an oft-repeated claim of goods flowing consistently towards the center, Babylon. The gravitational pull of the center does not restrict itself to material goods alone but also includes people. This portrayal of abundance–in economic goods, material tribute, skilled professionals, and corvée labor–has significant affective power. Situating Babylon as the locus of this power is an idea that is uniquely present in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions.[92] Irene Winter, who examined how the notion of abundance functions in Assyrian art and royal inscriptions, argues that the artistic display of abundance, signaled through repetition of images like palmettes, rosettes, and palm trees, was a way to show

[91] See discussion in Green, *I undertook Great Works*, 151–14. Green shows that although Kilamuwa was committed to establishing peace and security for his people, the provisions only extended to the residents of Ya'diya; also see F.M. Fales, "Kilamuwa and the Foreign Kings: Propaganda vs. Power" *Die Welt des Orients* 10 (1979): 6–22.

[92] Vanderhooft observes that this is altogether lacking in Nabopolassar's rhetoric.

that the king had the support of the gods in his kingdom. This was emphasized further by certain epithets and titles they selected for themselves, which underscored their connection to the natural environment.

Nebuchadnezzar too positions himself as a provider and mediator of abundance, which he expresses through titular shorthand: "*mugarrini karê bitrûtim"* the one who stores barley in large piles,[93] *"muṭaḫḫid X,"* "who makes X abundant."[94] His building projects such as the Ishtar Gate show that his desire to provide concrete displays of abundance extended to art: the gate and accompanying processional way featured a repetitive stereotyped rosette, lions, dragons, and other animals, framed on a background of glazed bricks. While such patterning has often been viewed as a mundane expression of repetition, Winter argues that heavily stylized repetitive imagery should be examined as potential visual representations of ideology.[95] She suggests that the use of stylized flowers (the rosette, in this case, but often the bud of a pomegranate), is not simply an artistic flourish but designed to communicate abundance and the king's ability to secure it from the natural world.[96] Winter's theory offers an instructive framework within which to consider how Nebuchadnezzar actively constructs a concept of abundance in his reign through a complex artistic, inscriptional, and architectural program. The location of the Ishtar gate at the

[93] Seux, *Épithètes royales*, 96. This title is claimed only by Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar II.

[94] Ibid, 351–52. Borger observes that this title is also used by Esarhaddon. See further, Borger, Esar. 92 §63, 7.

[95] Irene Winter, "Ornament and the 'Rhetoric of Abundance'," in *Eretz Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographical Studies* 27 (2003), 252–64.

[96] Henrietta Groenewegen-Frankfort argued for example, that repetition is a sign of a loss of "vigor," and that the recourse to the use of patterns is to the detriment of "dramatic character." Henrietta Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement* (London, 1951), 162. See also Irene Winter's brief rebuttal in Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance."

entrance of the city visually emphasized the enhanced order that was to be found within its perimeter and marked the taming of the natural world, signaled through the abundant repetition of real and imagined animals— the dragon, the lion, and the bull.

The ideology promoted by the gate is continued in other elements of Nebuchadnezzar's built environment. Although the palace of the king was initially located at some distance from the processional way, today a portion of Nebuchadnezzar's throne room is displayed near the entrance of the Gate. This façade is noteworthy for the way in which it communicates abundance and order.

Photo: © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, photograph by Olaf M. Teßmer

Reading from the outermost elements towards the center, the composition contains a series of concentric ornamental bands that draw attention inwards and signal a particular view of the world. As Irene Winter noted with regards to Assyrian reliefs, bands and lotus-like scallops at the edges of compositions are elaborately stylized but conventional ways of depicting a

productive "earth," *erṣetu* as well as "territory," or "land," *mātu,* thus conflating together both the arable land needed for the production of agricultural abundance as well as the physical territory of the state. At the center of this relief is a series of palm trees, highly charged symbols of cultivated abundance and fertility.[97] Standing outside the primary bands at the base of the relief (that enclose the the trees) are lions, signaling the tamed periphery. The relief can thus be read as a sequence that emanates from a strong center, in which the king (Nebuchadnezzar) regulates the provision of abundance and the control of the natural world. The artistic program of the Neo-Babylonian ruler participates in the advancing an imperial ideology that claims abundance as a major theme,[98] and the verdant, full seat of kingship reinforces the claim that Nebuchadnezzar is the one who orchestrates it all. The use of *mugarrini karê bitrûtim* and *muṭaḫḫid…* as titles selected by Nebuchadnezzar also speak to this preoccupation with safeguarding and providing abundance, often from the natural world and highlights a sustained interest of the ruler to demonstrate his ability to provide resources to his kingdom.

In Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions, abundance is also expressed through goods and people from captured lands who function to make Babylon the economic and administrative center of the world. The inscriptions describe three primary uses for these goods: the first, precious building materials used in temple construction, the second, materials furnished for the offering

[97] Winter has made a similar argument for the concentric, repetitive bands in a brick panel from Shalmaneser's reign, in which the ruler is depicted at the center of the frame, flanked by trees and encircled by bands that replicate an ideal Mesopotamian plantation. See Winter, "Ornament and The "Rhetoric of Abundance," 171. This kind of imagery is also found from the palace of Zimri-Lim at Mari, in the Old Babylonian period. Nebuchadnezzar's selection of such iconography aligns with his emphasis on abundance as well as his reverence for the past.

[98] Unlike Shalmaneser III's glazed brick panel, this relief does not portray the king himself at the center.

tables of the gods, and third, goods brought as tribute to the king's palace.[99] Although these inscriptions do not accurately convey reality– that is, goods did not only flow in towards the center, but also out, through bilateral trade–these inscriptions convey the fiction of domination and right order,[100] by emphasizing the ruler's skill at procuring goods for the service of the gods, which in turn results in blessings for the people. Liverani has described this as the ruling elite's "prestige," arguing that the flow of goods from the empire's periphery to its center is viewed positively, "as a symptom of power and a prerequisite for the exemplary functioning of the state."[101]

The Etemenanki inscription, in addition to describing corvée labor, also mentions a wide range of places from where workers are brought to Babylon. While much of the list is stereotyped, lacking specificity of individual cities, it creates a fiction of geographical and political reach of the empire, and legitimizes itself by stamping it with divine approval:

The widespread peoples whom Marduk, my lord, entrusted to me, whose shepherdship the hero Šamaš gave me, the totality of the lands, the entirety of all inhabited regions, from the Upper Sea to Lower Sea, remote lands, the people of the far flung inhabited regions, the kings of distant mountain regions and far flung lands in the Upper and Lower Sea, whose lead ropes

[99] For a consideration of how abundance is used in the Assyrian empire, see Irene Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance in Assyria," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* 27 (2003): 252–264.

[100] A.L. Oppenheim, "Essay on Overland Trade in the First Millennium B.C.," *JCS* 21 (1967).

[101] Mario Liverani, *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600–1100 BCE*, 219. For a general overview of the continuity and change between the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, see Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires."

Marduk, my lord, placed in my hands in order to pull his chariot pole, I conscripted… for the building of Etemenanki I imposed the workbasket on them.[102]

This passage exemplifies the rhetoric found in a variety of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions and highlights three aspects of the nature of abundance in the imperial self-presentation: first, it comprises a massive geographic extent; second, both kings and ordinary individuals are coopted into Nebuchadnezzar's building project; and third, Nebuchadnezzar has been granted the ability to carry out this massive accumulation of manpower and resources by the deity Marduk himself. Following this section, the inscription catalogues the regions from where labor is sought. Among the locations is the Land of Ḫatti, which referred at this time to the whole eastern coast of the Mediterranean from Cilicia in the north to Egypt's borders in the south.[103] Judah is thus included in the general list of regions from where corvée labor is sought. A study of this inscription and others reveals specific materials sought and reinforces the contexts for their use: temple construction, the offering tables of the gods, and royal tribute for the king's palace.[104] While building materials were often restricted by region, the use of rare materials showcased Nebuchadnezzar's trade networks and imperial reach.

Attention to Nebuchadnezzar's program of Babylon as the center and seat of abundance may also be viewed in another light. While the ruler repeatedly makes claims to a strong empire, his policy of extraction of resources from the periphery without creating an infrastructure to

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[102] Cited from Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 37. See also BE 1, 1 85 (=WVDOG 59 46 = Zyl IV, 1) 13–30.

[103] Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 40

[104] Ibid, 45.

sustain an enduring territory on the borders of the empire suggests the possibility that underlying the fictional claim of goods flowing into Babylon is a rescaling of imperial goals that makes possible a splendid center.

3. Strategies of Control: Representations of Babylonian Imperial Policy in 2 Kings 23–25

In this section, I examine 2 Kings 23–25's engagement with Babylonian presentation of power along several converging lines. Chief among these exhibitions are the portrayals of siege and deportation, the seizure of temple goods, and Babylonian incursions into Judahite institutions.

3.i. Portrayal of Siege and Deportation:

2 Kings 25 describes Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Jerusalem and its aftermath. The siege begins when Zedekiah rebels against the Babylonians—which presumably meant he ceased to pay tribute. Nebuchadnezzar's arrival with his entire army spells the beginning of the siege, which is marked by the construction of siege-works. Comparative evidence from Mesopotamia suggests that the term מצור refers not just to the situation of siege but also encompasses a wide range of physical structures, including battering rams and ladders.[105] According to the narrative, the siege lasts nearly two years before the famine ensues (25:3).[106]

[105] See for example, Sennacherib's inscription in which he boasts of the siege works possessed by his army: ramps, battering rams, infantry assaults, breaches, tunnels. OIP II 32–33 iii 18-23. For a full treatment of siege warfare in the ancient Near East, see Israel Eph'al, *The City Besieged: Siege and its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[106] The notice of the famine in the land is a literary motif in documents relating sieges and is also a technical formula to describe severe hardship. The corresponding Akkadian expression is *sunqu ina māta šakinma* "there is famine in the land." It appears in multiple texts,

ויחזק הרעב בעיר ולא היה לחם לעם הארץ

In response to this lack of provisions, the Judean king and his mighty men appear to flee the city in verse 4, leaving their subject inhabitants behind. The syntax of this verse is convoluted:

ותבקע העיר וכל אנשי המלחמה הלילה דרך שער בין החמתים אשר על גן המלך וכשדים על העיר סביב וילך דרך הערבה

"And the city was breached, and all the men of battle [*verb missing*] that night the way of a gate, between the walls that were alongside the garden, and the Chaldeans surrounded the city and he went the way of the desert."

וַתִּבָּקַע, a Niphal, prefix-conjugation verb, does not specify an explicit agent of the breaking and so it is unclear who is responsible for the breach in the walls, whether the invading force or the Judeans themselves as they attempted to flee. Here, evidence from siege tactics elsewhere in the ancient Near East prove illuminating: a common technique employed by the invading army was to lay siege for a long period of time and then break down the city walls using battering rams, which had sharp metal points on them designed to pierce dried brick, causing them to fracture and crumble.[107] Given that it was Nebuchadnezzar's army that had built

such as the one describing Ashurbanipal's siege over Babylon (Document K. 128) as well as in YOS VI 154:6–7, a text from the reign of Nabonidus which seems to use the expression as a technical legal idiom for hardship rather than to describe widespread famine. See the discussion of this text in Eph'al, *The City Besieged*, 123 and Raymond P. Doughterty, *The shirkûtu of Babylonian Deities* (YOS 5/2; New Haven: Yale University, 1923), 33.

[107] Eph'al, *The City Besieged*, 90-91. Ussishkin argues that the battering rams were used to attack the balconies atop the walls, which were defended by the soldiers of the besieged city. Having attacked and eliminated them as a threat, soldiers could then mount the wall and penetrate the city. Ushishkin's theory assumes that the siege ramps were made to be high enough such that the battering rams could reach the top of the city walls. Yet iconographic evidence shows the battering rams attacking the body of towers rather that the tops, suggesting that the

the siege works, they are likely also responsible for breaching the city. That this move is undertaken after the notice of the famine, suggests the possibility that the inhabitants within would not be in a position to defend themselves with much vigor. Further, attention to the use of this verb in other contexts in the Hebrew Bible suggests that the root has the connotation of splitting apart.[108] Though often used to describe the splitting of wood, such an understanding also accords with the pattern of siege in battle, which splits or creates a breach by which the invading force can gain entry into the city.[109]

While 2 Kings 25:4 lacks a verb to state what the men of war did when the walls were cleaved, Jeremiah 52:7 supplies one: יברחו. The men of battle, who were supposed to defend the city instead fled from it. Jeremiah 52 also resolves the ambiguity around the identity of the antecedent of "וילך" "he went" at the end of the verse by citing a plural form, "…וילכו" thus referring back to the men of war.[110] 2 Kings 25:5 also assumes flight: the Babylonian army pursues the Judean king, eventually capturing him *and* his men in the plains of Jericho. Yet 2 Kings 25:4 has a third masculine singular form, וילך. While it is possible that this ought to be

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battering rams were not used to attack the balconies. In imagery, ladders were used to scale the walls, while light weapons like slingshots and arrows were used to attack the soldiers who were stationed atop of the walls. See discussion in Ussishkin, *The Renewed Excavations at Lachish (1973–1994)*.

[108] See Gen 22:3; Ex 14:16, 21; Num 16:31; Deut 11:11; Josh 9:4; Judg 15:19; 1 Sam 6:14; 2 Sam 23:16; 1 Kings 1:40; 2 Kings 2:24; 25:4; Is 7:6; 34:15; 48:21; Jer 52:7; Ezek 13:13; 29:7; Zech 14:4; Psa 141:7; 1 Chr 11:18; 2 Chr 21:17.

[109] בקע is not the common root used to express the breaching a city wall, which is usually פרץ (Isa 30:13, Neh 6:1; 2 Kings 14:13, Prov 25:28; Neh 1:3; 3:35; 4:1, 2 Chron 26:6; 32:5).

[110] It seems likely that Jeremiah 52 represents a secondary stage in which the editors resolve the ambiguity of 2 Kings 25:4 to make clear what the soldiers did when the walls were broken (they fled), and clarifies that it was the soldiers who fled, and not just the king himself (as the Kings text reads). See Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 317.

interpreted as a singular verbal form with a collective subject, it suggests that it was only the king who fled towards the desert. The use of the plural verb, וילכו, in Jeremiah 52, counters this idea by making it seem that all the soldiers went towards the wilderness.[111] This serves to portray the Judean king as too cowardly to protect or fight on behalf of his people and so he escaped through the city gates by night, only to be overpowered by the enemy at a distance from the city he should have been protecting. The notice that he leaves through a gate also signals that it is unlikely he and his soldiers created the breach in the city—that was the action of the Babylonian army, and Zedekiah's exit through the garden gate is his response to the action.

In this description of the siege, the narrator gives more weight to the actions of Zedekiah than to the event of the siege. Animating the narrative is the subtle accusation of the king's abrogation of royal responsibility to protect and shepherd the people. The motif of the fleeing king is deployed frequently in military texts and inscriptions from both the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods that present the victor's view.[112] In these texts, depicting the vanquished as fleeing is a way of shaming the conquered by presenting him as weak and cowardly, unable to

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[111] It is also possible that the subject of this plural should be construed as the Chaldean army, which follows the king in pursuit, and is mentioned in the immediately preceding clause. Two reasons suggest, however, that they are not the subject. First, the preceding clause, וכשדים על העיר סביב, "now the Chaldeans were all around the city" seems to be a parenthetical comment, subordinate to the main sentence. Second, in the following verse, they are explicitly named as the subjects: וירדפו חיל כשדים. This explicit naming of the subject suggests they are a new subject, different than the preceding verbs.

[112] The fleeing king is a stock motif in Assyrian inscriptions to highlight a ruler's lack of credibility as provider and protector of his people. Cynthia Chapman has shown how this motif is sharply gendered, and that it structures and permeates accounts of military encounters, where gender is repeatedly used as a tool for diminishing masculinity and power. This "discredited the masculinity of the foreign king by contrasting his fear and cowardice–i.e. his non-performance of constitutive masculine activities–to the Assyrian King's strength and courage. It also spoke effectively to the foreign king's inability to act as "shepherd" to his own people." See full discussion in Cynthia Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite–Assyrian Encounter* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 62; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2004), esp. page 35.

protect his own people. The victorious king is presented as a better ruler who is more suited to shepherd people. Showcasing the conquered ruler as weak serves as legitimization for the victor.

These representations of power coupled with the absence of references to violence done to the city's inhabitants (other than the royal, military, and cultic functionaries), reinforce the impression of the invader's ability to better care for the conquered population. Here, Kings echoes a prominent trope from royal inscriptions, where the victorious king presents himself as a more suitable leader for the conquered population than the defeated king. Instead of languishing under the reign of a weak king, the claim is that the exiled population are transported to a new location where things will go better for them. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, repeatedly claims that he brings conquered people into the "eternal shade of Babylon." The claim sets up a tension between the conquering king who will care for them and the ruler who preferred fleeing over protecting them. Here in Kings, this subtle attempt to coopt the people into endorsing their own deportation to Babylon drives the episode. That the image is deployed here, a text from the "vanquished" population suggests the possibility that it is used to critique the Judean ruler for his failures, and imagines an alternative in which the Babylonian monarch may in fact offer a more suitable candidate for safeguarding the people.[113] The narrator's claims converge with

[113] It is striking that this account also contains no appeal to Yahweh for assistance at any point. One of the characteristic activities of a king in literary portrayals of siege is a prayer to the gods. This is the case both within the Hebrew Bible (see for example, 2 Kings 3:20–27) and also outside it (Zakkur, for example, the king of Hamath and Luash raises his hands in prayer to Ba'al-Shamayin when his enemies are about to attack his city). The account in Jeremiah 21 suggests that Zedekiah too inquired through the prophet if Yahweh would act on Judah's behalf to deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar's assault (Jer 21: 1–2; also 37:3). Jeremiah's response is that Yahweh will not in fact deliver Judah but that he has already decreed its destiny, which is to be conquered by the Chaldeans, and the only ones who survive will be those who cross over to the Babylonian side. The absence of a petitionary element in the Kings narrative may be more than simple omission and rather a implicit expression of their failure to inquire of Yahweh.

Nebuchadnezzar's portrayal of himself as a ruler who leads people well, even those of conquered lands.

Comparative data from Western Asia also clarifies why 2 Kings 25 contains two notices of the Babylonians coming up against Judah in a short period of time–the first, in 25:1 recounts how Zedekiah fled, was captured, and killed by Nebuchadnezzar; and the second, in verse 8, suggests that Nebuchadnezzar's officials came *again* and this second time, burned the city and exiled its inhabitants. Rather than viewing 25:8 and following as the account of a separate siege, as many scholars argue, it is instead another *episode* in the same event.[114] Israel Epha'al, in examining siege warfare in Mesopotamia, demonstrated that coercing the blockaded city by force is a tactic used in prolonged siege warfare.[115] In this tactic, demonstrated on reliefs and in texts narrating sieges, one finds descriptions and images of the execution of captives in the sight of their besieged relatives. Rather than viewing these as marking the *end* of a siege, these incidents are in fact points at which negotiations may occur. If the king (or whomever else is witnessing the death of their relatives) refuses to acquiesce, then renewed efforts are made against the city at large.[116]

This information, coupled with the illustrations on reliefs, illuminates the nature of the siege against Judah, which begins with entrapment and siege blockade, resulting in a famine that

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[114] Bickerman thinks that Nebuchadnezzar's renewed assault represents a separate event planned "in cold blood." Bickerman, "Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem," 84.

[115] Israel Eph'al, "Ways and Means to Conquer a City" in *Assyria 1995* (ed. Simo Parpola and R.M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 49–53.

[116] Ivan Starr, in his study on the queries made of Shamash, finds nine Assyrian letters that pertain to siege warfare. These letters concern Assyrian cities that are threatened by siege and also enemy cities that are threatened *with* siege. They describe in detail the ways and means of occupying and taking control of a city. Foremost among them are coercion and forced famine, the latter of which is accomplished through blockades. See Ivan Starr, *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria* (SAA IV; Helsinki, 1990), 118.

does not succeed on its own in forcing the city to capitulate. Instead, when Zedekiah tries escaping instead of capitulating, another tactic is employed– that of torture and negotiation. Such a negotiation perpetuates a fiction that if the besieged king acquiesces at this point, the invaders will lift the blockade and allow the city to become or to renew its status as vassal.[117] In 2 Kings 25, however, Zedekiah's sons are killed in front of him and his own eyes are blinded afterwards, and there is no possibility for negotiation. Rather than being portrayed as a brave king who willingly undergoes torture for his people, Zedekiah is instead characterized as weak, a ruler who failed to properly fulfill his vassal role, attempted to flee punishment, and finally, is humiliatingly tortured and forced to watch his sons be killed. It is only after this–including the king's deportation to Babylon–that the Babylonian king renews his efforts against the city and is "successful," that is, he is able to extract massive resources both material and human. This extraction of the city's resources and the destruction of its built environment, coupled with the exile of its prominent citizenry, make Judah's position crumble and in verse 21, the narrator states that Judah itself went into exile.

3. ii. Diverting Abundance: The Flow to Babylon

Across the Levant and Western Asia, the role of a king was closely associated with providing and protecting abundance in the land. Abundance was signaled visually through the use of copious amounts of gold and other costly stones in architecture, and the use of agricultural

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[117] In the Assyrian invasion against Hezekiah, the Assyrians claim that if the people make an agreement with the Assyrian ruler, then it will go well for the people, and every individual will be able to dwell securely (2 Kings 18:31). Whether or not the promise would be honored if the king acquiesced is another matter, but the speaker (or negotiator, in 2 Kings 18:31) presents it as being a possible outcome. Of course, things proceeded quite differently in Hezekiah's battle with the Assyrians, but nonetheless negotiation is a potential strategy to compel submission.

imagery like pomegranates and palmettes in reliefs, cultic objects, and garments worn by priests and the elite.[118] These visual demonstrations, found especially in temples and palaces, communicated right relations between king and deity.[119] The deity, as the ultimate source of abundance, mediated distribution of "blessings" through the king, and the king's ability to resource the temple in turn signaled his ability to carry out his responsibilities properly.[120] The temple and its priests had both an affective role in disseminating the notion of abundance as well as a practical one, as the temple was also the site of grain distribution of a community.[121] Abundance and governance is also signaled through the palace of the king, the site of the king's residence as well as an institution of administrative, legal, ceremonial, and judicial activities.[122]

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[118] Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance," *EI* (2003), 252–264.

[119] In the Hebrew bible, this relationship between king and deity is exploited in the royal characterization of Yahweh, as well as in the depiction of favored kings like Solomon. I explore this issue further in Chapter 4.

[120] This exhibition of power works both ways. The very fact that the king can command these resources reinforces the fact that the deity–in Judah's case, Yahweh– has already been fulfilling his promise of fertility and abundance to the people.

[121] See a nuanced discussion of what grain storage, distribution, and collection entailed in Tate Sewell Paulette, *Grain Storage and the Moral Economy in Mesopotamia 3000–2000 BCE* (Unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015), esp. pp. 15–30.

[122] In one Sumerian text from the 18th c. BCE, the king refers to a palace he commissions to as "the seat of his own kingship," while another text, a hymn, presents the king describing the foundations of his rule as being made strong "in the palace of kingship, in my pure, good seat." Such texts show that the palace was a critical emblem of rule. See J.V. Kinnier-Wilson, The Nimrud Wine Lists: A Study of Men and Administration at the Assyrian Capital in the 8th Century B.C. (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1972), 45; Irene J. Winter, "Seat of Kingship"/ "A Wonder to Behold": The Palace as Construct in the Ancient near East" *Ars Orientalis: Special Issue on Pre-Modern Islamic Palaces* (1993) 27–55 (see especially p. 27). That the palace is not simply a beautiful house is also indicated at a lexical level by the word for palace that is used in Sumerian and Akkadian: É.GAL, a composite sign formed by the combination of the word "house," and the adjective "great". Winter persuasively argues that this sign denotes scale at a very basic level, but "may also be seen to reflect elevated (enlarged) status and function" as a place where governing takes place and statecraft is conducted. See further, Winter, "Seat of Kingship," 27. I have also discussed the implications of this idea for the

While the monumental architecture is itself an assertion of power, palaces also depict royal standing by the use of costly construction materials and extensive decorations.[123] These visual exhibitions of opulence reinforce the intended impact upon the viewer.[124] The ability to harness the necessary resources is at once a glorification of the king and a concretization of his legitimacy to rule.[125]

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characterization of Yahweh in Pentateuchal priestly source in a paper titled "The Royal Deity and his Kingly Residence: Palace and Temple in the P Source" for Jeffrey Stackert's course, *The Priestly Source in the Hebrew Bible*.

[123] While building materials were often restricted by region, the use of rare materials showcased the ruler's trade networks and imperial reach. Through the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, as well as the Neo-Babylonian period, the use of costly construction materials is a frequent boast in royal inscriptions. See discussion in Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Israel, and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974), 118; A.K. Grayson, "Assyria and Babylonia," *Or* n.s. 49 (1980): 140-94; Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 45–49.

[124] The affective power of temple and palace construction is hinted at in an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, who states for example, that when he engages in monumental building projects, he will fill them with *lulû*, "splendor." VAB 4 132 (Nbk 15 = St. Tfl. X) vi 19–21. In the Hebrew Bible, the priestly narrative about the tabernacle also contains subtle references to affective power of both the structure itself as well as the individuals who serve in it. In the description of the priestly attire in Ex 28:40, the clothes for the sons of Aaron are "for glory and splendor." Similarly, the use of the cherubim recalls a feature common in Mesopotamian palaces, which frequently place such hybrid creatures at entrances to restricted spaces. Within this text, the cherubim are also important because they are positioned the underneath the place where Yahweh meets with Moses. Haran observes that the two cherubs, coupled with the notice that God dwells above them, "represent nothing less than a throne for God." Haran, *Temples and Temple Service*, 190; Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, I (Berkeley, 1970), esp. pp. 8–15, 60–66.

[125] Paul Garelli has argued that when describing features of the palace or its functionaries the standard words for 'well-built,' 'beautiful,' etc., are not used regularly, and instead, vocabulary associated with the king and his attributes are instead applied as descriptors. Thus, since the palace is the creation of the king, it itself was imbued with some of the king's qualities. The temple and palace, as the grandest architectural structures, mirror (in the built environment) the king as the grandest individual among all the citizens. See Garelli's discussion in "La conception de la beauté en Assyrie" in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (ed. T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard, and P. Steinkeller; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 173–77.

Both priests and kings played a critical role in the display, administration, and distribution of abundance.[126] As discussed earlier, Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly highlighted abundance as a critical emblem of his rule in a way that other rulers before him—Babylonian and Assyrian—had not done. Nebuchadnezzar's expression of abundance is one that positions Babylon at the center of the world towards which all goods flow. The reverse of abundance can also be imagined from his inscriptions: scarcity, concretized most categorically through famine–natural or forced.

In 2 Kings 25, the author systematically undoes the state network of abundance by deporting the king and the priests, as well as extracting its signifiers–the temple accouterments.[127] The built structures of the palace and temple, also signifiers of abundance, order, and power, are destroyed by burning them to the ground. With the benefactor and the administrators gone, and the temple, the seat of abundance, burned to the ground, Nebuchadnezzar's forces terminate Judah's bounty literally and figuratively.[128] The possibility of future abundance is eliminated by the deportation of the city's skilled workers and the destruction of its built environment. The assassination of Zedekiah's sons also terminates that

[126] I am thankful to Professor Jeffrey Stackert for calling my attention to this practical role the priests played in the distribution of abundance. See again Paulette, *Grain Storage and the Moral Economy*, for discussion of this role.

[127] Note that according to 2 Kings 12:18, Jehoash gave the "treasures" of the temple–presumably the costliest items in it to King Hazael of Aram. Thus by the time Jehoiachin was defeated and deported, the treasures would already have been gone. In Jehoiachin's deportation, the craftsmen and smiths were also exiled, as were many of the elite and royal family.

[128] For a chronology of these events as well as those recounted in 2 Kings 24, see Hayim Tadmor, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah" *JNES* 15 (1956): 226-230.

particular royal line, reinforcing the lack of ability to produce lineage—another potent communicator of abundance.[129]

A striking feature of the narrative in 2 Kings 25 is the manner in which it mirrors, in reverse order, a standard organization of historical inscriptions that detail military assaults. Such inscriptions, attested across Western Asia and the Levant, detail both military and domestic achievements.[130] The narrative within these texts usually demonstrates a clear sequence of military conflict to stability and development in the natural environment (usually through the development of gardens and other exempla of heightened order of natural elements) and finally, to construction of architectural spaces. In Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, the military exploits are highlighted as particularly critical evidence of the king's fitness for rule. Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions accord military conflicts little narrative space but some inscriptions do mention them as elementary steps in the exhibition of their suitability for rule.[131] These Neo-Babylonian inscriptions focus more heavily on the domestic achievements of the king in the areas of building and cultic restoration.[132] The progression of these achievement narratives also has a spatial

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[129] When Nebuchadnezzar rebuilds Emah, he closes his inscription with a prayer that concludes: "Make numerous my offspring, multiply my progeny, and make my offspring thrive in safety among my descendants" (C 21 II: 4–16), and in the longer version of the same rebuilding project, "May my progeny be multiplied, may my descendants endure, make my offspring thrive in happiness among my people" (C 39 III: 6–31). See discussion in da Riva, *Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions,* 55–56.

[130] See discussion of this literary trope in Green, *"I Undertook Great Works."*

[131] Rocío da Riva argues that an intimation of Nebuchadnezzar's western campaigns may be found in his Wadi Brisa inscription, where Nebuchadnezzar claims that with the assistance of Nabû and Marduk, he had to send troops to Lebanon to do battle, where he "exterminated the enemy" and "allowed the people of Lebanon to dwell in a green meadow." See discussion in da Riva, *The Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions*, 12–13.

[132] In nearly every case, however, no matter how briefly mentioned, military campaigns function to catalyze other achievements of the ruler. Building projects and other domestic achievements thus function as an extension and the end result of successful kingship that begin

organization, which typically begins with the taming of the periphery through the subduing of enemies or the imposition of tribute and moves steadily inwards, beginning with the outskirts of the kingdom where agriculture in the fields is made to flourish, and finally to the center, in which the building takes place and horticulture thrives.[133] Upon achieving resolution of disorder, beginning with the most exterior one and progressing inwards, the narrative shifts its attention from the international level and focuses it on the domestic center. Having subdued the outer world, the king embarks on enhancing or restoring order within the city walls, through the restoration and new construction of temples and palaces.

In 2 Kings 25, the opposite is described, and strikingly, the description of the siege mirrors in reverse order the achievement model. It describes not the successful ruler but rather

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with victorious military campaigns or the procurement of abundance for building and restoration projects.

[133] Douglas J. Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"* (FAT II/41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). Green observes that the motif of a luxurious garden plays a significant role in the self-presentation of Assyrian rulers. While the assurance of fertility and abundance throughout the king's territory is part of the greatness of his rule, the creation of garden spaces– *kirimaḫus*– is taken as proof "of his ability to create an ideal world in microcosm." Gardens are symbolic of heightened order particularly with regards to fertility and wealth. The creation of royal gardens is often listed among the accomplishments of rulers. In the stela of Ashurnasirpal II, for example, the ruler describes how he imported various exotic plants and trees for the royal gardens at Kalhu, and specifically names the myrtle, known as *asu* (GIŠ ŠIM *a-su*) in Akkadian, a plant highly regarded for its aromatic, ornamental, and medicinal properties: *ina* [KUR].KUR. MEŠ *šá at-tal-la-ku u ḫur-šá-ni šá e-ta-ti-qu* GIŠ.MEŠ NUMUN.MEŠ-*ni šá a-tam-ma-r[u* G]IŠ *e-re-nu* GIŠ.ŠUR.MÌN GIŠ.ŠIM.ŠAL GIŠ.ŠEM.LI GIŠ.ŠIM.*a-su*…, "In the lands in which I traveled, and the mountains through which I crossed, the trees and seeds which I found were: cedars, cypresses, box-trees, burasu-junipers, myrtle trees …" Translating *amāru* as "found" rather than "saw," suggests that the Ashurnasirpal saw *and brought back* the trees back to his garden, which provides a better contextual meaning for the passage that is describing the creation and contents of Ashurnasirpal's gardens. On GIŠ.ŠIM.*a-su* "myrtle," see CAD 1:2 (A) 342. For GIŠ.ŠIM.*a-su*, Wiseman reads GIŠ.ŠEM.A.SU, "physicians ointment." Donald J. Wiseman, "A New Stela of Aššur-naṣir-pal II*"* *Iraq* 14 (1952) 24–44 "New Stela," 30. Lessøe translates this as "medicinal plant"." See discussion in Jorgen Lessøe, *People of Ancient Assyria: Their Inscriptions and Correspondence* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1963), 105.

the unsuccessful one. The narrative begins with the assault on the center, in which the king flees his own city walls, the temple is set on fire, and the elite are either killed or deported. The implication is a systematic undoing of created order, beginning with the central buildings, the important functionaries–the king and others–and the physical markers of success– the pillars of the temple and the accouterments within. The broader move within these final units of 2 Kings also hints at the agenda of the narrator: while systematically destabilizing the image of Judean control, the narrative simultaneously is articulating and moving towards a new political epicenter, Babylon. The narrative in 2 Kings 23:31–25 reflects an awareness of the broader tradition of historical inscriptions of royal achievements but upends the form and reverses it to describe the city's destruction rather than its heightened order.

3.iii. Renegotiating Identity: Babylonian Incursions into Judahite Institutions

In this section, I examine three instances of Babylonian incursions into Judean territory that also result in the encroachment of imperialism into political structures: the appointment of Zedekiah; the subsequent appointment of Gedaliah; and the favor shown to Jehoiachin. An early sign of Babylonian infiltration into Judah's political structure first comes in the vacuum created by the deportation of Jehoiachin. In the king's absence, the narrator states that the Babylonian monarch appoint a new political head—Mattaniah, the uncle of the previous ruler,[134] and that the monarch also changes the name of this new ruler to Zedekiah.

3.iii.a Zedekiah and the Judgment at Riblah

[134] Appointing a replacement from within the royal family is attested in other instances of Neo-Babylonians taking control of royal ascensions. See discussion in Bickerman, "Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem," 77–79.

At the beginning of 2 Kings 25 the narrator announces that Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonians who installed him on the throne. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, and Zedekiah attempts to evade punishment by fleeing. He is quickly overtaken and captured and brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. In 2 Kings 25:6, the text states that וידברו אתו משפט "they pronounced judgment over him." This phrase is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible at Jeremiah 1:16 and 4:12, where context suggests formal legal proceedings are brought against individuals who have forsaken or disregarded an agreement. Both occurrences in Jeremiah are also located within a Neo-Babylonian context and may be generated by an Akkadian idiom *dinam dabābu*, "to initiate a legal case." Nebuchadnezzar's own inscriptions may also furnish the background of the use of this idiom in this particular instance. As described earlier in this chapter, the Babylonian king styled himself as the *šar mišarim*, "the king of justice."[135] It may be that this claim prompts 2 Kings 25:6.[136]

Jeremiah 39:3 may also provide additional clarity to the situation described in Kings. In Jeremiah 39, which parallels 2 Kings 25 almost perfectly, there is a plus in which the author states that the various officials of Nebuchadnezzar came and sat at the city gates, in response to which Zedekiah and his men flee:

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[135] See Lambert, "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Justice."

[136] Cogan has argued against such a correspondence with *dinam dabābu*. He argues "a fair trial before a judge is not applicable here." He argues instead for a semantic correspondence with *šipṭam šakānu* "to punish," but does not furnish any evidence for warranting such a correspondence. His argument rests on the idea that *dinam dabābu* only refers to "pleading" a case in which the plaintiff has a just cause and is the one who initiates the proceedings. Yet the idiom has a wider application and can refer also to bringing a complaint or charge against someone for wrongdoing. It is this reading that seems to be deployed here in 2 Kings 25:6. In my reading however, it is Nebuchadnezzar who initiates the case, and from his perspective, he is justified in doing so since Zedekiah rebelled against his overlord, an act that was always punishable in suzerain-vassal relationships. See Cogan's comments in *II Kings*, 317.

ויבאו כל שרי מלך בבל וישבו בשער התוך נרגל שר אצר סמגר נבו שר סכים רב סריס נרגל שר אצר רב מג

וכל שארית שרי מלך בבל

ויהי כאשר ראם צדקיהו מלך יהודה וכל אנשי המלחמה ויברחו ויצאו לילה מן העיר דרך גן המלך בשער בין

החמתים ויצא דרך הערבה

It may be that the arrival of these Babylonian officials was the formal beginning of the legal proceedings. Vanderhooft has suggested that Jeremiah 39:3 depicts a military procedure.[137] To resolve the insubordination of the king, he is brought directly to the *šar mišarim*. The content of Nebuchadnezzar's *mišpat* may indeed be the actions recounted in 2 Kings 25:10–11, namely, the slaying of the king's sons and the blinding of the king.[138]

Such a reading is suggestive for two reasons: first, it coheres with Babylonian self-promotion of Nebuchadnezzar's flair for justice, and second, it provides insight into the author's view, namely, that Zedekiah deserved to be brought up on charges of rebellion.

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[137] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire,* 139–40.

[138] For an examination of how this punishment of blinding fits into the larger Mesopotamian treatment of captives, see Ignace J. Gelb, "Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia," *JNES* 32 (1973) 70–98. See also Tracy Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125 (2006), 225–241. Lemos argues that disfigurement is not only a physical assault but can also have ideological meaning. The king is meant to literally be a "perfect" man (that is, whole and unblemished) and by disfiguring him in such a way, Nebuchadnezzar asserts his own superiority to rule, even from a purely physiological perspective (in addition, by blinding Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar ensures that the last vision he has is of his sons being killed). On such punishments in war and their gendered valence, see Tracy Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible" *JBL* 125.2 (2006): 225–241.

On the importance of the king's physical body as a symbol of his fitness for rule, see Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric and The Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sîn of Agade," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy* (ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–26; Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), esp. 103. For a treatment of the broader relationship between wholeness and holiness, see also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1966), esp. 52–58.

3.iii.b Gedaliah's Installation and Exhortation:

After Zedekiah's blinding and deportation, the Babylonians staged yet another intervention into Judean politics: the text states that the King of Babylon הִפְקִיד "appointed" Gedaliah over Jerusalem.[139] Unlike Zedekiah, the previous appointee, Gedaliah is not made king, a clear move towards delegitimizing local kingship, a powerful display of royal prerogative on the part of the Nebuchadnezzar. At the same time, according to the narrative's unfolding, it is unclear what Nebuchadnezzar hoped to achieve by installing Gedaliah in a position of power. The narrator claims the city itself was largely destroyed and all but the poor had been deported, so Gedaliah's appointment seems at first counterintuitive. Within the story-world however, Gedaliah's installation as a leader actually advances a significant claim, namely, that acquiescence to the Babylonians will allow things to go well for the people. At Mizpah, the new seat of local governance, Gedaliah swears to them that they ought not to be afraid of being servants to the Chaldeans, but rather should serve the King of Babylon so that it will go well for them: אל תיראו מעבדי הכשדים שבו בארץ ועבדו את מלך בבל ויטב לכם. Such language, coupled with the last four verses of the unit in which Jehoiachin is granted special provisions, suggests royal beneficence will be measured out to those who serve the Babylonian king loyally. Gedaliah's exhortation receives no response. The narrator simply announces that some months later there is

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[139] Stuart Creason, "PQD Revisited," in *Studies in Afro-Asiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg* (ed. Cynthia Miller; Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 60; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago, 2007), 27–42 offers a compelling argument for understanding the root PQD as "changing the status of." He argues that the subject of the verb is usually a person in a position of power over the object of the verb, which accords well with the situation here. The text does not explicitly state that Gedaliah was made governor; instead, it simply specifies that Nebuchadnezzar appointed him for some particular role, thus changing his status.

a coup, and he is assassinated. What seems at first to be an abrupt transition to Jehoiachin's situation in verses 27 and following may in fact be a calculated turn on the author's part to show just how well things go for those who do acknowledge their subservience to the Babylonian ruler.

3.iii.c Imagining Judah's Future: Granting ארחה to Jehoiachin

Jehoiachin, who had given himself up along with many of the temple's treasures and his family, comes to the notice of the new Babylonian king, Amel-Marduk, and is granted release from prison.[140] Two aspects of 2 Kings 25: 27–30 warrant comment because they illustrate the author's identification with Babylonian imperialism: the notion of "speaking kindly" (in v. 28) and the granting of ארחה to Jehoiachin (v. 30). In v. 28, the narrator states וידבר אתו טבות Most translations render this phrase "He spoke kindly to him,"[141] yet the phrase *waydabbēr 'ittô ṭōbôt* in fact signifies the sharp change in relationship between the Babylonian ruler and the subject king. This expression may correspond to the Akkadian idiom *ṭābūta dabābu*, "to establish a

[140] For a general treatment of Amel-Marduk's reign and his efforts to consolidate his power, see Ronald Herbert Sack, *Amēl-Marduk, 562–560 B.C.: A Study Based on Cuneiform, Old Testament, Greek, Latin, and Rabbinical Sources* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament vol. 4; Neukirche-Vluyn: Verlag Butzon und Bercker Kevelaer, 1972).

[141] See for example, the LXX, King James Version, NRSV, NIV, JPS, NLV, "He spoke kindly to him."

treaty, agreement."[142] The deployment of such an idiom to describe the relationship between an imprisoned Judean king and a reigning Babylonian monarch thus merits careful examination.

The motivations for establishing a formal agreement with the Judean ruler may have to do with the fact that Amel-Marduk had recently risen to the throne and may have been trying to secure cooperation of deported communities in his consolidation of power.[143] It is also possible that the story is included at the end of kings to signify that kingship did indeed continue, but only under the auspices of the Babylonian empire.[144] The suggestion that the thrust of this passage is

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[142] Only a few scholars have noticed this idiomatic use and seen it as deliberate in 2 Kings. Jon Levenson has provided a helpful overview of the implications of this idiom. See his article, "The Last Four Verses in Kings," Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 103, No. 3 (Sep., 1984): 353-361. See also W.L. Moran, "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *JNES* 22 (1963) 173–176. Moran was the first to argue that in the Sefire treaties, the term *ṭbt'* means "friendship," or "good relationships," akin to *damqātum* (good things) or *awātum damqātum* (good words) in the Mari letters. In relation to the Hebrew Bible, Levenson notes that José Severino Croatto provided an early suggestion that in instances where the term *ṭôbâ* is the object of *dibber*, it refers to the establishment of an alliance. Croatto states, "como promesa de parte de Dios, la Alianza es una Palabra." See full argument in J.S. Croatto, "TÔBĀ como 'amistad (de Alianza)' en el Antigio Testamento," *AION* 18 N.S. (1968) 368–87. Additionally, Michael Fox has compiled a list of texts in which he includes 2 Kings 25:8 that use this construction idiomatically to describe the establishment of a treaty. Michael Fox, "Tôb as Covenant Terminology," *BASOR* 209 (1973) 41–42.

[143] Why exactly Amel-Marduk would want to secure the cooperation of his captive kings is not entirely clear. Inscriptional evidence suggests that Amēl-Marduk's rule was tumultuous (Streck, 1998–2001, 199). He was ultimately assassinated by Neriglissar in approximately 560 BCE. On this, see D. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1985), esp. 10. For some hypotheses in response to this particular verse, see M. Goulder, "Behold My Servant Jehoiachin" *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002) 175–190.

[144] In a Neo-Babylonian administrative document published by Ernst F. Weidner, Jehoiachin is mentioned in a list of recipients of provisions from the palace. The amount listed as his provision is significantly higher than the amounts distributed to others. It would be purely speculative to explain why this is the case, but at any rate, the list corroborates the claim in 2 Kings 25 that Jehoiachin's position was rendered higher than the other kings. See E.F. Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda," in *Babylonischen Keilschrifttexten* (*Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, II Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939), 923–35. For English translation, see James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (3rd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 308.

towards the beneficence of the Babylonians is strengthened further by the claim that follows, namely that Jehoiachin dined in the presence of the Babylonian king all the days of his life.[145] This is reiterated and underscored in verse 30, using a broader term, "ארחה" to suggest activities beyond simply dining.

The term ארחה occurs in three places in the Hebrew Bible: 2 Kings 25:30 (=Jer 52: 34), Jer 40: 1–6, and Prov 15:7. This phrase has been variously understood and translated "allowance," "portion," "meal," "provisions," but its precise etymology has remained uncertain until very recently. One popularly accepted etymology is that it is derived from אורח, "way, road," and so is thus translated as "gift for the road."[146] This meaning coheres well enough with the passage in Jer 40:5, where the prophet is being released from prison and sent on his way to live with Gedaliah for a time. But the meaning "meal" or "gift for the road" seems poorly integrated with the meaning of 2 Kings 25, in which the Judean king, while released from prison, does not seem to be going anywhere and the author has just stated in the previous verse that he dined in the presence of the Babylonian ruler for the remainder of his life.

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[145] To be in the audience of the king is a well-attested form of displaying trust. See for example, SAA XVII 174, in which the speaker claims, "Now after I have been twice to the audience of the mighty king, I am beginning to regain my dignity again [*ina bultīya anaḫḫīsi*]." The king's confidence was a visual expression and by inviting Jehoiachin to the royal table, the king was both displaying a trust in him, while possibly also "keeping an eye" on him.

[146] This interpretation is attested as early as the Peshitta and has been taken up by C.H. Toy in his commentary on Proverbs. See his discussion in C.H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 310.

In an essay published in 2013, Ronnie Goldstein renewed efforts to understand the term, and argued compellingly that ארחה is an Akkadian loan word from the Neo-Babylonian period.[147] He demonstrates that it stems from the word *rēḫtu*, "remainder," which in turn is derived from the Akkadian verb *riāḫu*, "to remain, be left over.[148]" He suggests that the *aleph* in the attestation in 2 Kings 25: 30 is not to be read as part of the root but is rather a preformative, perhaps a prosthetic aleph.[149] Its relatively limited attestation in Biblical Hebrew may be attributed to its relatively late inclusion from Akkadian into the literary corpus of the Hebrew Bible.

As Goldstein shows, the plural of the nominal form, *rēḫātu*, "remnants" came to denote consecrated leftovers of temple offerings that were then sent to the king for his own consumption. In Neo-Assyrian texts, the term refers to orts from cultic meals and also appears in royal administrative lists at Nineveh. Goldstein notes a particularly apt example of this usage, referencing Sargon II, who receives *rēḫāti* from Babylonian temples after he defeats Merodach Baladan.[150]

The use of this term to refer to consecrated leftovers expanded in meaning, coming to refer eventually to a "special gift or steady allowance, given by the king to his protégés"[151]. One example of this usage occurs already in a letter from Urad-Gula to Aššurbanipal , in which the

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[147] Ronnie Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology and Its Influence in Biblical Literature: Hebrew ארחה" in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist* (ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer; Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 137–149.

[148] CAD R: 76–80, s.v. *râḫu*

[149] On the prosthetic aleph, see Joüon-Muraoka, § 17a; 88La; Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 142n20.

[150] Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 140

[151] Ibid., 142.

scholar moans about no longer receiving gifts from the king as he was accustomed to receiving during Aššurbanipal's father's reign:

He lifted me up from the dung heap. I received gifts from him, and my name was mentioned among men of good fortune. I used to enjoy generous "leftovers," intermittently, he used to give me a mule [or] an ox, and yearly I earned a mina or two of silver. [In the days] of my lord's crown-princehood I received "leftovers" with your exorcists…[152]

Another example of this expanded meaning occurs in an epigraphic text describing Aššurbanipal's gift to a defeated king.[153] Goldstein argues that the context of such a gift suggests not only benevolence on the part of the victorious king, but that its reception by the defeated king also constitutes "an act of loyalty." This argument is convincing also in its application to the situation in 2 Kings 25: 27–30, in which the Babylonian king gives similar royal provisions to the defeated Jehoiachin. These verses, which may at first seem to include a double notice of provisions (ואכל לחם תמיד לפניו and ארחת ארחתו תמיד), are better understood as complementary notices, one concerning food itself, and the other concerning a regular allowance or stipend for the Judean ruler's needs.[154]

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[152] ABL 1285 = S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10) 232 No. 294, Lines 16–19; Also, Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 140.

[153] Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996) 316 II. 41–43. Also cited in Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 141.

[154] Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 142. As Goldstein observes, this meaning also fits Jer 40: 5, in which the term is not referring to some sort of victuals for the prophet's journey to Gedaliah but rather a royal gift to the prophet from the King of Babylon (or at least, in his name, by Nebuzaradan). For the argument on how the Akkadian terminology illuminates the nature of use in Proverbs, see Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," pp. 144–146.

Goldstein notes one additional piece of evidence that complements the argument for an Akkadian lexeme behind the Hebrew term. Pointing to Jeremiah 52:22-23, which is part of the list of items taken from the Jerusalem temple by the Babylonians, Goldstein observes in particular the term רוחה, which occurs between the two different numbers provided about the pomegranates described in the account. This term, which appears to be a *hapax*, has generated considerable debate among interpreters, modern and ancient. The passage lists two separate numbers of pomegranates, and understanding the relationship between the two turns on the interpretation of רוחה. Goldstein suggests that the Akkadian term *rēḫtu* may stand behind this word. In Akkadian, particularly in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid documents, the term *rēḫtu* is routinely used in mathematical, administrative, and economic lists to refer to quantities remaining. Goldstein argues that this has salience understanding the term in Jer 52: 23, which is employed to explain that of the hundred original pomegranates, only 96 remained. Goldstein's suggested translation of this verse is, "There were 96 pomegranates remaining; all the pomegranates around the meshwork amounted to 100." It may even be a direct attempt at translating an Akkadian term, a possibility which would suggest why the Hebrew term disappears from the lexicon in later Persian times.[155]

Goldstein hypothesizes that the author of the text in Kings (and/or Jeremiah) encountered this term in an administrative list of the goods captured from the Judeans and that this scribe used the list to generate and supplement his own account.[156] This example also presents

[155] Goldstein observes, "Since the word may have been a loan used mainly by scribes seeking a translation of the Akkadian, it no longer survived after the Persian period." Goldstein, "NB Administrative Terminology," 149.

[156] Goldstein notes that one possibility is that the passage in Jeremiah is "directly based on a Neo-Babylonian booty list" of captured goods, in which the term *rēḫtu* was used.

additional evidence for the incorporation of a Neo-Babylonian technical term into Judean Hebrew, albeit with a slightly different spelling, as in 2 Kings 25:30.[157] While Goldstein does not attend to the implications of this term's incorporation and use, one might posit at least two. The first is the very concrete engagement that the employing of such a term suggests between Judean and Babylonian scribes, and the familiarity of the Judean scribe with Babylonian administrative terminology. The second is the positive deployment of this term in both passages at hand; in the use in Jer 40, the Babylonian king is described as favoring the prophet (even if by proxy), while in 2 Kings 25, the Babylonian king personally selects Jehoiachin out of prison and honors him the rest of his life. Underlying both these episodes is a worldview in which Babylonian hegemony is not altogether evil. Rather, the Babylonian ruler is presented in both instances as treating the Judeans favorably.

3.iii.d Reconfiguring Time: Calendrical Innovations

A significant encroachment of Babylonian imperialism into Judean life emerges in the use of a Babylonian calendar to chronicle events in Judah. The use of the Babylonian calendrical system is employed first in 24:12 and again in 25:8. In both instances, there is a power vacuum created by the absence of a strong Judahite ruler. 24:12 dates the event to Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year only after the formal notice of Jehoiachin giving himself up along with his entire household and palace administrators. 25:8 records the event with reference to Nebuchadnezzar again, because in this instance, the king Zedekiah has fled, abrogating his royal duties. In both

[157] For additional examples of Akkadian loanwords into Biblical Hebrew, see P. V. Mankowski, S.J., *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (HSS 47; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

situations, the lack of a Judahite king by which to reckon time creates an alternative system of chronicling events, and Babylonian systems of reckoning time step neatly into the lacuna generated by the absence of a viable local system.[158]

The reconfiguration of a polity's calendar is a strong assertion of power.[159] Evidence from Western Asia suggests that kings could manipulate or institute new calendars upon ascension to power and that such changes assisted in the consolidation of economic power. That the author of this text chose a Babylonian system for dating suggests that the author was familiar with the imperial dating system and that without its own king, Judah no longer had the ability to

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[158] Of the author's use of a Babylonian calendrical system, Cogan and Tadmor offer a tentative suggestion, "The notation indicates that the writer was familiar with the official practice of the Babylonian conqueror or perhaps was even in his employ." Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 311. This suggestion is an alluring one, but the authors do not offer any additional evidence that might substantiate this speculation.

[159] Evidence for the designing of new calendars, or the manipulation of existing ones to legitimize political or community ideologies and goals comes from both within the biblical text as well as without, and extends far back into Western Asia's history. In southern Mesopotamia, the founding monarch of the Isin dynasty, Išbi-Erra, ceased following the local calendar of the time, replacing it with the Sumerian Nippur calendar, in an attempt of political and economic unification of the Isin empire (around 2000 BCE). Some 200 years later, during the reign of Rim-Sim of Larsa, who conquered the territory of the Isin dynasty a calendrical change was included not so much because of any issue with religious observances but in order to better regulate the flow of resources in the kingdom. Sippar maintained two parallel calendars, reflecting the political states of the Amorites and the Sumerians. With the expansion of empire, all these calendars were eventually replaced with the Standard Mesopotamian calendar– an amalgamation of traditions and rituals and festivals from several different calendars. Commissioned by Šamsi-iluna of Babylon, it was likely an attempt to unify the diverse and vast empire. See full discussion of these calendars and texts in Mark Cohen, *Cultic Calendars in the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993).

Within the Book of Kings, explicit evidence for calendrical innovation emerges in 1 Kings 12: 33–34, in which Jereboam supposedly introduces a month that "he alone had devised," implying that he had introduced some reform in the standard calendar. Some scholars have suggested that he is not creating something new, but merely returning to a system practiced in the North. Even if that were the case, however, changing an existing system represents an innovation and is an assertion of power.

set its own time. At a broader level, such calendrical shifts align with the author's focus on the new political center–Babylon, and reflect an increasingly diminished attention towards the peripheral lands. Because there is no longer a Judean anchor for counting years, the dating of events in accordance with a foreign ruler elegantly draws the reader's attention to the shifting focus of the narrative, which culminates in the Judean ruler reacquiring a semblance of his power far from his land, at the table of the Babylonian monarch.

Implications and Conclusion

2 Kings 23:31–25's portrayal of Babylonian activity in Judah and the imperial power's interactions with the deported population offers insight into the ways in which a subjugated population responded to and engaged with new socio-political realia. While the term "subjugated" is used to reference Judah's status under the Babylonians, it by no means comments on the literary creativity of its scribal community. Indeed, the author of 2 Kings 23:31–25 is a highly literate, skilled individual, capable not only of drawing on Judean sources but also Babylonian ones. Furthermore, the narrative is not simply an annalistic account. Instead, it is a highly nuanced one, steeped in Judean and Babylonian imperial ideology. The text shows itself to support and affirm Nebuchadnezzar's position as well as his right to rule Judah. In its references to Yahweh, the narrator widens the scope of Nebuchadnezzar's mandate, extending it beyond Marduk. Such a move is not unparalleled in biblical texts, which often portray Yahweh as being behind attacks on Judah and Israel, but the excessive attention to Nebuchadnezzar in this unit reinforces the likelihood that the narrator is affirming Nebuchadnezzar's claim to have divine sanction for his actions. The narrator may even rely on the tradition of foreign kings being used by Yahweh in order to suggest that here too, Babylonians and Judeans could share the deity.

The claim that Babylon forms the new political epicenter for 2 Kings 25 thus has several important implications. The first is the remarkable transformation within the Book of Kings in the attitudes towards foreign alliances. In 2 Kings 16 for example, Jehoiachin's forefather Ahaz becomes a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser III, but this alliance is represented as breeding infidelity to Yahweh, and Israel's alliance with Assyria is arguably the tipping point in its downfall. Yet in 2 Kings 23, 24, and 25, a remarkably more favorable attitude towards the imperial power is demonstrated, and subservience to the Babylonian ruler is even encouraged.[160] As others have noted, it is possible that the end of Kings, particularly verses 27–30, imagines the eventual reestablishment of the Davidic throne in Jerusalem and that the Babylonian deportation is punishment or preparation, or both for that restoration. At a more immediate level, however, the ending in Kings suggests that Davidic kingship is so weakened that it must be nurtured in exile under the patronage of the Babylonian imperial center.[161]

This emphasis on Babylon's role in the future well-being of Judah is signaled repeatedly in the text, in a variety of idioms, tropes, and episodes. The fleeing king Zedekiah, for example, demonstrates that he is not fit to lead his own people– he is too weak. Instead, the claim is that the Babylonian king will better look after the people. The author of this story in Kings also draws on imperial imagery of abundance and center to draw a picture of the flow of goods and resources to Babylon. This portrayal converges nicely with the claims of Nebuchadnezzar

[160] Levenson notes that a similar encouragement is found in Ezekiel 17 in which Zedekiah is chastened for reneging on his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar. See Levenson, "The Last Four Verses in Kings," 359.

[161] Ezekiel 17 indeed envisions Yahweh's approval of this situation, suggesting that Yahweh considers the oath sworn to the Babylonian monarch as his own and intends to ensure that punishment is meted out to the ones who actively transgressed against it. See discussion in Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire,* 164–169, and chapter 5 of this dissertation.

himself about how he made Babylon into the center of the world and how he mustered workmen and skilled craftsmen from all over the empire to work on its temples.

The relative inattention to the remnant population in the land and the sharp focus on Jehoiachin at the end of Kings has significant impact on the theory that the Babylonian bureaucracy did not extend to Judah and that imperial policy did not attempt to expand the borders.[162] Rather, they pursued a policy of maximal extraction, after which cities were scorched and burned to the ground.[163] This was a successful tactic because it was done after all the resources from a particular location were already removed but also prevented the possible future rise of that location again. The archaeological and textual portrait from the Levantine region during the Babylonian period also strengthens the likelihood of such a policy being deployed in Judah. David Vanderhooft argued recently that the Babylonians, particularly under Nebuchadnezzar, did *not* continue the Neo-Assyrian pattern of establishing provincial centers in the outer reaches of the empire.[164] The Neo-Assyrian empire's presence in the Levantine region

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[162] On this question, see Faust's diligent review of the archaeological evidence, in *The Archaeology of Destruction.* For a consideration of the eventual fate of Judeans who were deported to Babylon, see Laurie E. Pearce "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia," *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 399-412.

[163] For a treatment of the archaeology and the implications of the destruction, see Lawrence E. Stager, The Fury of Babylon: The Archaeology of Destruction," *BAR* 22 (1996): 56–69, 76–77; Idem., "Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction: Kislev 604 B.C.E." *EI* 25 (1996): 61–74.

[164] Vanderhooft, "*Babylonian Strategies."* Contra Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (2nd ed. Completed by Erica Reiner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Amelie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 BCE.* (London,1995); Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts.* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

had been absent for nearly two decades before the Babylonians arrived in the region.[165] Numerous sites in the Levant witness destruction layers during the Babylonian period and then show a gap in the archaeological record until the Achaemenid period.[166]

This archaeological data converges with the literary material in 2 Kings 25, which suggests that after Gedaliah's killing, the Babylonian empire did not install another ranking individual over Jerusalem. The text also mentions the deportations of the elite and skilled citizenry, a notice which aligns with Nebuchadnezzar's claim to remove conquered people to Babylon. He does not claim to have repopulated the conquered territories. The literary claims of 2 Kings 24 and 25 thus intersect with the imperial rhetoric of Nebuchadnezzar that emphasizes a universalist ideal even while practicing a more exclusive, local one. It rehearses the emperor's claim that goods and people flow to Babylon, and that the situation in the metropole is a better one than in the peripheral corridors of the empire. 2 Kings 24–25 participates in furthering the grandeur of Nebuchadnezzar's rhetoric, all the while disguising the fact that for an empire, Nebuchadnezzar's focus was surprisingly parochial.

[165] Israel Eph'al, "Assyrian Domination in Palestine," in *The Age of the Monarchies: Political History* (ed. A. Malamat; Vol. 4/1 of *World History of the Jewish People*; Jerusalem, 1979), 276–89.

[166] Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible Volume II* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 2001); Lispchits, *Fall and Rise of Jerusalem;* Faust, *Archaeology of Destruction*.

Chapter 4

Indicting Yahweh: The Failure of Imperial Masculinity

Lamentations is a complicated text.[1] As the poems progress, the work becomes increasingly pointed and pessimistic in its assessment of Jerusalem's fall and the role that Yahweh played in the city's continued suffering. The speaker questions Yahweh's commitment to his people, accusing him of betraying Judah, and attacks the deity's masculinity through highly charged rhetoric. Within the poems, Yahweh is presented as a ruler undeterred by the cries of his people. The poet exhibits a sense of responsibility driven by a recognition of the tension between the received ideas about Yahweh's character and his actual behavior towards Jerusalem and the people. It is this tension of practical and theological dissonance that defines and structures the formal complexity and sustained critique of Yahweh's character throughout Lamentations.

In their nonlinear and recursive description of Jerusalem's fall and subsequent suffering, the poems draw attention to the confrontation that builds not between the Judeans and Babylonians but rather between the Judean people and their deity. For the poet, the event of Jerusalem's fall was an ambiguous turning point in their relationship marked by an insistent demand to evaluate the costs of continued reliance on Yahweh. The poet uses this turning point to consider and critique elements of Yahweh's character even through his tenuous fidelity to

[1] I read this composition as a single work with a single author. As I will show, although there is not a narrative "plot" that guides the progression of the work, the poems are held together by a shared framework of imperial masculinity. Each poem addresses one element of the masculinity paradigm. The poet uses this paradigm to propel the work forward.

Yahweh. The poet's awareness of the fragility of his obligation to Yahweh is reflected in both the form and content of his work. He mediates his sharply theo-political evaluation through the composition of poetic sequences that critically identify and diagnose the failures of Yahweh's masculinity and the impact of these failures on the current position of the people.

In this chapter, I thus examine how Lamentations engages the fall of Jerusalem through a poeticized representation of Yahweh's role in the ongoing aftermath of the fall. The chapter begins with an overview of prominent scholarly approaches to the work. It then turns attention to the framework of royal masculinity that governs the selection and descriptions in the poems. This section of the chapter first attends to the expression of royal masculinity in texts and iconography, and then turns to how those expressions are drawn on in this composition. Next, it studies the placement of Lamentations 3 and argues that the central verses of the poem (esp. Lam 3: 21–29) are satirical and coupled with the framework of masculinity, establish a conceptual constraint on interpretation of the work.

Like many other works in the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations characterizes Yahweh as a sovereign ruler whose earthly kingdom is Jerusalem.[2] The text is a series of five poems that describe the aftermath of the Babylonian attack in the sixth century BCE.[3] Biblical scholars have long since compellingly demonstrated Lamentations' formal similarities with the Near Eastern lament tradition as well as with laments within the Psalms, particularly with regard to the use of feminine imagery to describe the plight of the fallen city.[4]

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[2] Many works in the Hebrew Bible characterize the deity Yahweh as a sovereign ruler. This royal conceit first appears in Yahweh's creation of the cosmos and the subsequent appoint of human beings as his earthly regents. A primary role in which the king and deity function in parallel is as the source of authority and giver of laws, and in the lavish physical environments that depict their respective dominions. In biblical literature, the palace, and by analogy, the tabernacle, are the textual centers of the operationalization of this royal trope. The deity's character mimics human royalty. The conflation between the two is a possibility precisely because it is a political and cultural reality in the ancient near east, albeit on a human-level. In Mesopotamia, for example, some kings were deified upon their ascent to the throne, and said to be like the god, mirroring qualities of the divine, particularly in regards to their ability to rule. This conceptual linkage was concretized by the similarity between the layout and décor of temples and palaces. Each mimicked and mirrored aspects of the other, creating a circular connection between the two. Within the Hebrew Bible, especially the priestly source, the human king is frequently displaced by Yahweh, and rather than a human king being deified, it is instead the deity who is imbued with human royal qualities. An important material referent of this link is the tabernacle, which functions in effect, as Yahweh's palace. The language used to describe the tabernacle and its structure emerges from the physical realm of human hierarchical relationships, namely, between a king and his subjects. See discussion of the royal characterization of Yahweh in Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King! Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOTSup 76; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); John Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Jeremy Schipper and Jeffrey Stackert, "Blemishes, Camouflage, and Sanctuary Service." *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 2 (2013): 458–78. For discussion of this royal trope in Priestly literature more broadly, see Bernard F. Batto, "The Divine Sovereign: The Image of God in the Priestly Creation Account," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J.J.M. Roberts*, ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 143–186; Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the History of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 251–57.

On the reverse situation, the deification of the king, see W. G. Lambert, "Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. J. Day; JSOTSup 270; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 66–69; Burkhart Keinast, "Inscription of Narām Sîn: Deification of the King (2.90)," *COS* 2:244; H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern*

Although recent scholarship has sustained its interest in the gendered language that structures the presentation of Jerusalem's fall, these studies continue to examine the deployment of femininizing tropes with scant attention to the underlying ideology that makes such imagery compelling. This scholarship has been successful in identifying and analyzing the imagery of women and feminine tropes, but in so doing, has not attended to the corresponding construction of a masculine gendered identity that pervades the work. This chapter seeks to address this

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Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature (Oriental Institute Essay; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948) 302–306; C.J. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient Near East* (SchL 1945; London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

Iconography on gates also attests to the conflation of the roles of deities and kings. The Balāwāt Gates of Shalmaneser III, for example, depict sacrificial scenes before the royal image. S. Birch, T.G. Pinches, and W. de Gray Birch, *The Bronze Ornaments of the Palace Gates of Balawat (Shalmaneser II, B.C. 859–825)* (London: Society of Biblical Archaeology, 1880). See also the discussion of this image and others in Steven Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[3] Several commentaries offer nuanced summaries of this work in relation to the Babylonian attack as well as in connection with other laments in the Hebrew Bible. See for example, Adele Berlin, *Lamentations–A Commentary* (Louiseville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Hillers, *Lamentations* (Anchor Bible; Garden City: Double Day); Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations with a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963); R.B Salters, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Lamentations* (ICC; London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2010); Claus Westermann, *Lamentations*; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*. (Interpretation Commentary).

[4] Broadly, the city lament genre has certain key features: it usually composed in the aftermath of the destruction of a city, and addressed to the local deity. It contains a description of the desolation wreaked by an invading force and is followed by a proclamation of the unjustness or the magnitude of destruction. The author usually concludes that such destruction could only have taken place if the local deity somehow acquiesced to the plan and allowed the devastation to take place by physically leaving the city. Since the city cannot prosper without its gods, the people then participate in a communal lament to beseech the deity or deities to return and restore the city. In order to do so, a communal lament often includes a protest of innocence and an appeal to the deity to return and intervene on behalf of the residents. For an extensive treatment of the city lament tradition, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter Zion!*; Paul Wayne Ferris, Jr. *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*. (SBL 127; Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1990).

overlooked issue and show that rather than being a separate topic of study, identifying the masculinity paradigm of the work is in fact also crucial to evaluating why particular feminine imagery may have been especially useful for the work's ideology. A survey of scholarship also shows a preoccupation with identifying theodic and anti-theodic views in the book of Lamentations and then trying to assess which response was historically more probable. In presenting their hypotheses about the genre and nature of the work, scholars have addressed a variety of questions: How does Jerusalem relate to Yahweh? Is Jerusalem the city repentant or guilty?[5] Who is responsible for the city's downfall? How could Yahweh abandon his temple so willfully? With what type of feminine tropes is Jerusalem characterized?

Most striking in scholarship that aims to answer these questions however, is the interpreters' persistent placement of themselves within an unbroken chain of audiences to which Lamentations addresses itself: scholars have examined the issues raised within the text itself by a comparison not only to sixth century Judah, but also to a more proximate event, the Holocaust, and even more recently, to September 11, 2001. This foreshortened lens, with its remarkable leaps from the past to the present, has led to expressions of profound sympathy with the world of the text but has sharply limited the critical distance between the interpreter and the material, allowing interpreters to take the text at face value, as a piece in the puzzle of what really happened during Jerusalem's destruction. Gottwald's 1954 work on Lamentations, for example, was heavily influenced by his conviction that the biblical texts had significance not only in their ancient context but also for Gottwald's own modern situation. Published only nine years after the Second World War ended, Gottwald's assessment of the theology of Lamentations was as much

[5] On repentance in Lamentations, see David Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical.: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture.* New York, London: Oxford University Press, 2016.

an assessment of his own time, in which questions of how the Holocaust could have happened continued to be asked. Gottwald's interpretation of Lamentations was thus an effort to construct a theology that was capable of accounting for the disaster that befell Jerusalem in antiquity and the Jewish community in modernity.

S. Paul Re'emi similarly argues that Yahweh actively planned out Jerusalem's suffering because of the magnitude of its malfeasance, and through this literary work, "the poet had thus laid his finger upon that ultimate reality which is true for all times and which we have seen exemplified in our generation in the Holocaust at Auschwitz."[6] Dianne Bergant writes that Lamentations "invites the reader to Ground Zero," an expression explicitly linked to September 11, 2001.[7] Interpreters frequently analyze the text through such modern comparisons, and one wonders whether their quest to find "the" theological message in the work is more a function of their own theological search than something contained in or prompted by the text.

The willingness to collapse the cultural and temporal distance between the text and the modern interpreter, coupled with an instinctive feeling that Lamentations provides the 'lived' emotional experience of Jerusalem's fall, prompts scholars like Hillers to state, "Thus the book of Kings states the facts about the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Lamentations supplies the meaning of the facts."[8]

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[6] S. Paul Re'emi, "The Theology of Hope: A Commentary on the Book of Lamentations," in *Amos and Lamentations: God's People in Crisis* (ITC; Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), 73–134 (76). Re'emi traces the message from Lamentations into the New Testament and argues that just as Jesus was led by God to be crucified, so too his chosen people, the Jews, were led to their death, as sacrificial lambs.

[7] Dianne Bergant, *Lamentations* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 13.

[8] Hillers, *Lamentations*, xv.

Yet by favoring an approach that treats the poems as an eyewitness account composed shortly after the city's destruction, scholars have neglected analyzing the material as literature that self-consciously constructs a particular view of Jerusalem's fall. The willingness to place one's self within the world of the text, rather than as an interpreter outside it, diminishes the ability to measure the degree to which Lamentations not only carries its past, but also actively constructs a memory of that past, privileging and promoting particular perspectives.[9]

My analysis of Lamentations asks, conversely, what do we learn if we view this work as one of literature that provides a description of Jerusalem's fall and its portrayal as an alternately unfaithful and debased woman within a framework of imperial masculinity? I argue that Lamentations has supplied its readers with a seemingly authoritative eyewitness account that nonetheless is itself a claim *to* authority, and an effort to fix a particular, subjective view of Jerusalem's fall that advances particular claims and ideologies. It is not enough to appeal to an undefined "cultural code,"[10] of appropriate behavior for women to which Lamentations responds

[9] The narrative theorist Sophie Rabau argues, "Un texte est porteur de son passé qu'il détermine plus qu'il n'est déterminé par lui: inversement un texte est porteur de son future qu'il contient en puissance sinon en acte." ["A text carries its past, which it determines more than it is determined by it; inversely, a text carries its future, which it contains in potential if not in deed]. Sophie Rabau, *L'intertextualité: Introduction, Choix de Textes, Commentaires, Vade-Mecum et Bibliographie [livre]* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 37.

[10] Alan Mintz, *Ḥurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), esp. 32. In regards to Lamentations 3, and the turn to the *geber*'s speech, Mintz argues on page 32, "To deal with this threatened loss of meaning—what amounts to a threat of caprice; a woman's voice, according to the cultural code of Lamentations can achieve expressivity but not reflection. And now acts of reasoning and cognition are the necessary equipment for undertaking the desperate project of understanding the meaning of what has happened. The solution is the invention of a new, male figure… a figure whose maleness is unambiguously declared… and whose preference for theologizing rather than weeping is demonstrated throughout." Although Mintz notes the prominence of masculinity in the third lament, he misses its significance entirely. Without defining this so-called cultural code, he also conveniently neglects the fact that the narrator of the other poems seems to be male and yet manages to "achieve expressivity." The entire work is a sustained act of sophisticated reflection

and builds its characterization of Jerusalem: rather, the text relies upon and exploits a markedly royal framework of masculinity to construct its characters. What animates the poems is not just a description of Zion's pitiable state or the account of Jerusalem's fall but the assumptions that undergird them; namely, that Yahweh failed at both providing for his people as well as protecting them.[11] The work is a gender-driven critique of Yahweh's fitness for rule on the grounds of masculinity norms. The aftermath of Jerusalem's fall unfolds in these five poems with explicit and implicit references to conceptions of imperial masculinity that form the criteria for evaluating Jerusalem's situation and Yahweh's responsibility for the ongoing adversity. This chapter will demonstrate that, in so doing, the author of Lamentations also self-consciously constructs and promulgates a certain view of the city's fall that seeks, through its telling, the authority of a factual, unbiased account.[12] This is achieved in part through the silence of its protagonist, Yahweh, and the near-silence of Jerusalem, and through the mediating, and often accusing, voice of the poet.

4. 1 Theorizing the Lament: Definitions and Genres

How should we understand lament? Is it a definable literary object, one that can be isolated and recognized by formal features? Our scholarly category of lament, like many of our

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and critique that does not seem to place gendered limits on the ability to theologize *or* weep (this new, male figure after all, weeps rather copiously in Lam 3:48–51).

[11] See further, Berlin, *Lamentations*, 9. Berlin notes briefly, "The men [in Lamentations] suffer in a typically masculine way—they lose power and physical prowess…" but does not see the royal framework. It seems one could make the same hollow argument for the suffering of women—in a typically feminine way, they lose their children—but neither of these arguments would sufficiently explain why these stereotypical portrayals were rhetorically effective and compelling.

[12] See Hayden White, *Content of the Form*, where he argues for this effect in narrative.

literary ideas, emerges from a Greek literary tradition that stipulates certain features be present for a work to be so classified.[13] When scholars examined biblical literature, they sought to identify similar features that might cohere across different texts as a "lament genre." The difficulty, of course, is that biblical authors did not group texts under a unifying category with a clear handbook for later readers, even when they occasionally identify some of the works as belonging to particular types of compositions. Thus, for example, in Samuel, when David mourns the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, the author describes his speech as a *qînâ*. Scholars have sought to identify what makes this particular speech a *qînâ* and have suggested that it is the particular structure of the cola (a 3+2 structure or "limping" cola) that warrants the title *qînâ*. Because this similar structure is prevalent in other poems about loss and failure, as well as in Lamentations (whose title in Jewish tradition is *qînôṯ*), scholars, beginning with Karl Budde in the last decade of the nineteenth century, have suggested that biblical Hebrew texts have a *qînâ* "meter."[14]

As a category, even those texts that reference or self-describe as *qînôt* do so with markedly varying content and aims. Laments may be elegiac or individual, as in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan; communal, as in Psalm 44; or accusatory as in Lamentations 2. Yet when scholars write about lament, they often have in mind an individual or community in mourning seeking a way to express their grief and loss. Laments that seem accusatory are excused and reinterpreted as expressions of distress and grief. Diane Bergant, for example, following Claus Westermann, suggests the following definition for lament: "The standard lament possesses the following elements: an invocation of God's name; a description of present need; a

[13] On this topic, see Jacqueline Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms* (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

[14] Karl Budde, "Das hebräische Klagelied," *ZAW* 2 (1882) 1–52.

prayer for help and deliverance; reasons why God should hear the petitioner; a vow to offer praise or sacrifice when the petition has been heard; an expression of grateful praise."[15] Other definitions also note that the suffering of captive women and the destruction of cities form prominent and interwoven themes.[16] Such definitions are accompanied by three basic observations about laments, namely, that (a.) they seek to manage grief, (b.), they reflect communal or individual loss, and (c.), often make prominent women's suffering. These claims have informed and simultaneously constrained the scope of scholarly assessments of Lamentations, restricting them to issues of the feminization of cities, theodicy, and an elusive lament "meter."

It does not take much to realize that such definitions hardly account for the variety of laments found in biblical literature. Yet by holding on to such specific definitions, one unintentionally neglects other approaches to interpretation. In this study, I focus on the specific effects of this preclusion with regard to Lamentations. For example, if, as most scholars argue, the anger in Lamentations is simply an expression of grief and an attempt to deal with catastrophic sorrow, it becomes acceptable not to probe this anger further. Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that *because* Lamentations addresses Yahweh repeatedly it is ultimately still a work attempting to reconcile "God's" divine goodness with the experiences of his followers. And yet, by pigeonholing this work into a framework of theodicy and anti-theodicy, we ignore additional possibilities entirely. I argue that we do so at our interpretive peril: Lamentations is

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[15] Bergant, *Lamentations*, 17.

[16] Such definitions point to examples such as Antigone's Lament in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Elektra's lament.

not just an expression of a grief-stricken poet but a carefully thought-out anti-achievement narrative, a narrative of failure that finds its bedrock in the expectations of successful kingship.

Before turning to my own argument, I will first briefly highlight some of the major contributions from scholars on Lamentations, because in accounting for what makes Lamentations a series of *qînôt*, inflected with a communal and city lament, scholars have focused on two major issues: the parallels to Mesopotamian city laments and the theology of the work. Embedded within these issues is a subset of questions about the use of feminine imagery to personify Jerusalem and the role of sin in Jerusalem's fall.

Comparative Approaches: Mesopotamian City Laments and Greek Lyric

Kramer,[17] Gadd,[18] Gottwald,[19] and Westermann,[20] among others, argued that the text of Lamentations bears discernable similarities to numerous laments in Sumerian, most notably to the city laments over Sumer and Ur, with regards to the representation of the destruction of the city, the sorrow of the gods at its fall, and the use of gendered imagery to portray the disaster.

The city lament genre is best known from Mesopotamia, where it is represented by five poetic compositions in Sumerian and Akkadian: the Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur, the

[17] Samuel Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Rev. ed. Reprint, 1961. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); Idem, "Sumerian Literature and the Bible" *Studia Biblica et Orientalia 3: Oriens Antiqus* (Analecta Biblica 12; Rome: Pontifico Istituto Biblico 1959).

[18] C.J. Gadd, "The Second Lamentation for Ur" *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (eds. D. W. Thomas and W. D. McHardy; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[19] Norman K. Gottwald, "Lamentations," *Harper's Bible Commentary* (ed. James L. Mays; San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) 647.

[20] Claus Westermann, *Die Klagelieder* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990).

Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur, the Eridu Lament, the Nippur Lament, and the Uruk Lament.[21] As Dobbs-Allsopp has shown in his seminal study, these poems describe the destruction of important cities and their principal shrines through a personification of the city as a woman. The destruction is always the decision of the divine assembly, and is accomplished by the gods leaving their shrines and city, thus depriving the city of its protection, and leaving it vulnerable to attack, usually by a human agent.[22] These poems are marked by a limited list of characters. Apart from An and Enlil, the two deities who bring about the destruction, the only other major character is the city's goddess, who challenges the assembly's decision to destroy the city, and then laments its destruction. These laments typically end with a request for the gods to return to their city and a rejoicing when they do.[23] The following is an illustrative example from such a lament:

> The Lord of all the lands has abandoned (his stable)
> His sheepfold (has been delivered) to the wind;
> Enlil has abandoned… Nippur, his sheepfold, (has been delivered) to the wind.
> "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur" (*ANET* 455-463)

In literature preserved in the Hebrew Bible, examples of laments over cities abound, covering an impressive two centuries, from Amos to Isaiah 55–66, and have led scholars to posit a local city lament genre in Israel and Judea. Hillers writes: "A "city-lament" genre would be an

[21] See further, Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter Zion*.

[22] Ibid., 30–96.

[23] These laments requesting the deities to return have often been interpreted as having an apotropaic function to ward off a repetition of the gods' ire. Because of this potentially apotropaic function, some scholars have argued that these laments were composed as liturgies for temple razing and foundation ceremonies. Dobbs-Allsopp observes that although Mesopotamian city-laments may have been used in temple foundation ceremonies, the same is unlikely to be true of Lamentations given that there is no indication of the deity's return to the city. See further, Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter Zion*, 96.

abstraction made, for the sake of discussion, to refer to a common theme: the destruction of city and sanctuary, with identifiable imagery specific to this theme, common sub-topics and poetic devices."[24] This abstraction then generates for him additional examples of city laments from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, such as Amos 5:22 and Jer 9:10–11 and the successive laments against Moab in Jer 48, which also appear to use a *qînāh* meter and personify the destroyed city as a woman. Hillers's contribution is critical not only in the identification of the features of a lament in Judean literature, but also the claim that this literary tradition may have developed without direct influence or borrowing from Mesopotamian laments. This allows for the independent progression of Judean lament traditions that do not neatly correspond to the generic conventions of their Mesopotamian neighbors.[25] It is also very possible that the poet of Lamentations is well-aware of the tropes and conventions that control the city lament genre and instead chooses to invert some and neglect others, precisely to draw the audience's attention to the difference.[26]

More recently, Dobbs-Allsopp has refined his theory of Lamentations as a city lament by proposing an additional generic category that Lamentations may use, lyric. While lyric as a genre

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[24] Hillers, *Lamentations,* 36.

[25] Salters disagrees with Hillers and Dobbs-Allsopp concerning the presence of a city lament genre that is native to Judean literature. He argues that although there are many instances in the biblical text of laments over cities, it is not enough to be considered a full-blown genre. Dobbs-Allsopp, however, responds to this critique by arguing that unlike its Sumerian counterparts, biblical laments never had a period in which they were the *de-facto* form of lament and mourning. Rather, they appeared in various texts as part of longer compositions throughout the centuries of biblical literature. As a result, there is not the same flourishing of the genre as in Sumerian, which saw the production of many city laments over a relatively shorter period of time.

[26] As Dobbs-Allsopp observes, this is not altogether unusual. He suggests that the city lament genre has also been used and altered within the prophetic oracles against the nations. This is a point I will return to later in this chapter, particularly in the discussion of Lamentations 3.

has traditionally been associated with Greek poetry, Dobbs-Allsopp argues that it can profitably be used to describe Lamentations, because in his view, it has no discernable plot, full characters, or narrative progression. To be sure, reading Lamentations as lyric has heuristic value for understanding the use of parataxis and the acrostic form. Yet the poems' reception as lyric emerges not only because of its formal characteristics, but because of Dobbs-Allsopp's assumption that Lamentations is only a lament about the destruction of Jerusalem. He states, "these poems do not tell a story or mount an elaborate argument… To be sure, the story of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem everywhere suffuses the poetry of Lamentations but nowhere does Lamentations try to tell this particular story."[27] Because it does not tell "this particular story" Dobbs-Allsopp tries to account for what he sees as a fractured telling with minimal narrative progression by appealing to the genre of lyric. Dobbs-Allsopp is correct that the background of the Babylonian destruction suffuses the poems but his assumption that this is the main "impetus," the unspoken story, of Lamentations is a misunderstanding. Instead, as I argue below, this work uses the event of the Babylonian destruction as a catalyst for judging Yahweh's fitness as a divine king. The argument Lamentations seeks to make is not about the destruction or the people's culpability in it. It is that Yahweh has failed in his royal role. In other words, this work is a lament of failure, the inverse of an achievement narrative. It does not anywhere tell the story of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem because it is telling another one: it is a story of the ways in which Yahweh has fallen short of his kingly requirements.

Theology

Lamentations is a composition deeply concerned with the deity's action and inaction. In

[27] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 13.

Mesopotamian city laments, the poems begin with a scene of divine abandonment. The purpose of the lament in those cases is meant to draw the deities' attention back to the city they have left and thereby restore the city's fortunes. The focus on the relationship between the deity and the speaker—whether the unnamed narrator, the city, or its inhabitants—demands an understanding of the theology that prompts such a presentation. The lament's fronting of the relationship between the deity and the city has suggested to scholars that it ought to be the major point of entry for scholarly inquiry into Lamentations.

For scholars working on Lamentations, inquiry into the nature of Yahweh's relationship with Jerusalem has largely focused on one basic question: "How could Jerusalem's deity allow the city to suffer so much?"[28] The answers to this question in turn have followed two basic lines of argument: the first is that Jerusalem's suffering is not because of Yahweh's desire to make it suffer but rather because, having sinned so severely, Jerusalem's punishment must fit her crime. The alternative approach is to present an anti-theodic argument and claim that Yahweh has, in fact, overreached, and that Jerusalem's suffering is too much, regardless of any sin it may have committed.

Dobbs-Allsopp argues that the assumption underlying both scholarly approaches is an insistence "that compassion is the only appropriate response to radical suffering."[29] His argument rests on the claim that the use of images of the suffering of children and women is universally horrific and prompts the immediate response of compassion. According to Dobbs-Allsopp, the use of the images and tropes in Lamentations is meant similarly to prompt a compassionate

[28] Hillers, *Lamentations*; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*; O'Connor "Lamentations"; Bergant, *Lamentations,* 2011.

[29] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations,* 25.

response from Yahweh and from the audience listening to the lament. For our purposes, this emphasis on compassion as a natural response is important because it then gets read into the text as the goal of the poems. That is, because the suffering of women and children prompts compassion from others, by centering descriptions of suffering, the poet of Lamentations seeks to prompt a compassionate response from his audience.

For Dobbs-Allsopp, the use of lyric as the governing genre provides formal ways–most notably through parataxis– in which to repeatedly seek this response. For others, such as Bergant, Ryken, Krašovec, and Bier, the issues are the speaker's relationship to the deity and whether these poems are best understood as theodic or anti-theodic texts.[30] Philip Ryken for example, argued that, "Lamentations is a theodicy, an attempt to explain the ways of God to humanity."[31] His argument, like that of Krašovec's, rests on the notion that Yahweh's anger is a proportional response to Jerusalem's sin. The question of proportionality is, as Bier notes, often the linchpin for scholars seeking to identify the central theological message of the work.[32]

The identification of these poems as theodic or anti-theodic creates a circularity in scholarly interpretation: because they approach the text as one or the other, they end up trying to reconcile elements of the text that do not conform strictly to one or the other option. Many who argue for the theodic view of these poems end up not choosing one or the other, but rather suggesting that the poems draw on both theodic and anti-theodic rhetoric and should instead be categorized as what Bier has called "polyphonic" lament. This mixing of these two categories

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[30] Bergant, *Lamentations*; Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*; Bier, *Perhaps There is Hope*; Krašovek, "The Source of Hope in the Book of Lamentations," VT 42 (1992): 223.

[31] Ryken, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 739.

[32] Bier, *Perhaps There is Hope*, 13; Krašovek, "The Source of Hope," 223.

calls to mind the scholarly backlash against Gunkel's claim that the poems were all communal laments. Gunkel's categorization was quickly shown to be insufficient for explaining the poems, even as scholars continued to try and offer variations, often through appeal to theodicy and anti-theodicy, to the category of communal lament.

Norman Gottwald's 1954 study argued that the work sought to contend with the dissonance created by Deuteronomistic theology and the experience of Jerusalem's destruction.[33] Gottwald argued that the text sought to confront the question of why the Judeans suffered as they did if in fact they had repented after Josiah's urging. Gottwald's explanation of the theology in Lamentations was formative for other scholars who studied the issue, even if they disagreed with Gottwald's conclusions. Bertil Albrektson, for example, agreed that Lamentations represented the literary reckoning of lived history and received theology, but he located the source of the dissonance not in seeming contradiction between the experience of destruction and the belief in punishment and reward but rather because of the belief that Jerusalem was an inviolable city.[34] That it was destroyed represented a serious rupture in the theology of the city, and it was that rupture that Lamentations sought to address.

Robin Parry offered a more nuanced reading of Lamentations within its own context, but also argued similarly that within Lamentations, punishment is an expected result of sin and is never questioned: "The 'why' is already known—Israel has broken the covenant. Rather, the anguished questions behind Lamentations are, 'Why punish *so severely*?' and '*How long* until

[33] Norman Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (Studies in Biblical Theology 14; SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1954).

[34] Bertil Albrekston, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*.

you save?'"[35] Echoing the basic assumption of suffering as the prompt for the work, there are at least two implicit assumptions in Parry's statement: the first, that the poet of the laments is looking for answers, and the second, that he is anguished. Parry's equation of this anguish with piety and a belief in Yahweh's justice and righteousness generates his claim that the speaker is looking for some kind of theological finality, and that these poems represent the resolution of those questions. Parry argues further that the poet believes in Yahweh's righteousness and that his laments are a way to "make God feel uncomfortable with what is happening and act to change the situation precisely because he is righteous."[36] Parry's argument is a crucial one: what does the poet hope to accomplish with these laments? In Parry's reading, the response he hopes to provoke is an action to "change" the situation. Parry's argument builds on the claim in Lam 3:44 that the people's prayers have been shut out, and that Yahweh is ignoring them. In order for their situation to be improved, Yahweh must take positive action on their behalf.

What Parry does not address at all are the grounds on which the speaker seeks to make Yahweh "uncomfortable," other than the expectation that Yahweh is righteous. But how does this expectation of righteousness manifest itself, and what does the righteousness itself entail? What techniques does the poet employ to prompt Yahweh's concern? Why should the deity even feel uncomfortable? What are the grounds on which the poet seeks to persuade? It is these questions that this chapters aims to answer.

Gender

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[35] Parry, *Lamentations,* 28.

[36] Parry, *Lamentations,* 30.

Discussions of genre and theology in Lamentations inevitably and often immediately lead to an examination of gender in the work. The very first verses of Lamentation opens with a simile comparing Jerusalem to a widow, a once-admired woman to an object of scorn. Much of the scholarship investigating gender and its deployment in Lamentations and other biblical texts draws on Joan Wallach Scott's seminal essay, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," which argues that gender is a primary way of signifying power.[37] In its simplest usage in scholarship, Scott notes, gender has been used as a synonym for women.[38] Her essay reacts to this simplistic equation, claiming that a study of women necessarily involves studying men as well, a notion that rejects the interpretive value of studying the two genders separately. Scott has suggested the following definition: "Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[39] Judith Butler offered a more expansive definition, suggesting that gender is also "a performance that is achieved through a stylized repetition of acts."[40] These acts become normalized and naturalized over time and begin to operate in fixed domains of associations. Despite citing this essay, however, scholars examining Lamentations have not always heeded Scott's call to treat gender as made up of both masculine and feminine constructs, and as a result, have neglected some fundamental gender-issues in the work.

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[37] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 28–50.

[38] Ibid, 31.

[39] Ibid, 42–43.

[40] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (ed. Sue-Ellen Case; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 270–82. See esp. p. 270.

These definitions of gender have in fact great salience for a study of ancient texts from Mesopotamia and Israel and Judah, because many of these texts utilize gendered images, whether to describe battle-scenes, successful rulers, or defeated enemies. In many Akkadian and Hebrew texts, masculinity and femininity comprise a set of identifiable characteristics and signs, "a language anatomical males [and females] were taught to speak with their bodies."[41] Irene Winter has shown how this gendered language is encoded into Mesopotamian expressions of kingship (divine and human) and royal claims to power.[42] Kings and male deities are portrayed as idealized versions of perfectly realized masculinity, which is then subsequently tied to the demonstration, exercise, and legitimization of power.[43]

The ideological deployment of gender in royal texts has been well-documented and illuminated by Winter, Chapman, N'Shea, and others.[44] Chapman shows that the use and expression of gender in many of these royal texts is largely through metaphor, in which the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle relies on a fairly stable domain of images. Interpreting the two elements relies on attending to the relationship they have to each other. For

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[41] Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 70.

[42] Irene Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric and The Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sîn of Agade," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy* (ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–26.

[43] See for example, Omar N'Shea's recent treatment of this issue in the visual and literary depictions of Sennacherib in "Empire of the Surveilling Gaze: The Masculinity of King Sennacherib" in *Studying Gender in the Ancient Near East* (Eds. Saana Svärd and Agnès Garcia-Ventura; Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2018), pp. 315–336.

[44] Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument,"; Chapman, *Gendered Language*, 2004; N'Shea, "Empire of the Surveilling Gaze," Rhiannon Graybill, *Are We Not Men?*

example, in Nahum's taunt, "*Your soldiers are women"* (Nah 3:13), the claim is not the literal transformation of men into women but rather the fusion of the domain of the soldier with the domain of women. Alone, women as a category has numerous associations in antiquity, as does a soldier. Mapped together, they overlap in particular arenas set by the context, such as fear, bravery, weakness, and strength. Even the claim, "I am a man" prominent in numerous royal inscriptions, is a statement of anatomical fact, but the employment of a metaphor that is drawing upon the cultural understanding of men and masculinity.

Chapman's analysis of the constitutive power of gender in military and theological texts is generative for my study of Lamentations. While Chapman's study focuses primarily on the prophetic literature and its engagement with Assyrian concepts of masculinity, it serves as a heuristic model for conceptualizing the way in which gendered language structures and permeates accounts of military encounters. Chapman persuasively demonstrates the repeated use of gender as a tool for diminishing masculinity and power. The fleeing king, for example, a frequent image in royal inscriptions (and one also used in Lamentations) is a stock motif in Assyrian inscriptions to highlight a ruler's lack of masculine credibility as male provider and protector of his people. This image "discredited the masculinity of the foreign king by contrasting his fear and cowardice—i.e. his non-performance of constitutive masculine activities—to the Assyrian King's strength and courage. It also spoke effectively to the foreign king's inability to act as "shepherd" to his own people.[45] The choice to represent the effects of

[45] For example, Nah. 3:18 contains a pointed association between shepherding and guarding the people: "Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber. Your people are scattered upon the mountains with no one to gather them." That these are gendered images comes in part from the fact that shepherds are typically men, but also because the task of protection and gathering is one ascribed to men.

warfare in starkly gendered terms thus requires careful analysis to ascertain the implicit expectations and conceptual worldviews that underlie this representation.

In texts like Lamentations, where the city is troped as a female entity, it appears clear that the woman serves as kind of an ideological boundary marker of power and gender.[46] Transgressions against these borders are represented through the image of violated woman, single woman, widowed woman, and mother. For most scholars, the function of gendering the city in this way is to "evoke pity or disdain from readers,"[47] and their analyses of gender have been largely limited to the feminizing tropes in the work. In this chapter however, I heed Scott's call and warning that using gender as a synonym for women is too simplistic. Although the male gender is frequently assumed as basic, this chapter suggests that it is far from a stable reality in Lamentations. Gender theory and examinations of masculinity in the ancient Near East, and the works of Scott, Chapman, and Winter, in particular offer new interpretive frameworks with which to stage inquiries into the text of Lamentations. As I will show, these frameworks facilitate not only attention to the feminine imagery in the work but also the scaffolding of masculinity upon which it is staged and made productive.

Because it is immediately ascribed to a lament genre with all the assumptions that the genre entails, and with all the theological and historical weight that Jerusalem's fall carries, lost in many of these studies is a consideration of the basic literariness of Lamentations itself: how does it work as a text? What, exactly, is it lamenting? And what kind of ideological framework structures its contents? As I will show, this inattention has resulted in the misrecognition of

[46] Mieke Bal, Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[47] O'Connor, *Lamentations*. See also, Mintz, 1982, 3–4; Miller, 1994; Seidman, 1995.

Lamentations as primarily a work concerned with Yahweh's goodness or lack thereof, and a misidentification of the object of the lament: although Jerusalem's destruction is the precipitating factor, what the lament "mourns" and indicts is the failure of divine kingship. The issue of gender is rightly identified as a critical one, but by restricting it only to the portrayal of the city as a female, scholarship has ignored the corresponding framework of royal masculinity that pervades the work and informs the choices of female imagery. More importantly, by focusing too closely on the theological stance of laments and their relationship to Yahweh as God, biblical scholars have neglected the constructedness of Yahweh *as a character* within a particular literary projection. These two neglected issues—masculinity and Yahweh as a character—are in fact crucial for understanding the work. Moreover, by taking as fact that these poems are about the fall of Jerusalem, scholars have actually neglected to pay close attention to exactly how the poems are recounting and portraying the fall. Put differently, because scholars seem to assume particular details about the fall of Jerusalem, there is no impetus to understand how an individual work understands, depicts, and constructs the fall through its telling.

In this chapter, I argue Lamentations is a report card of the divine king's failures and stands as the inverse of royal achievement narratives, which catalogue a ruler's successes and triumphs and act as justification and evidence for the ruler's right to rule.

4. 2 The Imperial Male: Protector, Builder, Provider

In Lamentations, although Yahweh does not himself appear as a speaking character, he is repeatedly characterized through appeal to a well-established framework of hegemonic, imperial

masculinity.[48] This framework allows the narrator to evaluate Yahweh's behavior through well-conceptualized categories that result in a portrait of the deity's deficiency in accomplishing the requirements of imperial masculinity. Although comparative work on Lamentations thus far has articulated well its affinities to Mesopotamian city laments, the attention given here to the framework of royal masculinity identifies the ideological scaffolding upon which the work is built.

Specifically, as I will detail below, imperial masculinity is constituted through a complex program of text, iconography, and architecture. I will analyze each category briefly and then turn to the deployment of this framework in Lamentations.

4.2.1 Constituting Imperial Masculinity

[48] For discussions of hegemonic masculinity in reference to the ancient Near East, see Ilan Peled, *Masculinities and Third Gender: The Origins and Nature of an Institutionalized Gender Otherness in the Ancient Near East* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, no. 435; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016); Ilona Zolsnay (ed.), *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity* (Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East; Routledge: London/New York, 2017). The expression "hegemonic masculinity" comes from the seminal study of Connell and Messerschmidt, who argued that societies idealize certain performances, leading to the development of a "hegemonic" performance of gender—one that establishes itself as the ideal to strive for. They argue that hegemonic masculinity, an expression coined by Kessler et al., is not a fixed category but one actively constructed by the values and needs of any given society. See S. J. Kessler, D. J. Ashenden, R. W. Connell, and G. W. Dowsett, "Ockers and disco-maniacs" (Sydney, Australia: Inner City Education Center, 1982). Recently, Connell and Messerschmidt have revisited their original claims, offering slight modifications, particularly in the mobility and transformation of what counts as hegemonic, in light of further study. See further, Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" *Gender & Society*, 19.6 (2006), 829–859.

Masculinity and gender studies have emphasized that gender is a complex interaction beyond mere biological sex.[49] That gender is a critical tool through which kings in the ancient Near East represented power is apparent from the use of binary oppositions in their royal narratives and iconographic program: male/ female; strong/ weak; big/ small.[50] These oppositions are used to construct an image of a king without rival among princes, whose enemies are feminized males, incapable of successfully participating in a male arena. Presenting men who were anatomically male as being like women discredited their fitness for rule through a framework of masculinity. Such tactics also suffuse palace reliefs, where the king is always depicted a hyper-muscular, tall, and bearded. Subservience and inferiority to the king is indicated, for example, in the opposing king's comparatively shorter or entirely absent beard and underdeveloped calf muscles.[51]

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[49] Judith Butler, for example, has demonstrated that societal values not only help internalize norms about gender roles but also actively construct them, making gender a kind of performance.

[50] This program does not *only* use such stark binaries, but they do form a particularly prominent ideological system for organizing and portraying gender norms.

[51] Chapman has persuasively argued that imperial masculinity was modeled on the individual husband, whose role required him to provide basic provisions and protection for his wife and family. Like a husband, the king is required to care for his "family" by giving them food, stability, and safety. The microcosm of the family helps generate the concept of a "right" order in society. This order is continually alluded to in imperial treaties that threaten the vassal king with disruption of order and stability. Such disruption is threatening on both a practical level as well as an ideological one because it suggests the king is simply not strong enough to lead his people nor to safeguard them from external harm. Her argument builds on the work of Shalom Paul, who has examined legal literature from Mesopotamia and the Hebrew Bible, and demonstrated that the failure to provide three elements, food, oil, and clothing, constitutes sufficient grounds for a woman to divorce her husband. See further, Chapman, *Gendered Language*, and Shalom Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in Light of Biblical and Cuneiform Law* (VTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1970). On these issues, see also Smith-Christopher on Ezek 16 and 23 and Tracy Lemos (various pieces)

4.2. 1a The Self-Portrait of Kings

One of the most promising avenues for understanding which forms of masculinity were prized in the ancient Near East is the self-representation of rulers themselves. Within textual presentations, there are four primary areas in which masculinity is on display: the titulary, descriptions of battle, building achievements, and curse sections of treaties and loyalty oaths. In iconography, masculinity is displayed in two prominent areas: palace reliefs and steles. Taken together, these sources provide insight into the values and qualities rulers prized.

Examining this performance thus matters because masculinity is repeatedly implicated in assertions of power, indictments of defeat, and in boasts of achievements and success. Femininity, in contrast, is used to shame male rivals and to describe defeated cities that go hungry and unprotected. Hegemonic masculinity in this context is the figure of the warrior king who can successfully subdue his enemies, command resources to build and renovate his city, ensure agricultural productivity of the land, and promise a lineage.

Titulary: Imperial Role Play

Titles are announcements of who and what a ruler imagines himself to be. They are also perhaps the most explicit, succinct self-expression of masculinity. From Aššurnasirpal II to Nebuchadnezzar II, rulers repeatedly announce themselves in inscriptions and treaties by proclaiming to be a *zikaru* "male," and an *eṭlu*, "young male."[52] This is not, of course, a claim about their anatomical gender but rather a claim to particular domain of activity that might be termed "appropriate" masculinity for a ruler.

[52] E.g. Aššurnaṣirpal II in "A.O. 101.30" in Grayson, *RIMA 2*, vol. 1:288, line 3.

What counts as appropriate or expected can be inferred from the adjectives and substantive clauses linked to these terms of explicit maleness.[53] Such terms are frequently accompanied by adjectives such as "manly," "strong," "heroic," "protector," suggesting a close association between the conceptual categories of maleness and strength. Thus, for example, a king could claim to be *zikaru qardu* "heroic male" or *eṭlu qardu* "heroic young man."[54] Sennacherib referred to himself as an *eṭlum gitmālum*, "a perfect man."[55] Sargon II referred to himself as "the manly one, the strong one, clothed with splendor, the one who raises his weapons to bring down his enemies, the king to whom from the beginning of his lordship no prince was equal (*malku gabrāṣu la ibšuma*)."[56]

As Chapman notes, *malku gabrāšu la ibšuma*, "no prince was equal," reinforces the notion that masculinity of kings was not simply a performance but also a contest, in which the winner had no rivals. This kind of king could wield his weapons successfully to bring down his opponents.[57] To be without rival, *šaniššu la išu*, is a two-part claim: it is to be the best among others like one's self, *and* to successfully counter attacks from enemies. An ideal, successful,

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[53] Irene Winter has observed that a ruler utilizes such terminology to show that he is not just any male figure but rather "the *dominant* male within the state hierarchy." Irene Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric and The Public Monument." Winter argues that the king's body itself is a communicative symbol of strength and virility, and that the king's sexuality was linked to potency, which itself was linked to power and the exercise of it. Y

[54] For example, Aššurnaṣirpal II in "A.O. 101.30" in Grayson, *RIMA 2*, vol. 1:288, line 3.

[55] Luckenbill, The Annals of Sennacherib, 23, Line 7.

[56] Chapman, *Gendered Language*, 24, adapted from Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II*, 2–3, lines 3–4.

[57] Aššurnasirpal II for example, claims that he is "the manly one, the heroic one who acts with the support of Aššur, his lord, and among the princes of the four quarters has no rival." A.O.101.1 in Grayson, *RIMA 2*, Vol. 1, 194, Lines 12–13.

male ruler within this conceptual domain is thus one who has strength and can appropriately deploy it against his enemies.

These titles were also physically represented and reinforced through iconographic displays in which the king was depicted with a lush beard, sculpted muscles, upright stature, and intricately crafted clothing. These physical characteristics deliberately contrasted with those of their opponents and subordinates, who were shown with a shorter beard or no beard at all, comparatively less muscular, and often in a position of subservience—bent over or bowed down in simpler clothing. This physical strength extended also to protection and care for vulnerable members of society. To convey their fitness for such a role, kings adopted the epithet *re'u*, "shepherd." [58] Like a good shepherd who kept his flock safe and led it to sources of food, the good king too was able to keep his people safe and lead them to sustaining pastures. [59] The image of a shepherd expands the scope of the king's initial claim of being physically strong: it adds a nurturing element in which the king secures and safeguards sources of food and water for his people. In sum, the titles selected, and the various representations of them, functioned as symbolic shorthand for a much wider discourse of power.

Gendering Defeat through battle narratives and curses

In their accounts of battles and in treaties with conquered kings, defeat was always coded as feminine. Biblical literature and royal narratives from Mesopotamia alike describe the defeated

[58] Although this root of this word is not explicitly masculine, a survey of its application reveals that it is nearly always used to describe men. As such, it can be included in the survey of terms linked to the performance of masculinity.

[59] Chapman, Gendered Language, 21-23.

king and his soldiers as panicking, behaving like women and lacking courage.[60] Cities that were captured were described as fallen women, and the destruction wrought on them was often described in sexual terms.[61] The threat of losing one's masculinity and becoming more feminine is also frequently troped element in the curse sections of oaths and treaties across the ancient Near East. An additional category of curses and descriptions shames men for becoming too much like women. For example, in an oath taken by Hittite soldiers, the individual promises loyalty on the threat of turning into a woman if he defects:

> They bring the garment of a woman, a distaff, and a mirror; they break an arrow, and you speak to them as follows: "Are not these you see here the fine garments of a woman? We have them here for (the ceremony of) taking the oath. Therefore, whoever breaks these oaths and plots evil against the king, queen, and princes, let these oaths change him from a man into a woman! Let them change his troops into women, let them dress in the fashion of women, and put on their heads the headdress! Let them break the bow, the arrow, and weapons in their hands, and let them put in their hands the distaff and the mirror."[62]

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[60] This expression must be distinguished from "like a woman in travail," which operates in specific circumstances. Most scholars have ignored the nuances of "travail" in the simile, and treated it as merely a "fuller" expression of the more common "like a woman." For instance, Hillers, who has offered a sustained study of treaty curses in the prophetic literature of Hebrew Bible, argues there is no distinction between the simile "like a woman," and "like a woman in travail," and that both are conventional responses to bad news. In his reading, it is simply a standard trope, natural and easily understandable. See further, Delbert Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964). Hillers' argument has strongly influenced subsequent scholarship on this topic. Most scholars have relied on his interpretations without considering it any further. William Holladay, for example, in examining the simile's occurrence in Jeremiah 50: 41–43 notes, "This is a standard curse against the enemy." See further Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 167. Yet the purpose of the birthing simile is not primarily to curse the enemy, but to warn them of the threat of disaster. In each instance of the woman in travail, the situation is one of impending crisis. The language used envisions the reactions of people to the crisis. The implication of the simile is that everyone, not just the men, will be like women in labor, although in some cases, warriors are the explicit target. In texts that compare men to women, or curse men by suggesting they become like women, it is clear that there is an explicit target of the comparison. By contrast, the descriptions of crisis that utilize this simile most often affect whole communities.

[61] See, for example, Isa 3: 16–4:1; Jer 6: 3–8; Zeph 3: 1; Nah 3: 5–13.

[62] Harry Hoffner, "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals" *JBL* 85 (1966): 329–32.

Harry Hofner and others have argued that breaking the bow is a symbolic of destroying a man's masculinity because it is an object so strongly associated with men, particularly warriors. To have one's bow broken is to dismantle the complex of masculinity it represents. Its replacement is an object associated primarily with women–a distaff and a mirror. The threat finds its potency in the shame that will ensue for the man if his weakness is like that of a woman.

Like the breaking of the bow, the motif of the fleeing king, present in both Hebrew and Akkadian literature, also highlights the ruler's cowardice through feminizing tropes:

> I slaughtered at his feet like sheep his fighters, the mainstay of his army, [who were] carrying bows and lances, and I cut off their heads. And him— I surrounded him together with all his troops. I injured the stomach of his horses with arrows and lances. To preserve his life, he abandoned his chariot, mounted a mare, and bolted in before his troops.[63]

The claim that Rusâ abandoned his chariot for a mere mare and then fled is in sharp contrast to the characterization of Sargon's own actions. The specificity of the mare is also significant, since in all other references to the equids of kings, the horse is gendered male. That Rusâ fled on a mare is thus a pointed expression of his failed masculinity. Unlike his opponent, Sargon decimated the enemy soldiers. Not only did he cut off their heads, he also wounded the horses on their underbellies. In contrast, by running away from the battleground, Rusâ showed himself to be a coward who was unable to lead his own troops.

Although one might imagine the ideal outcome of a battle was the complete elimination of one's rival, a king who surrendered presented an opportunity for the victorious ruler to showcase his hegemonic masculinity, and to shame the loser for not being "man enough." In addition to feminizing descriptions like that above, kings also used treaties to compel the now-

[63] My translation of Akkadian in Walter Mayer, *Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu–714* v. Chr. (Berlin: Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 1983), 83.

subservient ruler into compliance. Like building inscriptions, these treaties too functioned as a catalogue of achievements of the more powerful king, and the titles employed within them worked as shorthand for broader roles the king envisioned for himself. At the end of the treaty, the ruler listed a series of curses that would be enacted upon the vassal king if he failed to live up to the demands of the relationship. Many of these curses are sharply gendered, marked by a sustained interest in the king's ability or failure to provide protection, provisions, and inheritance. These curses participate in the portraiture of masculinity by describing elements of manliness that will be removed if the vassal does not adhere to the stipulations set upon him. In addition to the curses that threaten the inability to fulfill the demands of kingship, other curses threaten the transformation of male soldiers into women, and the king into a prostitute. These curses are animated by a continuous concern with "doing" masculinity right. Together with the battle narratives, these curses paint a sharp picture of what successful–and unsuccessful–masculinity looked like.

Like royal narratives about military campaigns, treaties also use gendered language to set up a contrast between the strong king and his subservient vassal.[64] While the preamble often contained epithets and titles designed to highlight certain characteristics of the suzerain, it is in

[64] Treaties between vassals and suzerains were legally binding. The treaties often contained a statement of what the suzerain (or equivalent higher authority) had done in the past for the lesser individual– this would a list of benefits and blessings that one individual had received as a result of the benevolence of the other. On account of these blessings, the suzerain was able to establish his superiority and thus impose stipulations and requirements for his continued support. To ensure that the vassal adhered to these requirements, the treaty included a set of blessings and curses that would occur depending on the vassal's behavior. These blessings and curses often relied on inversions of gendered stereotypes. For a brief study of the Near Eastern treaty pattern, see further J.A. Thompson, "ANE Treaty Pattern," *Tyndale Bulletin* 13 (October 1963) 1–6. For a brief review of Akkadian treaties, see A. Kirk Grayson, "Akkadian treaties of the Seventh Century B.C." *JCS* 39 (1987) 127–60; Simo Parpola and K. Watanabe, eds. *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988).

the curse section that one finds a particularly clear elucidation of what constituted right order in the ancient Near East.[65] These curses establish the concept of right order by the threat of its opposite.[66] In Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaty, for example, rather than enjoying agricultural bounty, famine and drought are threatened. Rather than having large families, plagues will wipe out communities. Additionally, a series of curses threatening uniquely masculine roles are included: soldiers acting like women, men being unable to protect their wives from physical violence or from going astray, men being unable to provide food for their children, or unable to leave their families an inheritance.

As Chapman notes, many of the curses are universally frightening: plagues and famine threaten whole communities, not just one's masculinity. Yet, as she also observes, the pattern of clustering of gendered curses highlights the vassal king's fears of dishonor and shame through tropes of feminization and failed masculinity. [67] The clustering of these gendered curses is not unique to Assyrian treaties, for it is also similarly attested in the Hebrew Bible. Deuteronomy 28:30, for example, states, "You shall take a wife but another man will lie with her. You shall build a house but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you will not enjoy its fruit."[68]

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[65] For a discussion of treaties in the Hebrew bible, particularly with regards to curses, see Hillers, *Treaty Curses*; idem, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969). Werberg-Møller provides a helpful review of Hiller's work; see Preben Wernberg-Møller, review of *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* by Delbert Hillers, *CBQ* 27/1 (1965): 68–69; and Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Analecta Biblica 21A; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

[66] Chapman, *Gendered Language*, 40–58.

[67] Ibid, 41.

[68] A lengthier cluster of gendered curses follows in 28:48–57 which describes a siege in which families are reduced to cannibalism and women eat their own offspring. The gendered

This curse describes three seemingly unrelated items: losing one's wife to another man, losing one's property, and the inability to reap the fruits of one's labor. Yet when placed in the context of masculinity, these three items take on a shared connection: they all pivot around expectations attendant on men. To protect a wife, to pass on an inheritance through progeny or land, and to provide food from one's field are all standards by which a man's success is measured.[69] The failure to do so threatens his performance of masculinity. Through inversion, curses embed these values of masculinity that emerge from the microcosm of an individual family into a royal sphere to communicate the dysfunction and weakness of the ruler.

In Esarhaddon's vassal treaty, the Assyrian monarch ties these three ideas— provision, protection, and inheritance—into a tidy curse package:

> Instead of grain may your sons and daughters grind your bones. May not your first finger joint dip in the dough, may the […] bowls eat up the dough. May a mother [bar the door] to her daughter. In your hunger, eat the flesh of your sons! In want and famine may one man eat the flesh of another! May one man clothe himself in another's skin.[70]

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element here is the inversion of behavior associated with mothering: rather than providing nurture to their children, the children provide nurture to their mothers through their own bodies.

[69] In studying modern performances of masculinity, David Gilmore has called these same standards the "three pillars of maleness" and names them similarly: impregnation, provision, protection (in that order). See further, David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[70] "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty" in *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA 2, 46, Lines 446–51. For studies examining the connection between Deuteronomy and Esarhaddon's treaties, see Rintje Frankena, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy,"OtSt 14 (1965): 123–54; Bernard M. Levinson, "Textual Criticism, Assyriology, and the History of Interpretation: Deuteronomy 13:7a as a Test Case in Method," JBL 120 (2001): 211–43; idem, "Neo-Assyrian Origins of the Canon Formula: in Deuteronomy 13:1," in *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shape of Culture and the Religious Imagination (Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane)* (Ed. Deborah A. Green and Laura Lieber; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 25–45. " Levinson and Jeffrey Stackert, "Between the Covenant Code and Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty: Deuteronomy 13 and the Composition of Deuteronomy." Journal of Ancient Judaism 3 (2012): 123–40;" Moshe Weinfeld, "Traces of Assyrian Treaty Formulae in Deuteronomy," Biblica 46 (1965): 417–27.

In the event of such curses of famine and hunger being enacted, the vassal-king would, of course, also suffer the effects, but the focus in each of these is on the children and mothers. Natural disasters like famines are made worse by tying them to explicitly male roles such as providing food and securing one's lineage. By linking the king's failure in the domestic sphere to natural disasters, the treaty threatens to magnify the king's failure to a national scale. [71]

These curses also frequently include a threat against the ruler's progeny and their inheritance. Aššur-Nerari V (754–745 BCE), for example, threatens Mati–ilu, the King of Arpad, "May his land [be reduced] to wasteland, may only an area of the size of a brick (be left) for [him to stand upon], may nothing be left for his sons, [his daughters, his magnates, and the peo]ple of his and to stand upon."[72] The king's land—a prominent physical emblem of his rule—is at stake, not only in the king's own lifetime, but in the future, for his children. Because the giving of an inheritance was a masculine prerogative within the ancient Near East, the inability to safeguard the bare necessities of life or even the physical land which people are to inhabit suggests a total breakdown of the king's powers and, as Chapman argues, prevents the king from claiming "the mantle of shepherd-king."[73]

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[71] In another curse, Esarhaddon threatens Baal of Tyre: "May Melqarth and Ešmun deliver your land to destruction and your people to deportation may they [uproot] you from your land and take away the food from your mouth, the clothes from your body, and the oil for your anointing." Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, 27, lines 18–19. Note the threefold threat to take away food, clothing, and oil. These are the same three items a husband is supposed to provide for his wife; the absence of these items is legitimate grounds for divorce. If the metaphor is extended to the royal domain, a king who cannot provide or equip himself with the trio is similarly rendered unfit for discharging the duties of kingship.

[72] Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*," SAA 2, 27 lines 6–7.

[73] Chapman, Gendered Language, 42.

These curses of famine and loss of land are animated at the personal level by threatening the king's ability to guard sexual access to his wife. Drawing its efficacy from the husband and king's role as protector of his family, this type of curse warns of violence–physical and often sexual–that will be done to his children and wife. In Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, for example, the vassals are intimidated with a three-fold curse, "May Venus, brightest of stars, before your eyes make your wives lie in the lap of your enemy; may your sons not take possession of your house, but a strange enemy divide your land."[74] Sharing remarkable similarities with Deut 28:30, this curse is animated by the notion of a man being responsible for protecting his wife's sexuality, providing an inheritance to his sons, and securing his land. Like those in Deut 28, these curses are each individually powerful enough, but placed together they constitute an inversion of the successful performance of imperial masculinity.[75]

Architecture and the Building of Masculinity

The physical environment around the king was also a potent signifier of his ability to follow through on the claims in his titulary. The palace structure, the gardens, and the agricultural space of the kingdom were visual signs of the king's success. That the palace was an extension of the king's abilities are seen in the way in which rulers boasted of their buildings: Sennacherib calls his palace *ekal šaninu la išû*, "a palace without rival," much the way in which kings described their own position vis-à-vis other rulers. The ability to harness the resources

[74] Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*," SAA 2, 27 lines 428–30

[75] Chapman, *Gendered Language*, 42–43.

necessary for constructing a palace and ensuring its maintenance point, as detailed below, also to the king's claim to be a successful provider.

The assertion of manliness was thus not just a literary fiction. Rather, rulers embarked upon building projects, such as the construction of new palaces, to give concrete evidence of their authority and strength.[76] In addition to their spatial assertions of power, palaces in particular demonstrated manliness through the decorative program and use of precious materials. Between the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, as well as the Neo-Babylonian period, numerous inscriptions boast of the king's ability to procure costly and decadent construction materials.[77] Rulers also embarked on temple restoration to assert their power as well as divine favor. In one inscription, for example, Nebuchadnezzar boasts:

> When Marduk, great lord, gave me far off scattered peoples to shepherd, and sent in majesty to care for the cities and renew the sacred places, I for Marduk, my lord, faithfully and unceasingly, with silver, gold, and costly jewels, with bronze and *Mismagan*-wood, and with cedar adorned Esagila, and made it shine as the day. I completed Ezida and built it as the scenery of heaven. In the sacred places of the gods I made restorations.[78]

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[76] Within literary presentations of building projects, the building of palaces and temples have important communicative power and function in a constellation of overlapping domains of the royal and male: the physical structure is designed to have affective power over the viewer, and perhaps more significantly, building projects are only undertaken after the completion of military campaigns– efforts on the part of the new king to subdue his enemies and protect his borders. Building projects are thus undertaken when the king has already proved his martial abilities. Only when the periphery is tamed is the centre able to flourish. Tiglath Pileser's annals, for example, typically begin with a statement about the subjugation, defeat, or destruction of hostile territories on the outskirts of the empire, followed by a series of restoration and development projects in the capital region. Cf. Hayim Tadmor and Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

[77] On the affective function of such claims, see Michael Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Israel, and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974), 118; A.K. Grayson, "Assyria and Babylonia," *Or* n.s. 49 (1980): 140-94; Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 45–49.

[78] Langdon, "Nebuchadnezzar II, Lines 11–23."

Within literary presentations of building projects, palaces are powerful communicative symbols of order and success. Inscriptions use military campaigns as a narrative trope that catalyzes other achievements of the ruler, the final result of which is the king's undertaking of monumental building projects and other expressions of heightened domestic order, such as pleasure gardens.[79] The ability to embark on such "leisure" activities conveys a sense of mastery and successful completion of the other requirements of rule.[80]

4.3 Imperial Masculinity in Lamentations

Lamentations relays an account of the actions of Judah's divine king that spearheaded the polity's destruction. Although the poems do not seem at first to advance a systematic or coherent view of Jerusalem's fall and its aftermath, they in fact convey a clearly structured argument not primarily about the fall itself but rather about Yahweh's complicity in it. That Yahweh's character is on trial here is made clear through the categories within which Jerusalem is

[79] In Neo-Assyrian and West Semitic royal inscriptions, for example, building projects are undertaken only after the successful completion of military campaigns. See Douglas Green, *I Undertook Great Works;* on West Semitic royal inscriptions, Mesha's inscriptions, provide a representative example of this trope. See J. Liver, "The Wars of Mesha, King of Moab," *PEQ* 99 (1967): 14–31; J.A. Dearman, "Historical Reconstruction and the Mesha' Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (ed., J.A. Dearman; Archaeology and Biblical Studies 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 155–210; K.A.D. Smelik, "King Mesha's Inscription: Between History and Fiction," in *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OtSt 28; Leiden: Brill, 1992) 74–92.

[80] The literary and iconographic trope of the royal hunt also seems to participate in this ideological complex. The hunt is an expression of the king's power of the natural world that allows the center to flourish. For a discussion of the royal hunt particularly in relation to Ashurbanipal's reign, see Elnathan Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82-5-22,2)," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki*, (ed. S. Parpola and R. Whiting; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 339-58.

described. As I will show below, these categories center around the inversion of the classic markers of successful rule: the provision of abundance (in the natural and built environment), protection, and inheritance (expressed through land and progeny). I will argue that the reason the quoted character addresses Yahweh repeatedly in these poems is more than just to request help. It is also to warn Yahweh of his failure to live up to his own name and his responsibilities.[81]

The composition explains that Jerusalem's divine king has become like an enemy to the city. This discourse is not one of mere sorrow at Jerusalem's fall but a consciously constructed claim of Yahweh's failure to be a fit king. The opening and closing frames place the *absence* of Jerusalem's deity as the subject of the entire work. It thus ties the central theme—Yahweh's unsuitability and deliberate distance—to Jerusalem's demise. In so doing, it turns the idea of divine abandonment, where the deity is normally understood as justified in their actions, on its head. The composition describes Yahweh's misplaced violent actions systematically, revolving tightly around three main themes: protection, the provision of abundance in the built and natural environment, and the assurance of a lineage in property and progeny. Alternating between earnest, accusatory, and satirical speech, the poet's litany of Yahweh's failures seems to warn the deity that his actions, which have already resulted in his kingdom's demise, will also result in his own diminishment.

4.3.1 The Frame

[81] The argument here is not unique to Lamentations; it occurs broadly in biblical literature, in texts like Exod 32:12, Num 14:16, etc. or Hezekiah's admission in 2 Kings 19:3. In Exod 32: 12, for example, Moses attempts to dissuade Yahweh from releasing his anger on the people by positioning it as being about Yahweh's "name," and his reputation among the Egyptians.

In my analysis of Lamentations, I begin by attending to the frame for the composition and the extent to which it then sets into motion particular ways to interpret the work. I will then focus on the major themes expressed in these poems, with particular attention to the addressees of the poems.

Lamentations 1: 1–2

איכה ישבה בדד העיר
רבתי עם היתה כאלמנה
רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות היתה למס

How has the city come to sit alone?
She who was once full of people has become like a widow!
Great among the nations, a princess among the provinces, she has become a tributary!

Opening with a rhetorical exclamation characteristic of laments, איכה, *How*! the frame, voiced by an unnamed speaker, stages the context for the five poems: a defeated city, personified as a weeping widow. The framing voice remains consistent throughout the work, even as the speech of Jerusalem, personified as widow, is also quoted. In subsequent verses, the frame particularizes the image by identifying the city as Jerusalem, establishing a "field of reference" within which to interpret the images of a widowed and unprotected city and the images that follow.[82] Although a widow can have numerous connotations, when placed within the context of an empty, unguarded city, it becomes grounded in a certain constellation of associations.[83]

[82] Here, I am drawing on Benjamin Harshav's concept of "fields of reference" that govern a reader's interpretation of a text. See Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics*, especially pages 1–25.

[83] This is what Harshav refers to as "referential grounding". He suggests that it is from this grounding, that the exposition of the composition can proceed. He notes too that these early referents provided in a text may be ""minor" from the point of view of the hierarchy as developed in the text as a whole. This is due to the need to establish some coordinates as soon as

Left implicit in these opening lines is that it is Yahweh who is the absent husband. Put simply, if his wife is a widow, he is dead. Instead of providing details of why or how Yahweh became absent, the speaker instead describes the consequences of this unprotected position. This description, offered not by the invading king seeking to discredit Judah's ruler, but rather by a speaker from within the community, seems at once to be an accusation against Yahweh as well as a chance for the deity to pay heed and do something about the situation. In the context of imperial masculinity, dead kings are the ones vanquished and defeated. To open with an image of Jerusalem's widowhood then is a powerful statement of Yahweh's seeming impotence.

Without Yahweh's protection, Jerusalem finds herself in economic, sexual, and physical danger. Lamentations offers a sustained reflection on these dangers throughout the five poems but concentrates on the effects of the lack of protection in the first poem.

Lam 1: 3–5

גלתה יהודה מעני ומרב עבדה
היא ישבה בגוים לא מצאה מנוח
כל רדפיה השיגוה בין המצרים

דרכי ציון אבלות מבלי באי מועד
כל שעריה שוממין
כהניה נאנחים בתולתיה נוגות
והיא מר לה

היו צריה לראש איביה שלו
כי יהוה הוגה על רב פשעיה
עולליה הלכו שבי לפני צר

Judah is exiled from affliction and plentiful servitude;[84]

possible for an acceptable fictional world in which the story unfolds." Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics*, 24.

[84] In the Hebrew Bible, the construction גלה מן occurs eleven times (1 Sam 4: 21, 22; 2 Kgs 17: 23; 25: 21; Isa 5: 13; Jer 52: 27; Ezek 12: 3; Hos 10: 5; Amos 7: 11; Mic 1: 16). In all but Mic 1:16, the מן is local (GKC 119v), and in Isa 5: 13 it is causal. The history of

She dwells among the nations; she finds no rest.[85]
All her persecutors overtook her between the straits[86]

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interpretation has favored a causal explanation, though this is in line with the broader reading of Jerusalem being destroyed because of the city's sins. Yet, if exile is envisioned this interpretation is problematic: why would Jerusalem go into exile *because of* her affliction. If we take a temporal interpretation, the situation is slightly alleviated, rendering an interpretation like that of Calvin, "Judah leaveth the country after affliction" (Broughton, 1608 *ad loc*). See excellent discussion of the various possibilities in Salters, *Lamentations*, 41–43.

[85] Within the Hebrew Bible, the trope of securing rest from the surrounding lands has important implications. Most important among them, perhaps, is that it is a time that is suitable for building activity. Thus, for example, in Deuteronomy 12: 9, 10 and following, the claim is that the Israelites must begin to obey Yahweh's commandments concerning sacrifices, tithes etc. only once they cross the Jordan and are granted "rest from their enemies that are around them." (Note that the usual roots to describe such rest are Š'N and ŠQṬ, but NWḤ can function similarly). It is also only after this securing of rest for the Israelites that Yahweh will choose a place for his name to dwell. A similar idea is found in 2 Sam 7, where only when Yahweh grants David rest from all his enemies that it becomes possible for David to even conceive of constructing a house for Yahweh to dwell in. In 1 Kings 5, we find another example of the correlation between rest from one's enemies and time for building a temple. In verse 17–18, Solomon explains how David was unable to build Yahweh a house because of his numerous enemies, but now that he, Solomon, has been granted rest, it is now a suitable time to begin building Yahweh's temple. The connection between rest and the appropriate time for undertaking building activity is widespread outside the Hebrew Bible as well: in Neo-Assyrian and West Semitic royal inscriptions, for example, building projects are undertaken only after the successful completion of military campaigns. In the Mesha inscription, for example, the king reports that Israel "humiliated" Moab on account of the Moabite deity Chemosh's anger towards his own land. Mesha responds by force and is able to successfully overthrow Omri, taking control of Medeba, Ataroth, Jahaz etc., before finally turning his attention to Dibon, where he builds a lavish walled acropolis. (On these texts, see further J. Liver, "The Wars of Mesha,"; Dearman, "Historical Reconstruction and the Mesha Inscription,." The annals of Tiglath Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) reveal a similar narrative structure and progression. They typically begin with a statement about the subjugation, defeat, or destruction of hostile territories on the outskirts of the empire, followed by a series of restoration and development projects in the capital region. The link between rest and building activity is based on primarily pragmatic reasons: military conflicts utilize resources and manpower, and the unstable atmosphere created by them precludes easy transportation of raw materials for building, takes away from monetary resources required to build, and prevents the easy movement of pilgrims. In inscriptions that detail both royal achievements, the narrative moves from military conflict to stability and development in the natural environment (usually through the cultivation of gardens and other exempla of heightened order of natural elements) and finally, to construction of architectural spaces.

[86] Gk. has *qlibo/ntwn* "oppressors." *hammĕṣārîm*, straits, which would read, "Her pursuers overtook her in the straits." See discussion of the unusual noun in Salters, *Lamentations*, 44. But see also Joüon's innovative proposal that the term is a mispointed reading

The roads of Zion are forlorn without any festival goers,
All her gates are ruined,[87]
her priests groan, her young women are led captive,
She is herself bitter.

Her oppressors have become the head,
and her enemies have prospered,
for Yahweh has afflicted her because of the multitude of her infractions.
Her young have gone into captivity before the oppressor.

In Lam 1:3–5, the poet describes the most striking of the effects: the mass captivity and deportation of the citizenry of Judah. Couched in the metaphor of a mother losing her children to the enemy, עוללֶיהָ הלכו שבי לפני צר "Her young have gone into captivity before the oppressor," the poem is both evocative and dire. Coupled with the opening image of the widowed city, these early lines of Lamentations repeatedly cast the event of war in familial terms in which the male protector is absent. The removal of the children from the land is a particularly strong statement of failure because it paralyzes the nation's future growth through dissolution of the nation and makes permanent the cessation of the kingdom, an issue the poet returns to at length in the last poem.

The lack of protection also expresses itself in incidents of sexual violence. While the victims of such violence were women, it is to the men of the community, and ultimately the king and deity that such violence is directed and from whom a reaction is expected. As seen in the

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for "Egyptians." Joüon, "Etudes de Philologie Semitique," in *Meelanges de la Faculté Orientale* 6 (1913), 16–211. For specific treatment of this word, see p. 209.

[87] This has the double valence of "carrying off" and "destroyed," highlighting the destruction of the city. Although there are no military inscriptions from the Neo-Babylonian period, information gleaned from the many military battles fought by the Assyrians proves illustrative: city gates themselves were frequently carried off and displayed in the victor's capital as emblems of victory. Here, the primary meaning seems to be 'destroyed' because of the voice (active; the meaning of carried off tends to be used with passive forms). See further discussion and comparative biblical examples in Salters, *Lamentations*, 46–47.

section above, authors frequently use women and their sexuality to set up a contest for masculine power. The sexual violation of a woman is designed to humiliate the men expected to protect her and draw attention to their powerlessness. Lamentations refers to sexual violence obliquely and explicitly: in 1:6, for example, the city's princes have been hunted and captured before the enemy, and Jerusalem, personified woman, is exposed to her enemies in verses 8 and 9:

חטא חטאה ירושלם על כן לנידה היתה
כל מכבדיה הזילוה כי ראו ערותה
גם היא נאנחה ותשב אחור
טמאתה בשוליה לא זכרה אחריתה
ותרד פלאים אין מנחם לה
ראה יהוה את עניי כי הגדיל אויב

Jerusalem sinned a great sin, therefore she has become an unclean woman.
All who honored her, afflict her, for they have seen her nakedness.
Indeed, she herself cries out and turns from it
Her uncleanness is at her feet, she did not remember her last end,
She came down greatly;
there is no one to comfort her.
Look O Yahweh, at my affliction! for the enemy has been magnified

But rather than appealing to the princes or the young men of the city, it is to Yahweh that Jerusalem turns for intervention in 9b:

ראה יהוה את עניי כי הגדיל אויב

"Look, O Yahweh, at my affliction, for the enemy has been magnified!"

This plea authorizes a connection to an imperial contest by Jerusalem's assertion that her affliction is somehow proportional to the magnification of her enemy. The implication is that the enemy's magnification will reflect a diminishment of Yahweh's power but that if he should respond to the plea and lift Jerusalem out of her situation, he will demonstrate his own strength.

The poem characterizes Jerusalem's unprotected status as resulting from the lack of a comforter or protector: four times in Lamentations 1, the poet refers to the absence of a

comforter for the city (vv. 1:2, 9, 16, 21). When used in reference to a city, the request for comfort has explicit associations with situations of reversal. Comparable are Isa 51:3, where Yahweh's comfort of Zion means the transformation of its wastelands into Edenic gardens, and Isa 54:11, where comfort implies a rebuilding of foundations. Comfort in this context then is a renewal and restoration of an environment which will allow the city's inhabitants to be protected and thrive. Yet in this composition, Yahweh adopts no such role.

This theme of protection is woven through the entire work. In Lamentations 2:16–21, for example, the poet describes the consequences of Jerusalem's unprotected position. Yahweh's actions, as articulated in verse 17, cause Jerusalem's complete destruction. The poet's urging of the people to cry out to Yahweh can be interpreted as a call to Yahweh to pay attention to the numerous ways in which he failed at being king. Verse 20 authorizes this claim by explicitly addressing Yahweh, in effect saying "What are you doing? Look at who you are attacking—it's not the enemy, it is your own people!"[88] The poet names individuals belonging to categories who require special protection from the king, namely women and children.[89]

4.3.2 Destruction of the Built Environment

[88] The outrage expressed in this section is similar in tone to the outrage of the Jephthah story in Judges 11–12, where Jephthah's battle and vow to Yahweh results in the death of his own beloved daughter. This kind of outrage is also echoed in 2 Kings 6: 26–31 in which the king of Israel recognizes his own folly only when confronted with a mother whose son has been consumed in lieu of food. In all of these instances, the spectacle of the king's (or judge) women or children suffering is jolts him to recognize the inversion of right order.

[89] The reference to priest and prophet (Lam 2: 20) may also be interpreted as such a category, since prophets often have a close relationship to the deity and king, and priests are generally not included in any list of combatants.

The repeated requests for a comforter who will restore Jerusalem's position to its previous status as a princess among the states forms a thematic and conceptual bridge to the second poem, in which rather than responding to the request to protect and restore Jerusalem, Yahweh instead goes on a carefully planned rampage. The successful king who restores and rebuilds the foundations of his city, leading it to greater heights of beauty. Yet Yahweh has done precisely the opposite:

Lam 2: 1–3

איכה יעיב באפו אדני את בת ציון
השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל
ולא זכר הדם רגליו ביום אפו
בלע אדני לא חמל את כל נאות יעקב
הרס בעברתו מבצרי בת יהודה
הגיע לארץ חלל ממלכה ושריה
גדע בחרי אף כל קרן ישראל
השיב אחור ימינו מפני אויב
ויבער ביעקב כאש להבה אכלה סביב

[1] Alas!
The Lord has beclouded Lady Zion.[90]

[90] The meaning of יעיב is uncertain because it is a *hapax*. Salters notes that it has been understood as a denominative, possibly a Hiphil, from 'cloud' and possibly related to the Syriac *Aphel* of 'WB "to overcloud" or Arabic 'YB "to be hidden." The LXX ἐγνόφωσεν derives the root from 'BH, "to be thick, fat," and in the Hiphil, "to make gross," Rashi suggests the connotation is turning into darkness, pointing to 1 Kings 18:45, in which the heavens grow dark with clouds; See Rashi, מקראות גדולות. Based on the analysis by Albrektson, Salters notes that the cloud, which may seem relatively weak of an image in contrast to the other displays of Yahweh's anger, it may be used to signal the strong change in Yahweh's merciful behavior. See Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (STL 21; Lund, 1963). Elsewhere the use of "cloud" with reference to Yahweh signals his mercy and protection of Israel–his presence– here, it is the very opposite, the cloud conveys no protection and no protection from the deity's wrath. See Salters, *Lamentations*, 111–113. Hillers in contrast calls the explanation for יעיב "suspiciously *ad-hoc*" and notes that nowhere else is "beclouding" an image for punishment. He points to Ehrlich, Rudolph and others, who have related this verb to an Arabic root *'āba,* 'to blame, revile,' and notes their translation, 'How the Lord has *disgraced* Zion.' Hillers, *Lamentations*, 35. McDaniel suggests the vocalization read *yō'īb*, as though from the root W'B (thus related to the noun *tō'ēbāh*). This would match the sense of the verb in Ps 106:40. McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations, I–II," *Biblica* 49 (1968): 27–53, 199–220. On discussion of this verb, see pp. 34–35.

He flung from heaven to the ground the beauty of Israel,
And he did not remember his footstool on the day of his anger.
[2] The lord devoured—he did not show mercy to any of Jacob's settlements.[91]
With rage, he broke the fortifications of daughter Judah.
He profaned the kingdom and her princes,[92]
[3] He hewed down in fierce anger all the horn of Israel.
He has drawn back his right hand from [them] before the enemy,
And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, consuming all around.

Lamentations 2 opens with Yahweh beclouding or disgracing Jerusalem. The meaning of the verb יעיב is contested because this is its singular occurrence in biblical Hebrew, but characterization of Yahweh as a warrior in the verses that follow suggest that "beclouding" offers the strongest possibility for understanding this term. Yahweh is frequently depicted as a storm god, much like the Near Eastern deity Adad, who rides on the clouds and is characterized as a divine warrior. Lamentations also makes use of cloud imagery elsewhere in the work, describing Yahweh as having covered himself with a cloud. Scholars who argue that the cloud is a weak image for anger ignore its associations with storm deities as well as with other instances in which Yahweh is linked to a cloud. Here in Lamentations, the clouding is not a protective

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[91] On the meaning of "dwellings" or pastures": The meaning of the word has occasioned much debate, even in early translations. LXX, reading 'beautiful things,' reads this as a plural of נאוה, meaning "delightful." Salters suggests that the translator may have been influenced by v 1. Renkema and Westermann suggest that the word may pertain to "grazing places" but Salters, with whom I agree, prefers "settlements" in the current context. See Renkema, *Lamentations*, 222; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 151; Salters, *Lamentations*, 116-117. If interpreted with the frame of domestic achievements in mind, one would expect this to refer to the external most portions of a kingdom, which would be the fields and grazing regions. In achievement narratives, the attention moves steadily inwards, from the periphery of the kingdom in towards the center, and becomes progressively more "ordered." Here, we have an inversion of that order described.

[92] On ממלכה: Hillers reads this on the basis of comparison with Phoenician, suggesting the initial *m* was originally an enclitic *m* attached to the preceding verb *ḥillēl*. He also points ahead to v. 9, where 'king' and 'princes' occur as a pair. Hillers also translates the verb *ḥillēl* as "profaned," on the basis of Ps 79:40, suggesting that verses Ps 79: 39–46 resemble the context of Lam 2 and thus justify such a comparison. See Hillers, *Lamentations*, 36.

charm but rather one that stands as a barrier between Judah and its deity. Like the storm god Adad, here Yahweh too takes on the characteristics of a warrior. By framing the opening couplet with references to Yahweh's anger, the poet provides an early indication of the overarching theme of this particular poem, namely, the unbridled anger of Yahweh that carries through the rest of the poem (vv. 2:2b; 2:3a; 2:4c;2:6c). [93]

In verse two, Yahweh destroys "without mercy," in sharp contrast to the oft-repeated request for comfort in the first lament. This destructive nature pervades the second poem: of the thirty-one verbs at the beginning of this poem, Yahweh is the subject of twenty-nine of them, and in each of them he engages in acts of violence, fury, and demolition. Although the spheres of destruction described in the poem seem to be somewhat haphazard, the acts of a warrior "gone rogue," there is in fact an undoing of a particular kind of created order in this poem. In narratives that detail domestic achievements of rulers, the king usually describes his activities with reference to the city's built environment—its palace, temple, strongholds, and city walls. The improvements in these infrastructural capacities are what allow his people to dwell safely and to

[93] For a comparison of Yahweh and the storm god Adad/ Ba'al, see Martin G. Klingbeil, "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image: A Comparison Between Sub-metaphors of the Heavenly Warrior Metaphor in the Hebrew Psalter and Iconographic Elements of the Storm- and Warrior-god Ba'al in ANE Iconography," *Die Welt des Orients*, Bd. 39, H. 2 (2009), pp. 205-222. For a broader treatment of storm god imagery, see Daniel Schwemer, "The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part I" *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7.2 (2008), 121-168; and idem, "The Storm Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part I" *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8.1 (2008), 1-44.

enjoy the abundance that flows into the city.[94] In Lamentations 2, however, the catalogue is one of annihilation not construction. Like an enemy would treat the city, so too does Yahweh: like an invading enemy, he destroys the strongholds of Judah that are meant to protect the kingdom and thereby eviscerates the people's ability to protect themselves (v. 2). He also decimates the kingdom and its royal figures, defeating them entirely.[95] In verse three, the nature of this destruction is clarified further: Yahweh's right hand, usually symbolic of his protective nature towards Judah, is instead withdrawn from the city, and Yahweh "burns like a flaming fire" against Jacob.[96]

Verses 4 and 5 make explicit that Yahweh is being compared to an enemy:

דרך קשתו כאויב
נצב ימינו כצר

[94] See Douglas Green, "*I Undertook Great Works*," for an expansive treatment of this framework in achievement narratives.

[95] On הגיע: Salters reads this as figurative for "bringing X down" and would here apply to the king and princes, who had until this point not been overthrown. Kiel, on the other hand, argues that the phrase is epexegetical with הרס and read with the Masoretic notation of the *atnach*. Reading with the Masoretes suggests that the actions of Yahweh are directed towards the strongholds of Judah. See C. F. Kiel, *The Lamentations of Jeremiah* in vol II of The Prophecies of Jeremiah (Edinburgh, 1874), 383. Salters also argues that the meaning of v. 2c be read as having similar associations as Isa 43:28, in which Yahweh claims to have desecrated the princes, as well as Isa 47.6, where he claims to have desecrated the princes and then handed them over to Babylonians. Reading with Renkema, Salters suggests that the importance of this line is in underscoring the idea that Zion is no longer considered to be holy or sacred in Yahweh's eyes– the conquest of Judah shows this. See Salters, *Lamentations*, 118.

[96]Although fire is often a sign of a theophany in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 19:8; 2 Sam 22:9, 13), it is also a potent weapon in war and a symbol of divine wrath (for example, Ps 89:46; Isa 66:15). Here it seems explicitly a tool of divine wrath. O'Connor argues that here it must be understood as likening God's presence to "a consuming holocaust. The poem does not nuance references to fire, as for example, purgation, cleansing, or refining … In Lamentations, fire is God's weapon to obliterate a world." See further discussion in Kathleen O'Connor, "Lamentations" *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Vol. 6; Abingdon: Nashville, 2001) 1011–72 (at 1038). This observation that it has no overtly redemptive qualities is an important one for understanding how the poet is representing the destruction of Jerusalem as one that is the result of divine anger exploding.

ויהרג כל מחמדי עין
באהל בת ציון שפך כאש חמתו
היה אדני כאויב
בלע ישראל בלע כל ארמנותיה שחת
מבצריו
וירב בבת יהודה תאניה ואניה

[4] He bent his bow like an enemy.
He stationed his right hand[97] like an adversary,
and slew all that is pleasant to see.
In the tent of daughter Zion, he poured forth his fury like fire.
[5] The lord was like an enemy:
He swallowed Israel,[98] he swallowed up all her citadels, and destroyed its fortifications![99]
He multiplied mourning and lamentation in daughter Judah.[100]

This is one of Lamentations' most explicit characterizations of the deity. Although other sections of Lamentations have also portrayed Yahweh's actions as like an enemy (as in 1:13–15), here we

[97] Hillers suggests that "his right hand is stationed" can 'scarcely be correct' without offering further detail. But he also observes that if *kĕṣār* "like an adversary" is added to the previous line, the line becomes very long, and line 2 becomes too short, yet if it is read with the second line, the meaning is unclear, "like a foe and he slew." He offers the following solution: rather than understanding *niṣṣāb* as a verb, it should be understood as a rarer noun, meaning "sword hilt" (cf. Judges 3:22), and to the *yĕmīnō* should be added a 'b' (which he tentatively suggests may have been lost by haplography). Hillers, *Lamentations*, 37. On the image of Yahweh as a warrior who wields a bow and sword, he offers examples of Ps 7:13, Zech 9:13, and also Isa 41:2, Ps 37:14. In the second line, *kĕṣār* would nicely parallel *kĕ'ōyēb*, but a verb has fallen out here–Hillers suggests probably *hikkāh*. The resulting restoration would yield a syntactic pattern that is more in line with the rest of the poem's pattern (and that of Lamentations as a whole).

[98] Syr. does not attest the MT comparative *kĕ*. It is possible that the MT reflects a later, pious, insertion.

[99] Hillers emends the suffix on ארמנותיה to a masculine singular form to align with the suffix on 'fortification' and the masculine antecedent Israel.

[100] Hillers offers the comparative example from the *Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, lines 361–62: "The desolate city–in its midst there was uttered (nothing but) laments (and) dirges | In its midst there was uttered (nothing but) laments (and) dirges." Although the speech acts are described with similar terminology, my interpretation emphasizes the active action on Yahweh's part that prompts these speech acts.

have a sustained exposition of what that comparison entails. The poet uses language of consumption to signal the total obliteration of Judah in Lam 2: 6–9a:[101]

ויחמס כגן שכו שחת מועדו
שכח יהוה בציון מועד ושבת
וינאץ בזעם אפו מלך וכהן
זנח אדני מזבחו נאר מקדשו
הסגיר ביד אויב חומת ארמנותיה
קול נתנו בבית יהוה כיום מועד
חשב יהוה להשחית חומת בת ציון
נטה קו לא השיב ידו מבלע
ויאבל חל וחומה יחדו אמללו
טבעו בארץ שעריה אבד ושבר בריחיה

[6] He has violently torn down his booth as in a vineyard, he has destroyed his meeting place
Yahweh erased the memory of festival and sabbath in Zion
In his indignant anger, he spurned both king and priest
[7] Yahweh rejected his altar, he abhorred his sanctuary
He closed into the hand of the enemy the walls of her citadels
They raise a clamor in the house of Yahweh as on the day of a festival
[8] Yahweh planned to destroy the wall of Daughter Zion
He stretched out a line, he did not turn his hand (i.e. relent) from swallowing up
He made wall and rampart mourn, and together they languish
[9 a] Her gates have sunk into the earth, he destroyed and shattered her bars

Verses 6–9a complete this initial section of the poem by describing in greater detail the destruction of the temple and the institutional infrastructure of Judah. In verses 6 and 7, Yahweh dismantles his temple as though it were a booth in a vineyard after harvest. The reference to the "appointed time" is both a cultic as well as an agricultural image, and thus looks backwards to

[101] Engulfment and consumption imagery is a relatively well-attested trope in descriptions of military and personal crisis, for example, in 2 Sam 22: 5 (Parallel in Ps 18:5) and the thanksgiving hymn from Qumran (1QH XI). This language is also reflected in birth incantations wherein the mother cries out that she is 'encircled' (for discussion, see van der Toorn, *From her Cradle to her Grave*, 89). Bergmann notes that in the ancient Near East, childbirth was often described metaphorically as sailing on a boat from one shore to the other, with the intervening sea likened to a battle. This metaphorical description was in turn then used to describe military crises. Complications would thus be metaphorically described through a stormy sea, choppy waters. For further discussion, see Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis*, 127-28.

the use of the booth imagery as well as forward to the idea of festivals and sacrifice. The references to despising both king and priest are a sign of the withdrawal of divine favor, and thus allow for a transition back into a political sphere in which the enemies gain control of the city's citadels and shout as though rejoicing. Lest one think Yahweh's actions are those of an overzealous deity, 9a makes clear that Yahweh's actions were carefully considered and premeditated. Like the architect of a city who stretches out a measuring line before building, Yahweh also carefully planned how to destroy the city. He is, in effect, the inverse of the royal architect.[102] Unlike the king who boasts of his building achievements and constructs pleasure gardens as signs of heightened order, Yahweh actively undoes visible symbols of order. One may read the comparison between the tabernacle and a booth in a garden as activating that kind of achievement narrative which describes the planting of luxurious gardens but turning all expectations on their head.

Lam 2: 9b–13

מלכה ושריה בגוים אין תורה
גם נביאיה לא מצאו חזון מיהוה

ישבו לארץ ידמו זקני בת ציון
העלו עפר על ראשם חגרו שקים
הורידו לארץ ראשן בתולת ירושלם

כלו בדמעות עיני חמרמרו מעי
נשפך לארץ כבדי על שבר בת עמי
בעטף עולל ויונק ברחבות קריה

לאמתם יאמרו איה דגן ויין
בהתעטפם כחלל ברחבות עיר
בהשתפך נפשם אל חיק אמתם

[102] See also Amos 7: 7–9 where Yahweh is depicted standing with a plumb line, and 2 Sam 8: 1–2, where David "measures out" Moab with a line. I am grateful to Simeon Chavel for drawing my attention to these examples.

מה אעידך מה אדמה לך הבת ירושלם
מה אשוה לך ואנחמך בתולת בת ציון
כי גדול כים שברך מי ירפא לך

נביאיך חזו לך שוא ותפל
ולא גלו על עונך להשיב שביתך שבותך
ויחזו לך משאות שוא ומדוחים

[9b] Her king and princes are among the nations; instruction is no more,
and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD.

[10] The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth;
the young girls of Jerusalem bowed their heads to the ground.

[11] My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns;
My innards are poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people,
While infants and babes faint in the streets of the city.

[12] They cry to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?"
as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city,
as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom.

[13] How shall I witness [for] you, to what shall I compare you, O daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O daughter Zion?
Vast as the sea is your ruin—who can heal you?

Verses 9b–13 establish the people's response to Yahweh's destructive spree. The first-person speaker first describes his own response to the crisis, which is one of sorrow and compassion. He then names particular groups and royal figures that are emblematic of the city, and together, function as a merism to express the totality of the kingdom: the king, princes, prophets, elders, children, and mothers.[103] While the royal figures are expected to run the city, their absence results in the breakdown of the right functioning of the city. The prophets are

[103] Salters notes parallels to the phrase *špk npš* of Lam 2: in Job 30:16, 1 Sam 1:15, Ps 102:1, which suggest not the individual's death but rather them "pouring out their heart." If so, the children are crying out in their mothers' arms, rather than dying.

unable to prophesy, and the elders of the city, lacking their usual juridical locations, sit in mourning. These activities are essential to the correct functioning of the city and with their cessation, the city itself came to standstill as every order was upturned.

Typically, the ends of achievement narratives boast of the city or king being unparalleled in its beauty, order, and abundance. Here, there is a statement of Jerusalem's unparalleled status, but rather than being the pinnacle among all other cities, it is in fact the nadir. In this scene, there is an emptying in progress rather than a progressively fulsome description. The language of witnessing in v. 13 is also noteworthy because it underscores an undercurrent of juridical conviction that justifies the poet's speech.[104] In Lam 2: 15–17, below, the passersby occupy a unique position within the fictional world of the text as they stand as the first witnesses to evidence of Yahweh's descent. Together, these verses provide "evidence" of Yahweh's failure to carry out his role as king, and in so doing, acts like a litigant's brief.

Lam 2: 14–17

נביאיך חזו לך שוא ותפל
ולא גלו על עונך להשיב שביתך
ויחזו לך משאות שוא ומדוחים

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[104] The Hebrew verb, אעידך of 2:13, which means "to bear witness" is frequently used in legal proceedings to describe legal transactions and cases. In Deut 32:46, and Psalm 50:7, the notion of a witnessing has negative connotation and highlights the complex conceptual world that this verb encapsulates. In Deut 8:19; 2 Kings 17:3, and elsewhere, "to witness" has the additional connotation of warning or chastising. The question here, of how to bear witness is answered implicitly, as Dobbs-Allsopp astutely observes, by the very act of the poem's composition. Yet, it is not only witnessing abstractly as Dobbs-Allsopp seems to suggest, but really also actively constructing a case against Yahweh. These poems may be compared, in this respect, to the charge sheet brought against a defendant. Within the context of critiquing the divine king's masculinity, this kind of language plays an important role in formalizing the proceedings, and acts as a performative element. This performative element is what underlies, for example, the letter found at Arad, in which the letter writer states, "I hereby send witness to you…" (Arad 24: 18–19), aiming to warn the recipient of the letter of an impending crisis. Here too, the poet is warning Yahweh of the crisis that is already underway, and spelling out the implications for Yahweh's status as king.

סִפְקוּ עָלַיִךְ כַּפַּיִם כָּל עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ
שָׁרְקוּ וְיָנִיעוּ רֹאשָׁם עַל בַּת יְרוּשָׁלִָם
הֲזֹאת הָעִיר שֶׁיֹּאמְרוּ כְלִילַת יֹפִי מָשׂוֹשׂ לְכָל הָאָרֶץ

פָּצוּ עָלַיִךְ פִּיהֶם כָּל אוֹיְבַיִךְ
שָׁרְקוּ וְיַחֲרְקוּ שֵׁן אָמְרוּ
בָּלַעְנוּ אַךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שְׁקִוִּינֵהוּ מָצָאנוּ רָאִינוּ

עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם בָּצַע אִמְרָתוֹ
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי קֶדֶם
הָרַס וְלֹא חָמָל
וַיְשַׂמַּח עָלַיִךְ אוֹיֵב הֲרִים קֶרֶן צָרָיִךְ

[14] The visions your prophets saw were false whitewash
They did not uncover your iniquity to turn (you) from your captivity [or: to cause your fortunes to be restored]
They have seen for you empty oracles and enticements
[15] All the wayfarers clap their hands at you
They whistle and shake their heads at Daughter Jerusalem
Is this the city of which they said the "fullness of beauty, the joy of all the land"?
[16]All your enemies open their mouths wide at you
They whistle, shriek [with] their teeth, saying,
"We have swallowed [them]!" Indeed, this day that we have waited for– we have found! We see it!"
[17] Yahweh has done what he devised, he has carried his word
that he had commanded long ago. He has broken and not spared,
And he has made the enemy rejoice against you,
He has raised high the horn of your adversary.

In these verses, the poet describes the futility of Judah's prophets in preventing its downfall. Unlike the prophets who warn the people of punishment, the prophets of Judah gave false prophecies and oracles. Those who pass by the city now are unable to reconcile the ruins they witness with the reputation that previously characterized the city, "the fullness of beauty," and mock it. The content of v. 16 explains the claim of the following verse, that Yahweh made the enemy rejoice against Judah. Yahweh's careful planning has coopted Jerusalem's enemies into partaking in its downfall and making mockery of it. This coopting is signaled through the repetition of the same kind of language of engulfing and swallowing as attributed to Yahweh at

the opening of the poem. On the one hand, v. 17 continues the pattern established in the previous three verses of identifying potential saviors for Jerusalem and then systematically rejecting them on the basis of their actions. Verse 17 offers yet another contender for Jerusalem's salvation: its own deity. Like the figures in the preceding verses, Yahweh is unsympathetic and in fact actively engaged in Jerusalem's suffering.

In these final verses of the poem we find a clear formulation of charges against Yahweh. In vv. 14–17, the poet described the mockery that Judah has to endure as a result of Yahweh's plotting against it. The poet presents a series of groups who have the potential to respond positively to Jerusalem's suffering, but each is progressively worse than the previous. Finally, the poet lists Yahweh, but describes his actions as particularly malevolent. These verses prepare the audience for a pivot in v. 18: no longer is the poet simply offering a catalogue of prospective rescuers but now actively charging them with culpable negligence. Verse 18 begins the leveling of an accusation of misconduct against Yahweh that is sustained throughout the poems. The poet instructs the people to cry unceasingly and lays out the stakes that rest on their prayers: the very lives of their children, who are fainting and dying in their mothers' arms because of hunger. Deftly, the poet pivots away from his instruction to the people to cry out and turns his attention to Yahweh, chastising him for not paying attention or responding.

4.3.3 Provisions

Next, Lamentations 2 impresses upon Yahweh the magnitude of his failures; he describes the grim reality that has ensued, by referring to women who have begun eating their own children because of hunger. This is not an immaterial choice. Lamentations exhibits a sustained and pervasive interest in food, or at least, in its absence. A crucial element of successful kingship, as

demonstrated in the previous section, is the provisioning and safeguarding of food supplies. Successful rulers and deities, particularly Yahweh, boast of their agricultural yield and lavish royal banquets as evidence of their suitability to rule. Because of the close relationship between the king and the agricultural abundance, royal treaties often include curses that threaten the agricultural produce of the land. These curses derive their potency not only from the assured physical effects of such failure, but also because it reflects poorly on the king and shows him to be too weak to orchestrate agricultural bounty.

In Lamentations, bounty is nowhere to be found. Beginning in Lam 1:11, in a theme that spans the entire work, the people are depicted as starving, bartering 'treasure' for food.[105] In Lamentations 2, the poet's description of Yahweh's destruction catalogues Yahweh's decimation of the infrastructure that supports the regulation of food resources. The author repeatedly draws attention to the shortage of food, particularly to the children affected by the shortage. Lamentations 2:20–21 states:

ראה יהוה והביטה למי עוללת כה
אם תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי טפחים אם
יהרג במקדש אדני כהן ונביא
שכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן
בתולתי ובחורי נפלו בחרב
הרגת ביום אפך טבחת לא חמלת

[20] Look, O Yahweh, and consider whom you have bullied so!
Shall women be made to eat their own fruit, infant children?[106]
Shall priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?
[21] The young and elderly lie on the ground outside
My young men and women have fallen by the sword
You killed on the day of your anger.
You slaughtered, you have not shown mercy

[105] References to a shortage of food, famine, and starvation are found in Lam 1:11, 19; 2:12, 2:19–20; 4:3–5, 4:8–10; 5:4, 9–10.

[106] Note the word play on עוללת "bullied" and עללי טפחים "infant children."

These verses offer a particularly horrific example in which starving mothers begin eating their own offspring to sustain themselves. The focus on children highlights the plight of the vulnerable during wartime but it is also a damning critique of the agent responsible for bringing about such a situation. Instead of protecting his people, particularly the children of the city, his actions have devastating consequences as the children draw near to death by starvation and at the hands of famished mothers.

Lamentations 4:1–5 echoes this issue of starvation as it describes the inversion of order in the society, symbolized most clearly by the absence of food:

בני ציון היקרים המסלאים בפז
איכה נחשבו לנבלי חרש מעשה ידי יוצר
גם תנין תנים חלצו שד היניקו גוריהן
בת עמי לאכזר כי ענים כיענים במדבר
דבק לשון יונק אל חכו בצמא
עוללים שאלו לחם פרש אין להם
האכלים למעדנים נשמו בחוצות
האמנים עלי תולע חבקו אשפתות

The precious people of Zion, the ones comparable to gold,
Alas! They have been reckoned as earthen vessels of the hands of a potter.[107]
Even jackals present a breast, they suckle their cubs,[108]
But my people have become cruel like ostriches in the wilderness.[109]
The tongue of the infant cleaves to the roof of its mouth in thirst.
Children beg for food, no food is laid out for them.
The ones who ate delicacies are desolate in the streets,

[107] On "earthen vessels," see also Isa 30:14, where the destruction of Judah is described with similar terms

[108] Presenting the breast is used idiomatically also for consolation. See for example, Isa 60:16. On their young, the young of jackals or lion whelps; see also Gen 49:9 where the term is used figuratively for Judah.

[109] The term ענים is a hapax, but read with the preceding כי may refer to ostriches. If ostriches, the comparison has nothing to do with whether or not the ostriches care for or neglect their young but rather that ostriches do not allow all the eggs in the nest to hatch. Usually only the alpha female's eggs are allowed to hatch. The implication in this comparison is that mothers do not even help their children to live.

The ones raised in scarlet embraced ash heaps.[110]

The emphasis on the children's hunger in these poems is a strong statement of the failure of the divine king on two counts: to provide adequate sustenance for his people, and to guard the most vulnerable members of society.[111] Ironically, death by starvation and cannibalism is a curse frequently threatened in treaty agreements: the vassal king will not be able to provide food for his family and people. Such a critique concretizes Yahweh's diminished position. Not only does the result make him look like a defeated, vassal king, his actions are in direct contradiction to the fundamental expectation of a ruler to protect the most vulnerable segments of population.

Yet in the world of Lamentations, Yahweh is willingly oblivious to the state of his people. By appealing directly to Yahweh to pay attention to the starvation of his people, the poems warn Yahweh that he has contravened the code of conduct expected of him as a ruler. Even worse, the poet says, is that Yahweh brought it about.

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[110] תולע m.s. noun; worm (as those found in the manna), scarlet stuff–symbolic token of luxury. See BDB, תלע: the meaning of the word itself is disputed though here there seems to be drawn an inverse comparison, and so the meaning "scarlet" may suit the context most. *HALOT* lists various suggestions for how to interpret the word, such as it being a quadriradical primary noun, (see also Degen Gramm. §29: 3, cf. Nöldeke Syr. Gramm. §127). Others have suggested it means "worm" or "maggot," while others, turning to potential cognates in Aramaic, suggest that is an adjective meaning "crimson material."

[111] That such a notice of dire scarcity condemns the king is attested more concretely elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in 2 Kings 6: 24–32. In this passage, Samaria is under siege by Ben-Hadad of Aram. The siege left the city in a state of famine, and as the king walked along the ramparts one day, he was stopped by a woman who asked him to judge a dispute: she and her fellow neighbor had agreed to cook their children for food and to share the meal with each other. On the first day, they cooked the first woman's child (the one speaking to the king) but when it came time to cook the second woman's child, the mother refused.[111] Immediately, the king realizes the horror of the situation and rends his garments (and blames the prophet Elisha). By approaching the king, it is clear that she viewed him as responsible for providing both food for the people (and thus putting her in the situation of consuming her own child) and adjudicating her case.

4.3.4 Inheritance

As the poems progress, the focus turns from the immediate situation of starvation to a consideration of the long-term effects of the people's suffering. In 4:17, the speaking voice now becomes a first-plural, shifting into that of the community. This shift from an individual to a communal voice marks the beginning of a consideration of the community's future prospects, in light of the dismal present in 4:17–20:

עודינה עודינו תכלינה עינינו אל עזרתנו הבל
בצפיתנו צפינו אל גוי לא יושע
צדו צעדינו מלכת ברחבתינו
קרב קצינו מלאו ימינו כי בא קצינו
קלים היו רדפינו מנשרי שמים
על ההרים דלקנו במדבר ארבו לנו
רוח אפינו משיח יהוה נלכד בשחיתותם
אשר אמרנו בצלו נחיה בגוים

As for us, our eyes failed for our vain help;
in our desperate watching we watched for a nation that does not save.
They hunt our steps so that we cannot go in our streets.
Our end is near, our days have come to term, for our end is come.
Our persecutors were swifter than the eagles of the sky:
they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.
The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was trapped in their pits,
of whom we said, "Under his shadow we shall live among the nations."

These verses position the speaker as the broader community. Like the previous poems, the speaker here too makes clear that the people looked not only to Yahweh for help, but also to their powerful neighbors. With no aid forthcoming, the people were overrun by their enemies, trapped in the wilderness and chased across the mountains. They had no security they could rely on. This bleak scenario prepares the audience for the shift in the fifth lament to a consideration of the implications for the future.[112]

[112] Hillers observes that multiple Greek manuscripts add "A Prayer" as the title of this poem, while "other ancient witnesses add 'of Jeremiah,' or 'of Jeremiah the Prophet.' The opening recalls other appeals scattered throughout the poems thus far–Lam 1:9, 11, 20; 3:59–61.

Lam 5:1–3

זכר יהוה מה היה לנו
הביט וראה את חרפתנו
נחלתנו נהפכה לזרים בתינו לנכרים
יתומים היינו אין אב אמתינו כאלמנות

Call to mind,[113] O Yahweh, what has become of us,
Pay attention, and behold our reproach:[114]
Our inheritance has become strangers', our houses to aliens.
We have become orphans, fatherless, our mothers are like widows.

The fifth and final poem in Lamentations opens with an imperative addressed to God to remember—that is, to take note, Jerusalem's reproach. The content of this reproach is explained in vv. 2–3: the people have lost their "inheritance," and as a result, the people's future is literally in jeopardy.[115] The problem with losing one's inheritance is not just the loss of a physical

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The communal form of Lam 5 by no means makes it anymore "prayer" like. It may be however that scholars are unduly influenced by the Greek and other manuscript traditions which label this a prayer. Furthermore, scholars like Westermann, Renkema, and Hillers, who explicitly titles this poem a prayer (Hillers, *Lamentations*, 97) do not offer a coherent description of the generic differences between the two categories, and why prayer offers a more productive interpretative category. Like all four poems prior, this one too is an accusation against Yahweh.

[113] While the whole poem is addressed to Yahweh, the 2nd person imperative forms occur only at verse 1 and again in 19–22. Salters and others note that the imperative form of זכר occurs only here in Lamentations.

[114] Albrektson observes that 5QThr[a] has a plural חרפותינו for חרפתנו, which is supported by other late Hebrew manuscripts as well, but there is no clear reason to privilege that over the MT and LXX. Alberktson, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 196–197.

[115] The term נחלה "heritage" is common in Biblical Hebrew, being attested just over one hundred times but is only used this single time in Lamentations. With a basic meaning of "heritage," or "land," it is one component of Yahweh's two-part promise (land and descendants) to the patriarchs. The term is also used as a synonym for the people themselves–in Deut 4:20, 9:26, 29; Joel 3:2, and it is possible that such a double valence is at play here as well. This term appeals to God on two counts: the people and the land. Given that the granting of the inheritance in both contexts is Yahweh's prerogative, a threat to it would warrant an appeal to him. For a discussion of the promises to the patriarchs, see Joel Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the*

structure, but also the loss of one's future progeny. As is clear from other texts within the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East, without children to carry on one's name, a person's memory is erased from the earth after their death.[116] This poem thus moves from the immediate present issue of starvation and humiliation to a much larger one, namely, the issue of memory. Like the term נחלה, which can refer to both the actual inheritance, the land, as well as to the people, the term בית also has a similar double valence–it can refer to the physical structure of the built house but it can also refer to the entire household within it. The use of these two terms, coupled with Lamentations's more sustained preoccupation with the deportation of the people, underlines the severity of the loss—the physical inheritance of land and house is lost as well as the people entrusted to bequeath the inheritance, the fathers.[117]

The choice of land as the focus of the final lament is not accidental. Irene Winter has argued that land is often used as a starting point from which to build narratives of plenty or scarcity.[118] Focusing on visual representations of such narratives, she observes that they often begin with depictions of scallops or other similar designs for rendering *erṣetu*, "earth," and *mātu*, "land" thus referring to "both the 'ground' of desirable abundance in production and the

Pentateuch (FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 243–254; idem, *The Promise to the Patriarchs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[116] See excellent discussion in Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973), 1–54.

[117] Like the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who are the physical conduits by which Yahweh's inheritance is originally delivered, so too in Lamentations, it is the fathers who are responsible for passing down the inheritance to the children. To be fatherless, then, is to lack access to an inheritance, and spells the end of a lineage.

[118] Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance."

"territory" of the state."[119] Using the land as a foundation, the image then builds concentric bands around it that depict other aspects of abundance, namely, agriculture and water. She argues that this systematic progression of bands mimics the ideal Mesopotamian plantation and organization of abundance.[120] While the images employed in Lamentations 5 are different, they also rely on a similar understanding of what constitutes right order. Beginning with the land, the presentation in Lamentations 5 represents a complete inversion of the ideal organization of abundance: the loss of inheritance sets into motion other privations, beginning with water, wood, and food.[121] The unjustness of the agricultural situation is exacerbated further by the resulting social upheaval in which the עבדים "servants" rule (5: 8)[122], and the population is humiliated and assaulted in various ways. In v. 15, regular institutions, such as the judicial activities of the elders and the

[119] This is seen, for example, in the glazed brick panel from Shalmaneser III's fort, as well as in reliefs from Assurnasirpal's reign. In the Shalmaneser brick panel, the next portion of the image is *guilloches*, which are interpreted as references to water, followed by flowers and trees in subsequent bands. Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance," 256.

[120] Glassner, "A Propos des jardins Mésopotamiens," *Jardins d'Orient* (ed. R. Gyselen; RES Orientales III; Paris, 1991), pp. 9–17.

[121] The pairing of widow and orphan is shorthand in the bible for referring to vulnerable segments of the population. The poor are the third class that completes the triad, and may be alluded to in verse 2, which refers to the loss of inheritance and house.

[122]It is unclear who the referent of this עבדים, "servants" is, but it likely refers to the Babylonian functionaries of the king. Both Peshitta and LXX understand the term to have a narrow sense of "slave" or "servant." Yet as Salters emphasizes in his commentary, in Biblical Hebrew the term has a much wider semantic field and rather than operating only in the master-servant relationship, also functions to describe any asymmetrical relationship in which one individual (or group) is subordinate to another. Thus, for example, at Exod 21:7, the term means "slave," at Jer 22:2, "Official," at 2 Sam 10:19, "vassal king," and at Num 14:24, "worshipper." Some traditions seem to take *Egypt* as the direct referent. This interpretation does cohere with the historical situation. The term servants may simply refer to the Babylonians, particularly since royal inscriptions style even the king as the servant of the gods.

music making of young men, cease.[123] The upturning of expected order comes to a climax in v. 16, in which the crown—a sign of beauty, royalty, and honor, previously worn by Judah—is fallen. This stands in contrast to depictions of order, both visual and literary: as the narrative moves inwards, order becomes increasingly heightened and perfect.

The poem ends bleakly: the poet levels one final, damning accusation against Yahweh, namely, that he already has an eternal dwelling place (5:19), and yet has continually forgotten and neglected Judah (5:20). The poet ends his laments with a request for Yahweh to restore the people to him in order that they might be able to return themselves (5:21). The point here is not a sudden change of heart, but a reminder to Yahweh that he has a responsibility to the people and that without his cooperation, their future is in grave jeopardy. The fact that all five poems addressed to Yahweh suggests that even in the face of continued assault, the poet demands change in Yahweh's behavior, even as he indicts the deity repeatedly for his failure.

In addition to the sustained use of the first-person plural in this poem, other differences also alert the audience to a subtle shift in this poem to a new level of the poet's critique of Yahweh. Dobbs-Allsopp notes that the "one of the most common and effective ways to conclude a sequence of poems is to simply modify its governing patterns of repetition."[124] He suggests that

[123] There seem to be two social spheres referenced in this verse: justice, which was administered by city elders at the gate, and music making, orchestrated by the young men. This pairing is not as Salters suggests a contrastive one of elders who are carrying out official business versus young men who were engaged in leisure activities (361). Rather, the music making ought to be understood as a ritual procedure, as suggested by Isa 38:20 which describes how songs were sung in the temple to rejoice at and praise Yahweh's willingness to save. Isa 23:16 instructs the figure of Tyre to make music "in order to be remembered," and a verse later, the speaker says that God will then remember Tyre (at the end of 70 years) and her fortunes will become Yahweh's supply. Renkema offers the amusing argument that the inclusion of the young men "suggests that the young men's fingers were not only too sore from milling but their pleasure in music-making was spoiled by the fact that such work was humiliating for them."

[124] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 140.

the disappearance of the acrostic is intentional, replaced by balanced, non-enjambed lines. These changes disrupt the listener's expectation for continuance. This formal signaling is matched by the corresponding change in grammatical number and a preoccupation with Yahweh's continued distance. Dobbs-Allsopp, however, argues that by referring to Jerusalem's suffering and resulting shame, the author "not only calls attention to this dimension of suffering, but also names and authorizes these feelings, [and] valorizes them alongside the hurt of physical pain, and thus offers gestures of articulation for those unable to name what they feel inside may be experienced as consoling and liberating."[125] Yet this affirming view of shame's redemptive qualities seems to miss the mark and provides little in the way of explanation for why shame's redemption appears only here, rather than earlier in the poem. There is an alternative to Dobbs-Allsopp's understanding: the shame and suffering here are not any kind of valorization or consolation for the people's suffering but rather, as earlier in the poems, attempts to draw Yahweh's attention to that suffering, thereby linking the deity's status to that of his people. Dobbs-Allsopp argues, however, that the poem's excessive use of the first plural morpheme (*–nû*) is a deliberate move, emphasizing the larger shift from third person descriptions progressively inwards to first person plural formulations. While he concludes from this turn that, "survival is implicated in voice, and voice is found in community,"[126] it is possible to be more specific about what the shift to a communal perspective is doing here for the work as a whole. Rather than being about survival,

[125] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 143. Dobbs-Allsopp also observes that this poem, more than the others, exhibits features consistent with communal lament. Lam 5 is structured according to the communal lament form: it opens with an address to God, coupled with a lengthy description of the pitiable state of Jerusalem in verses 2–18, and concludes with a petition for help in verses 19–22.

[126] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*,142. See also Todd Linafelt who argues that Lamentations is a work of "survival literature." Todd Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*.

the issue in this poem is precisely the opposite: it is about the threat to the people's inheritance. The turn to a communal perspective emphasizes the *generational* threat that Yahweh's actions provoke. To have their houses given to strangers is a comment not just on the physical architecture of the house. It is also a reference to lineage: the people who will occupy Jerusalem in the future will be people of a strange lineage, enemies who stand outside the relationship between Yahweh and the Judeans. The reason this should be of interest to Yahweh is hinted at the end of the poem, with the poet's wry comment that Yahweh's throne endures eternally, from generation to generation. And yet, wild animals prowl the desolate Zion and no generations seem to endure. The claim then that Yahweh's position will endure forever comes across as hollow and mocking for a deity who has neither temple nor worshippers to remember his name.

The frame of this fifth poem is balanced by requests for Yahweh to "remember" and "not forget." The concept of memory is a fraught one in the Hebrew Bible, and although Yahweh is frequently portrayed within a royal idiom, he is also frequently portrayed as forgetful. In the Priestly source, for example, Yahweh requires mnemonic signs like circumcision and the rainbow to remind him of his obligation to his people.[127] Yet here in Lamentations, no sign from the people seems sufficient to arrest his attention: his continued ignoring of their suffering threatens their disappearance and obliteration from memory as well as Yahweh's own downfall.

The Role of Lamentations 3 in the Composition

If any individual poem in Lamentations is read on its own, out of context, it is possible to interpret the work as merely an expression of sorrow at Jerusalem's situation. Yet when read

[127] For a discussion of how circumcision also functions as a kind of mnemonic device, see Schipper and Stackert, "Blemishes, Camouflage, and Sanctuary Service."

together, particularly with the third lament, the work appears as one of irony, satire, and warning. The four elements discussed above, namely, the provision of food and protection, the building projects, and the safeguarding of inheritance, all appear as failures of Yahweh's role as king in Lamentations. These issues span the entire work.

Lamentations 3 at first seems to stand apart from these more accusatory poems. Although the poem begins with a litany of complaints, it has been hailed at turns as the 'pinnacle,' the 'a model for the nation,' and 'the most enigmatic,' part of the book of Lamentations.[128] The reasons for this are at once obvious. The third poem differs from the other four in at least three explicit ways: first, it is exceptionally intricate. Although it adheres to an acrostic form, it takes this form to an extreme, with three lines per consonant. Second, the voice of the speaker changes from Zion/Jerusalem as personified female in Lamentations 1 and 2 to an unidentified first-person male speaker. Third, the poem utilizes imagery and language that appear incongruous with the rest of Lamentations. Also, it begins as a readily comprehensible first-person lament, but a third of the way through, it makes a remarkable turn from describing a situation of misery to a profession of faith in Yahweh. By the end of the poem, it returns to a description of the hopeless situation in which the speaker finds himself. Somewhat counterintuitively, scholars have called this the poem a *true example* of what it means to have faith, even in the face of unrelenting suffering.

Reading alongside the four poems that bookend it, however, I argue that the expression of hope at the center of Lamentations 3 should not be read as an earnest statement, but rather as deeply ironic and sarcastic. This argument relies on a serious engagement with the literary claims

[128] Salters, *Lamentations,* 187; Hillers, 64. Dobbs-Allsopp uses this section to argue that "Lamentations is a profoundly life-embracing work." *Lamentations*, 117.

of the work, particularly the immediate context of the verses, which as I will show, does not prompt expectations of a profession of faith and hope.

Lamentations 3 opens with an unnamed first-person speaker who identifies himself only as "the man (*geber*) who has seen affliction." It is a monologue, in which this *geber* comments at length on his circumstances to an unidentified addressee (vv.1–20). He provides a lengthy account of his suffering: he has been besieged and walled in, persecuted and ridiculed (v.14), and his prayers have been shut out (v. 8). His self-description as a *geber*, a strong man or soldier, is immediately undercut by the account of his situation. In vv. 17–20, the speaker brings his audience to the present moment in which he has lost all hope. In v. 18, Yahweh is explicitly named as the origin of the speaker's troubles; the speaker says that his strength and his hope have perished because of Yahweh. In v. 21, however, the speaker makes a surprising turn:

זאת אשיב אל לבי על כן אוחיל

This I can call to mind and have hope

This verse, particularly the demonstrative *zŏt* "this" has caused much scholarly consternation. Is it looking backwards, to the previous verses, or forwards to vv. 22ff, which recount Yahweh's characteristics: his steadfast loyalties, which never come to an end, and his mercies, which renew every morning? Some scholars, like Dobbs-Allsopp and Hillers, have argued that it looks backwards, and that the hope the speaker feels stems from his realization that even in the midst of suffering, the fact that he is still living means there is yet hope.[129] Others, like Renkema, have argued that such a backward-looking word makes no sense, that there is

[129] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 117; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 69.

nothing hopeful about suffering, and thus the word must look forward to the verses that follow, in which the speaker recalls Yahweh's goodness, mercy, and loyalty.[130]

The recitation of Yahweh's attributes continues through v. 25. Verses 25–30 detail the proper behavior one should adopt when waiting for Yahweh to respond. This behavior includes sitting quietly, placing one's face in the dust, and proffering one's face to be struck. In vv. 31–39, the poet returns to a meditation on Yahweh's characteristics and the purpose of adopting various physical postures, such as sitting alone and placing one's mouth in the dust. Although Yahweh causes humans suffering, he also has great compassion and does not afflict anyone deliberately. The speaker concludes this section with a rhetorical question: why should any living person complain, much less a man about his sin?

Here the poem marks a shift again: in verse 40, the speaker now adopts a cohortative first person plural, and suggests that the community reexamine their ways and adopt a physical posture of prayer towards Yahweh. Yet the speaker does not retain this conciliatory desire for an extended period of time: in v. 42b, he accuses God of preventing the efficacy of their prayer by not forgiving them. Instead, he covers himself in anger and walls himself with an impenetrable cloud. The speaker then recounts the dire straits in which his people find themselves and states that he will continue weeping until Yahweh takes notice. The idea behind this act seems to be that although the people's prayer cannot pass through the cloud, Yahweh can still look down and see his people's suffering. In v. 55 he rebukes Yahweh again, chastising him for his willful neglect of the people *even though* he can hear them. The speaker attempts to provoke Yahweh's response by recalling past situations in which the deity has intervened, with the implicit

[130] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 383–384; O'Connor, *Tears of the World*, 44.

suggestion that a similar intervention is again necessary. The speaker ends his speech with a series of requests that Yahweh attack, persecute, and punish his enemies.

Scholarship on Lamentations 3 has overwhelmingly interpreted this poem as a profound expression of the speaker's piety and great faithfulness to Yahweh. Hillers argues that the individual is a "representative suffer" who "points the way to the nation, as he shows the man who has been through trouble moving into, then out of, near despair to patient faith and penitence, thus becoming a model for the nation."[131] In discussing vv. 17–21, which he views as "transitional," Hillers argues that the poem hints at the turn about to take place in verse 18, with the quotation of the speaker's thought. Hillers argues that such profession of inner thought "is occasionally used in laments at just such points,"[132] and he points to examples such as Jonah 2:4, Pss. 31:22, 94:18, 139:11. What exactly he means by "just such points" is not obvious, but what is striking in all his examples, with the exception perhaps of Ps 139:11, is that the lamenter sustains a positive attitude towards Yahweh for the remainder of each of those laments. In Lamentations 3, however, the confidence in Yahweh does not appear until v. 21, and even then it is not sustained beyond a few verses. Quickly skimming over the recitation of Yahweh's attributes in v. 22ff, Hillers moves straight to v. 25, which for him is the rationale for this poem: namely, the didactic advice it offers: to suffer quietly and to wait in the hope that Yahweh's mercies will reveal themselves. For Hillers, the purpose of this advice emerges in v. 33: Yahweh does not willingly afflict anyone. Hillers views this line as a preemptive resolution of the paradox in vv. 37–38, that both good and bad events happen at Yahweh's command. The use of the term *geber* in verse 39 for Hillers rounds off the first half of the poem and acts as a transition

[131] Hillers, *Lamentations,* 64.

[132] Ibid, 69.

to the next part, which is a call for repentance, a summons that he admits is brief. He reads verses 42–66 as a collective prayer of the people designed to prompt Yahweh's pity.[133]

Dobbs-Allsopp also calls Lamentations 3 the "emotional peak," but he argues that this feeling is only transitional because of the "ever onward march of the alphabet."[134] The short section from vv. 19–24 he calls its site of "pivotal theological significance," and he regards it as proof that the work as a whole is a "most profoundly life-embracing work," whose words "stand as 'memory's beginning' to new life."[135] Dobbs-Allsopp is correct in his observation that the demonstrative of v. 21, until v.22 is read, immediately causes the reader to look backwards at what has just been recounted, as the source from which hope springs. His conclusion is that these lines, particularly v. 21, allows the reader to "come face to face with the peculiar biblical idea that hope is born out of pain."[136] The appeal to the exceptionalism of the Bible notwithstanding, the notion that there is even a single "biblical" idea is difficult to prove, not only for the Bible writ large, but even within this poem.

Like Dobbs-Allsopp and Hillers before him, Salters too suggested that there is a didactic function within the poem. Unlike these scholars, he also argues that despite the first-person singular formulation of the monologue, it is a profoundly communal speech. His argument rests

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[133] Hillers avoids a consideration of the strange departure—that is, the return to a complaint– from the standard lament form to which he continually appeals, in which the complaint comes at the beginning of the prayer, followed by a recall and profession of Yahweh's attributes and/or prior salvific acts, and ending with a prayer to deliver the speaker from his present trouble, which often culminates in a promise to praise Yahweh forever thereafter. He dismisses the final section of the poem as an expression of "belief in divine justice," which is a "typical Old Testament theme." Hillers, *Lamentations,* 74.

[134] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 27.

[135] Ibid., 117.

[136] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 117.

on the communal nature of the other four laments. It is unclear what exactly Salters's interpretation gains as a "collective," nor is it quite clear how the speaker positions himself vis-à-vis the people in this reading. Is he their spokesperson or speaking to them? Do the shifts matter? How? Salters's reading seems to careen between the options and it is not clear that he is successful in proving why they are significant.[137] Further, it ignores the literariness of the work: the author is free to disorient the reader by constructing different points of view without sustaining a single position.

Salters suggests that the speaker has two basic aims with this lament: the first is "to lift the commemorating community out of the slough of despond where one limits oneself with bemoaning one's fate and calling for disaster to fall on the enemy."[138] This is done with a "surprising piece" in which the speaker recalls that Yahweh's love is still operating. The second aim of the speaker is to impart a particular piece of advice for the people: the way out of their suffering is to contact Yahweh as the deity who punished them. Unfortunately, his analysis leaves unresolved the basic problem identified by the speaker: that the people have to contact Yahweh, who deliberately ignores them. Salters's interpretation also fails to explore the possible contextual grounds for recalling Yahweh's mercy and goodness, other than a speculation of these being "old adages."

In contrast to this poem as didactic wisdom is Renkema's interpretation. He argues that the personal lament was not composed to be didactic–this latter function is a byproduct of the extremely relatable experiences that the speaker recounts. Instead, he claims that the covenant between Yahweh and his people is broken, and on those grounds, Yahweh is under no obligation

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[137] Salters, *Lamentations,* 186–188.

[138] Salters, *Lamentations,* 187.

to act on behalf of his people. Yet vv. 22ff make a claim about Yahweh's divine character that operates independently and irrespective of covenantal obligations. As such, the speaker is able to "build his hopes… on the expressions of Yhwh's goodness to which he has no obligation, acts of kindness which he continues to reveal nonetheless."[139] This reading is difficult to prove from the immediate context in Lamentations 3. Recourse to the remaining laments seems only to suggest Yahweh's obligations (or abandonment of them) in a relational framework rather than some abstract notion of Yahweh's benevolent and kind nature. Renkema insists however, that it would be "somewhat unbelievable and unrealistic to suddenly begin to speak of Yahweh's favours if they are not actually in evidence."[140] Of course, he is right, but instead of entertaining the possibility that the speaker's words may not be entirely earnest, or even the "sudden appropriation of a credo," Renkema is forced to reevaluate what might count as evidence in this lament.[141] He finds it in the speaker's realization that despite all the destruction and death, survival is still a possibility. The nearly spent existence the speaker decries is now evidence of Yahweh's merciful favor. This reading is unpersuasive because the *quality* of this possible survival is exactly what the speaker bemoans in the poem. It is certainly not the evidence that one might expect of Yahweh's continued mercies. Calling it so is an unsubstantiated interpretive decision.

While Renkema disavows the possibility that the speaker is quoting a well-known adage, Miriam Bier, like Salters, suggests that the turn in verses 21—22 is not the speaker voicing his own conviction, but instead proverbial wisdom. I think this is the right direction, but it does not

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[139] Renkema, *Lamentations,* 385.

[140] Ibid, 386.

[141] Renkema, *Lamentations,* 386.

go far enough. Bier's assessment of the reason for this quotation is, ultimately, a conventional one: the speaker is trying to convince himself of Yahweh's merciful nature, despite the current circumstances.

To better account for this remarkable "turn" in the poem, it is helpful to look at the verses in question again:

Lamentations 3: 21–24

זאת אשיב אל לבי על כן אוחיל
חסדי יהוה כי לא תמנו כי לא כלו רחמיו
חדשים לבקרים רבה אמונתך
חלקי יהוה אמרה נפשי על כן אוחיל לו

This I call to mind, therefore I have hope.
The loyalties of Yahweh–they do not end.
His compassions do not cease
[They are] new every morning.
Great is your faithfulness.
Yahweh is my portion, says my soul, therefore I have hope in him

Even a cursory reading reveals that Lamentations 3:21 and following are discordant with the poems that precede it and even the preceding verses in Lamentations 3. Nothing in the preceding verses or poems have suggested any element of mercy, compassion, or loyalty that might be forthcoming on Yahweh's part, or of the speaker's confidence that such mercy might be anticipated. Instead, the deity is portrayed as a capricious and cruel ruler, attacking his own people rather than their enemies. Not only does the deity allow his people to suffer at the hands of a foreign foe, but he actively partakes in furthering their persecution.

The broader context of these verses suggests that to make sense of the speaker's seeming turn to piety and renewed faithfulness, we ought to consider a different option: that the speaker is in fact quoting proverbial wisdom about Yahweh to show its complete inadequacy. He is being profoundly ironic when he refers to Yahweh's mercy and loyalty. My argument for reading this

as irony is born out of the difficulty presented by trying to read the text earnestly. It simply does not cohere with the material that precedes and follows these verses, nor have any explanations of the speaker's sudden flash of piety been compelling or able to explain its just as sudden disappearance.[142]

At its simplest level, irony works by demanding that the target—the listener or reader, in our case—reject the said, literal, meaning. The reader's rejection arises not just from a feeling of disagreement or that one could potentially see further meaning in the words, but because one cannot reconcile the words with each other.[143] Wayne Booth argues that having recognized an incongruity in a text, the reader must then create alternative explanations that offer a more plausible reading, which may involve decisions "about the author's knowledge or beliefs."[144] Booth says that having decided that the work could not have possibly meant what it said, the reader chooses meanings that "are in harmony with the unspoken beliefs" and worldview generated by the text's larger context.[145]

Here in Lamentations 3, we are faced with a text that presents us with starkly incompatible images: the deity is continuously attacking the speaker but recalling how badly he

[142] For a similar approach see the incisive work by Simeon Chavel, "The Utility and Futility of Poetry in Qohelet," *Biblical Poetry and the Art of Close Reading* (ed. J. Blake Couey and Elaine James; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 93–110.

[143] For example, in the novella *Candide*, Voltaire writes, "When all was over and the rival kings were celebrating their victory with Te Deums in their respective camps…" One does not need to be familiar with the intricacies of Voltaire's composition to notice that the statement rests on an absurd proposition: "both sides can win the same war." Voltaire, *Candide and Related Texts* (trans. David Wootton; Indianapolis: Hackett Publications, 2000).

[144] In the example cited in the previous footnote, it would be that *Candide* also reject the proposition that both sides could win *a* war.

[145] Wayne Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 9–12.

had been treated, he recalls the deity's proverbial characteristics and so had hope. At the nadir of his emotion, he seems to forget his situation and depicts Yahweh as a benevolent, merciful deity. Scholars have attempted to reconcile these statements with the claim that hope is to be found in suffering. If that is so, one might expect this poem to be more like the psalms in which *having recalled Yahweh's goodness,* the lamenter would experience or hope to a turn in fortunes. Instead, his loyal profession of hope lasts only until his next accusation. The self-interruption of piety is intrusive to his audience and creates a distance between what the speaker said about the way Yahweh treated him and the beliefs about what Yahweh's character is like.

It is upon this instability in the deity's character —between the received, proverbial wisdom and the lived experience—that what the speaker builds his case.[146] By fronting and providing excessive detail about his situation, patterned through the artifice of the acrostic and bookended on either end by two poems detailing Yahweh's malice, the recollection of Yahweh's wonderful attributes rings hollow.[147] But, if we read this satirically–sarcastically, even–we can reject the stated words, making our assessment based on the contextual surroundings and instead

[146] Rosen argues that when the audience recognizes this moment of perceived instability, "there exists an exhilarating moment of uncertainty… this is a tension peculiar to transgressive genres, because unlike other forms of poetic representation that do not depend upon the pretense of attack, there are genuine consequences when poeticized mockery is mistaken for unmediated hostility." See his excellent work, *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 54–55.

[147] Ralph Rosen has argued that this is precisely why satire can be so elusive: it is simultaneously topical and abstract (8). He argues that although most satirists' work is suffused with the culture they critique, many of its themes can be abstracted and rendered intelligible to multiple audiences and times. He writes, "just as the satirist may insist that he tells a certain historically rooted truth about his situation, the generalizing purport of this truth tends to deflect the audience from taking it at face value" (8–9). Satire, Rosen argues, is a comedic and literary form that implies an audience and a performance. As such, a work of satire is a fictionalized, mimetic representation of aggressive human behavior, but is not in itself a "real" instance of that behavior." Rosen, *Making Mockery,* esp. pp. 8–9, 20.

suggest that what the speaker intends to say is precisely the opposite: Yahweh's loyalty has ended, his "mercies" are not what is new every morning.[148] What are new are his assaults (vv.22–23). Yahweh has shown no sign of goodness to the ones who trust in him nor has he responded to anyone seeking him (vv. 25). Sarcastically, the speaker considers his options: "Wait patiently, bear a yoke, put his mouth in dust." It is almost as though he is responding to every piece of proverbial advice given to one who is suffering: give it time, things will get better. Maybe that's where the hope is! Yahweh's "abundant loyalty" is satirized here as anything but. Based on the speaker's experiences, vv. 31–36 cannot be read earnestly. They are as insincere as the arrows of Yahweh's quiver, drawn not to pierce the enemy, but his own people.

The sarcasm continues in verses 40–41:

נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה ונשובה עד יהוה
נשא לבבנו אל כפים אל אל בשמים

Let us search our ways and test them, and return to Yahweh.
Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

The speaker plays along with an implicit rebuttal that perhaps the people are at fault and that they should adopt a posture of prayer that will garner Yahweh's notice as they turn towards him, waving their hands.

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[148] Terry Lindvall traces the development of religious satire as a literary form from antiquity to the present. He argues that satirists write out of a position of moral calling that aims to correct something wrong or unjust. Satire is "a recognition of a moral discrepancy between what is proclaimed and what is practiced, often with an attempt to remedy it." Satire aims to diagnose, correct, while all the while appealing to a "recognition of the ridiculous." See Lindvall's discussion in *God Mocks: A History of Religious Satire from the Hebrew Prophets to Stephen Colbert* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 5–7. In order to be effective, satire acknowledges some standard , a "reasonable norm against which audiences or readers can measure what is good and right." (pp. –25) Lindvall provides a compelling analysis of the ways in which satire functions and means of moral attack and provocation, but he fails to notice that satire in the Hebrew Bible is not only directed from human to human (as in the prophetic literature, such as Amos 1), or God to human (for example, as in Psalm 2), but also from human to God.

If this text is indeed using irony to critique and subvert existing theologies, it represents a sophisticated innovation in a broader lament tradition in which it is usually the lamenter and his form that is ironized.[149] In a collection of Sumerian proverbs, there is a series of entries on the kālû figure, the lamenter. These entries mock the lamenter in a variety of ways, ranging from remarks on his bodily functions to the absurd lengths he will go to in order to praise his deity in times of trouble. Two examples illustrate this particularly well:

A *kālû* priest, when his grain-boat had sunk with him onboard [and] he afterwards had come to dry land, (without the grain, he said) … "O Enki! You're having rescued me has made me (?) rejoice! I must…"[150]

As the saying goes: If the *kālû* priest slips as he is sitting down, he will immediately say: "It is a thing of my mistress Inanna! Far be it from me that I rise."[151]

In these proverbs, the lamenter is mocked for his willingness to attribute negative incidents to divine providence and to praise the deity for them. In Lamentations, it appears that the lamenter has innovated on such a tradition and turned the tables. Rather than being mocked for his piety, he instead mocks his own tradition from within it, opposing a pious and inert response to calamity. He quotes proverbial wisdom and turns it on its head, using it as a way to accuse and indict Yahweh for his flagrant misuse of power.

The accusation, which has been building up to a crescendo, comes in verse 42–44:

נחנו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת
סכתה באף ותרדפנו הרגת לא חמלת
סכותה בענן לך מעבור תפלה

[149] But see Ps 89, which is also deeply ironic. I thank Professor Chavel for point me to this example!

[150] Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs: Glimpses into Everyday Life* (2 Vols.; Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959) 2. 103.

[151] Ibid., 2.100.

We have transgressed and have rebelled: you have not pardoned.
You have covered yourself with anger, and pursued us: you have slain, you have not pitied.
You have covered yourself with a cloud, that our prayer cannot pass through.

Having embedded Yahweh's excellent attributes in the monologue about his dire situation, the speaker then chooses entirely to deny the integrity and validity of those attributes. He accuses Yahweh of failing to behave according to his reputation. In verse 42, while conceding that the people transgressed, the speaker lampoons Yahweh for not forgiving or having pity upon them. Instead, the deity has cloaked himself in a cloud of anger and actively attacked his people without compassion. What's more, he has created an impenetrable barrier between himself and his people such that prayer cannot pass through it. No prayer can possibly be efficacious if Yahweh refuses to receive it. The consequences of this behavior are that the they have become סחי ומאוס "filth and rubbish" in the eyes of people (Lam 3:45) and enemies have triumphed against them, bringing השאת והשבר, "desolation and destruction" (Lam 3: 46–47).

In verses 48, 49, and 51, the speaker models the correct response to such catastrophe: grievous sorrow, expressed through the physical act of weeping. The purpose of this overt display of sorrow is still aimed at Yahweh, to compel him to עד ישקיף ויראה יהוה משמים, "look down and see from heaven." Here, the speaker returns to the style of the beginning of the poem: descriptions of his dire situation, expressed through a first person singular instead of the plural referents employed in verses 40–51. As he describes his entrapment, the speaker provides a brief retrospective in which he recounts how he had called on Yahweh in the past and his cries had been heeded, his enemies subdued. The accusatory tone that began in verse 42b echoes subtly in these recollections as the speaker demands that Yahweh not shut his ear to the groans and cries he hears (v 56), that having seen the malice of the enemies and their continued taunting, that he

not shy away from response. The speaker ends his litany of demands with a forceful request to curse his enemies with anguish of heart and destruction.

The recitation of Yahweh's goodness and abundant mercy is thus framed by discourse about his ruthlessness. Despite the seeming performance of piety, the speaker progressively mitigates any positive impression created by the middle of the poem, alienating any conviction that Yahweh might act benevolently. Yahweh appears in this text repeatedly but he is present only through a narration of what he is like and what his actions are. Our perception of what he is like is mediated through the voice of this speaker who recounts his experience of Yahweh. The effect is to recast the deity as an unreliable and malevolent figure. And yet the imperative demands in the poem are addressed to Yahweh. What kind of relationship does the author envisions between Yahweh and the speaker here? The effect thus far has been to continually suspend resolution, to reorient and explode expectations. The pattern imposed by the acrostic form is undone by the content, and these imperatives only add to that disorienting experience. The answer is not that offered by Renkema–that there is no longer a covenant between the people and Yahweh—nor is it Dobbs-Allsopp's answer—that hope is born out of pain. There is no clear resolution or theological stance taken, other than one of accusation and demand. The poem arises it seems from a sense of betrayal, which prompts the satirical recitation of what Yahweh *ought* to have done but failed to do. It mocks and parodies the lament form and itself is satirized by the fact that it still addresses Yahweh. Irony is thus embedded into this text in multiple layers and levels and remains insistently present. The prayer for deliverance from one's enemy has striking force when read in concert with the early lines of the text, which paint Yahweh himself as the enemy.

Reading Lamentations as an Indictment

What kind of text addresses its own leader and portrays him as an enemy? Lamentations stands out against other works of lament because rather than predicting a foreign ruler's fall, it instead warns Yahweh of his own diminishment. Because of the continued focus in the work on markers of successful rulership—food, protection, building, land, children—this work acts as a kind of anti-achievement narrative, in which rather than cataloguing the king's achievements, it is instead a relentless account of failure. What makes this failure worthy of cataloguing is that Yahweh is capable of and expected to behave differently. Yahweh's royal characterization in the work, coupled with attributes associated with him, listed in Lamentations 3, is the framework that prompts the poet to challenge Yahweh's behavior.

This interpretation does not accord with "conventional" notions of lament. Here it is helpful to return to two early studies of the lament form, those of Hedwig Jahnow and G. Fleischer. Jahnow's study observed that laments across the world pursue a variety of rhetorical strategies and goals, ranging from accusation and curses to petitionary prayers and commemoration of the dead. G. Fleischer, working from a form-critical perspective, distinguished between two types of lament: the "original" or "literal" *qînâ*, and the "figurative" *qînâ*. Although the development from the "original" to the figurative is problematic, the explanation of the types is generative. The first type is the lament that is commonly referred to as loss or grief. The second type, which Fleischer locates in the prophetic literature, does not mourn an actual loss but is rather a lament over an *anticipated* loss. Thus, for example, Ezekiel 27, with its lament over Tyre is identified as this kind of anticipated, predicted loss. This explanation, taken up more recently in Jacqueline Vayntrub's work on the intersection between *qînâ* and

mashal speeches, provides important analogues to Lamentations in unexpected ways.[152] If we take seriously the claim that Ezekiel 27, within the fiction of its broader narrative, is a poem about an anticipated fall of Tyre, then the lament functions as a kind of cautionary tale or warning. Vayntrub notes the poem refers to "bystanders" who mock Tyre for its downfall. These people, whom Vayntrub calls "bystanders to failure"[153] play an important role within the poem of authenticating the warning through mockery. In Lamentations too, there are repeated references to the bystanders and those who pass by the city, jeering, taunting, and marveling at the city's fall.[154] The warning here is aimed not at the city but at the perpetrator of the fall—namely Yahweh, who like the city, will also be jeered at for his downfall. The bystanders in Lamentations stand witness to Yahweh's inability to rule correctly.[155]

This sustained, poeticized depiction of Yahweh's inability to rule seems plays on the idea of an achievement narrative, which catalogues the king's success at ruling. In Lamentations, we have quite the opposite of achievement—a log of the king's haphazard and deliberate endeavors to undo the kingdom's functioning. Just as the aim of the royal achievement narrative is to provide proof of the ruler's ability to lead, so in Lamentations does the anti-achievement structure provide proof of the king's inability to lead. Drawing on a variety of literary and poetic devices, from satire to the acrostic, these poems repeatedly subvert expectations of achievement.

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[152] Jacqueline Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms* (New York: Routledge, 2019), see especially pages 233–41.

[153] Ibid., 241.

[154] In Lamentations, the fall of the city has already occurred, so it is not like Ezekiel 27 exactly.

[155] This is similar to Moses calling upon Yahweh to spare the people for the sake of his own reputation (Exod 32).

In the end, the result is that Yahweh's people are left with neither land inheritance nor progeny. The poem ends with one final jab at the deity's position:

אתה יהוה לעולם תשב כסאך לדר ודור

You, O Yahweh, sit forever on your throne, from generation to generation.

The irony of this line is two-part: first, no longer will there be generations upon generations because of the way Yahweh has acted, and second, more subtly, by referring to Yahweh as "sitting" on his throne, the image created is of a deity who doesn't just "endure" in the abstract sense, but who, having systematically undone the network of institutional and social structures of the kingdom, is literally now just sitting. The portrayal of the inattentive, misguided, and failed king is complete.

Chapter 5

In Defense of Yahweh: The Fall of Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."

— Winston S. Churchill

In chapters three and four, I examined literary representations of the destruction of Jerusalem and its aftermath in Kings 23:31–25 and Lamentations. I argued, broadly speaking, that each one uses the destruction of Jerusalem as a prompt for its own localized interest. For Kings, I have argued that the narrator constructed a historiographic narrative in which Neo-Babylonian ideas of empire were endorsed and promoted through the characterization of the local Judean king as weak and inept, as well as through the subtle deployment of Akkadian idioms and Neo-Babylonian "calendar." Lamentations also drew on the fall of Jerusalem and a paradigm of imperial masculinity to stage a carefully constructed accusation of ineptness, but this time directed at Yahweh rather than the human Judean king.

In this chapter, I turn to the question of how Book of Ezekiel represents the fall of Jerusalem. Where—ideologically and spatially—does Ezekiel the prophet locate himself in relation to the fall? How does he describe it? In so doing, does the work familiarity and engagement with Neo-Babylonian ideas of empire and kingship? Ezekiel's perspective on the fall of Jerusalem intersects in important ways with the concerns of 2 Kings 25 and Lamentations, but as I will show, makes rather divergent claims. The chapter has three parts: in the first part, I outline the points at which Ezekiel represents the fall of Jerusalem in a prominent way. In the second part, I consider how the book of Ezekiel positions the restoration of the temple complex as an expression of

Yahweh's long-term plan for Judah. The third section addresses how the genre of this work aids in advancing the text's claims and offers a reflection on the kinds of networks of interaction that might generate the types of imagery deployed within the work.

Part I

In Defense of Yahweh

5. 1. 1 The Narrative

The frame of the work is the narrator Ezekiel, who is looking backwards in time from an unnamed location—probably Babylon—and an unstated time—though probably sometime close to 573 B.C.E.[1] The work opens with a date, a location, and an announcement that the speaker, identified only in the first-person singular pronoun, saw visions of God.[2] It is only in v. 3 that this "I" is introduced more formally: he is Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzi. Simeon Chavel has suggested that these names might be charactonyms.[3] His hypothesis is prompted by the narrative that this priest recalls. Ezekiel, "God was hard against me" and Buzi, "my shame," call attention to the

[1] Questions about the redaction and compilation of the book have been treated in Rainer Albertz's book *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Studies in Biblical Literature 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 345–356; Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 1–24* (NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 26–30; Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel 35–51*; K.S. Freedy and D.B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources" 462–485; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 8-17; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 9-15.

[2] On the influence of the location on Ezekiel's prophecies, see Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth* 14–24; M.S. Odell and J T Strong, *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Symposium Series, Vol. 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

[3] Chavel, "Ezekiel Ben Buzi, The Raggedy-Ann Prophet," SBL Paper, Helsinki 2018.

profoundly difficult, unpleasant, and in some cases, shameful trials, Ezekiel must undergo as Yahweh's spokesman. The entire work is communicated as a retrospective in which Ezekiel recalls his past in which he saw visions of God and in which God spoke directly to him. This remembering-self constitutes the first-level of speaker in the work. Below Ezekiel-the-rememberer, there is Ezekiel-in-the-past, who experiences and undergoes the news of the destruction of Jerusalem and the visions of Yahweh, some of which are set in that past-self's imagined future. The memories are arranged largely through a series of dates that are coordinated to events external to the text's main story.[4] This chronological scheme holds together a series of seemingly disparate visions and episodes from Ezekiel's past.

The opening sections of the work establish Ezekiel's commissioning as Yahweh's prophet.[5] Ezekiel recounts his discomfort with this role obliquely, revealing the weight of his alienation from the exiled community that does not understand what he is doing as well as from the Judeans left behind in Jerusalem. That his commission is too challenging for him is seen in his complete muteness as well as in the bewilderment that his actions are met with by the exiled

[4] Not all scholars are convinced, however, that these dates are accurate– some contend that Ezekiel is composed at a later date and retrospectively assigns these dates to the prophecies. See for example, Lester Grabbe, ed. Leading Captivity Captive: the "Exile" as History and Ideology (Sheffield: 1998). Other scholars also examine the question of reliability of temporal notices, for example Rainer Albertz and B. Becking, eds. *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era* (STAR 5; Assen: van Gorcum, 2000); Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah: Shifts of Group Identities within Babylonian Exilic Ideology," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (eds. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 127–151.

[5] For general introductions to the work, see Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel I* (Anchor Bible Commentary; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1–27; Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979; Rimmon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary* (*Mikra Leyisra'el*; Tel-Aviv, 2004), (Hebrew); Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*.

community. And yet, the remembering character, the narrator, continues his retrospective that recognizes the tension between the different roles he inhabited as exiled Judean, priest, and prophet. His deft combination of these different roles highlights the author's facility with an expressive literary form that is as complex as it is engaging.

The retrospective element of the work establishes a conceptual constraint on its interpretation, and underlines an important point about the prophet's portrayal of Jerusalem's fall, namely, that the prophet never recounts his memory of experiencing the fall of the city. What he describes instead is his memory of being in exile (Ezek. 1) when he is told to perform mimes that prefigures episodes in the fall (Ezek. 4ff.) He then sees a series of visions that "foretell" the complete destruction of the city. When Ezekiel receives these visions, he is already in Babylon. His audience is a group of Judeans who have already been exiled, not Judeans living in Jerusalem,[6] and although the visions are future-oriented to his past-self, they are not intended to address the Judeans in Jerusalem.[7]

5. 1. 2 The Story of the Fall in Ezekiel

4: 1–17

That Ezekiel is already in exile points to an important aspect of this work's representation of Jerusalem's fall: it is a two-part, protracted assault. In the first part, only implied in the story,

[6] See, for example, Ezek 3:11 ולך בא אל הגולה אל בני עמך ודברת אליהם "Now go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them…"

[7] The statement in 3:4–7 that Ezekiel is sent to a people whose language he knows rather than to those who speak a difficult one also makes sense if this "difficult" language is imagined as Akkadian, a language to which the exiled Judeans would have been exposed to, but would not necessarily be fluent in. Ironically of course, the author of this particular work in fact seems quite familiar with Akkadian imagery and idioms.

Nebuchadnezzar exiles some Judeans but not all. In Ezekiel 4 and 5, the prophet engages in a series of mimetic actions that portray this multi-part fall. In Ezekiel 4: 1, Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to create a tableau of the siege by using an inscribed brick blockaded by an iron pan.[8] He is then to lie on his left side first for three hundred and ninety days, and then on his right side for forty days (4:4–8).[9] This is meant to represent in turn the punishments upon Israel and Judah. In Ezekiel 5, Yahweh instructs him to undertake another symbolic action, cutting his hair and dividing it into

[8] The term "brick," cognate with Akkadian *libittu*, "sun-dried brick" was ubiquitous in building projects in Mesopotamia. That it was to be inscribed (וחקות) suggests that Ezekiel was to incise a drawing or perhaps a map. Greenberg observes that in royal building projects, bricks were frequently inscribed with the ruler's name. The command to portray Jerusalem on the brick suggests that the prophet was more likely drawing some sort of map. Numerous maps are known from Mesopotamia: the world map from Babylon (BM 92687) is a particularly famous example. These maps depict both small- and large-scale topographic features, and use standard geometric shapes incised on clay. At a more local level, incised drawings were also depicted building plans, property layouts, and temples. The Gudea statue, for example, shows the prince seated with a tablet on his lap. Inscribed on this tablet is a drawing plan of a boundary wall for a temple or monumental building. That Ezekiel chooses to use cartographic imagery to represent the siege points to his familiarity with a Mesopotamian tradition of visual representation. For discussion of these various maps, see Ernst Heinrich and Ursula Seidl, "GrundriBzeichnungen aus dem alten Orient," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 98 (1967): 24-45. For a plan of a large building, possibly a palace, see British Museum, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1906), pt. 22, pI. 50, BM 68841 + 68843 + 68845 and 68840 + 68842; Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Late Babylonian Field Plans in the British Museum* (Studia Pohl: Series Maior 11; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982).

[9] Abraham Winitzer has recently argued that the numerical data provided with the references to the "left" and "right" sides of the body should be interpreted in light of standard learned writing styles known from Mesopotamia, and that their interpretation accords well with a Mesopotamian sexagesimal system. See further Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian literati" in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon, Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity* (ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 163–216, esp. 170–175. Also see, Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 305; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004), esp. 432 (no. 831); Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (New International Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997) esp. 171, 193; Uehlinger " 'Zeichene eine Stadt ... und belagere sie!': Bild und Wort in einer Zeichenhandlung Ezekiels gegen Jerusalem (Ez 4f)" In *Jerusalem: Texte, Bilder, Steine: Im Namen von Mitgliedern und Freunden des Biblischen Instituts der Univer- sität Freiburg Schweiz* (ed. M. Küchler and C. Uehlinger; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 111–200.

thirds: one third is burned in the "city," another third is stricken by a sword; and the final third is scattered in the wind.[10] From these, a small number are to be bound in Ezekiel's robe, and then again some is to be put into the fire to be consumed entirely.[11] Yahweh explains that the hair symbolizes the people of Jerusalem. Nearly all will die, either in the fire that will consume the city or from famine or by the sword when they try to flee. Only a few will be spared (Ezek. 6: 8), but they will be scattered across the countries, and the land that they previously lived in will become a vast wasteland, inhabited only by wild animals.[12]

These oracles against Jerusalem portray the city as bringing the disaster upon itself through repeated cultic infractions and transgressions against vulnerable members of the community (Ezek 5: 5–9). These recurrent malfeasances thus force Yahweh to respond, despite having previously placed Jerusalem in a prominent position among the nations. Yahweh takes ownership of the disaster that will befall Jerusalem, even as he locates the reason for his actions in Jerusalem's malfeasance (Ezek 5: 8–9):

> לכן כה אמר אדני יהוה הנני עליך גם אני ועשיתי בתוכך משפטים לעיני הגוים
> ועשיתי בך את אשר לא עשיתי ואת אשר לא אעשה כמהו עוד יען כל תועבתיך
>
> Therefore, thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I, I myself am coming against you; I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.

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[10] The term הגלבים "barbers" in Ezek 5: 1 is from Akkadian *gallābu*, "barber," *gullubu*, "to cut." See Tawil, *Lexical Companion*, 65; Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena*, 132; Stökl, "Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture," 245–246.

[11] Ezek 5:3 ,וצרת אותם בכנפיך "and bind them in the skirts of your robe." Greenberg observes that the phrase may loosely reflect the Akkadian idiom *rakāsu ina qannišu*, "bind into her hem," as an expression for describing the secure delivery of a bride price by placing it within the hem of the bride's garment. The expression generally signals protection, but here in Ezekiel the protection is short-lived, with some of the hair being removed and thrown into the fire.

[12] Greenberg has suggested that this passage is influenced by Lev 26: 33–40, particularly with regard to the idea of the division between those who will perish and those that will survive. This passage connects what in Lev 26 are discrete parts (the unsheathing of the sword, scattering, and perishing). Greenberg, *Ezekiel I*,

> And because of all your abominations, I will do to you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.

Noteworthy is the absence of human agents in this destruction: the destruction takes place entirely at Yahweh's behest; the deity does not explicitly claim to use any human king to carry out his punishment. What this does is represent the destruction of Jerusalem as accomplished by Yahweh, and as punishment for cultic and social violations against the deity's laws and statutes, rather than as a politically motivated assault of a foreign ruler.

Ezekiel 8

The imagery of destruction in Ezek 5–7 is elaborated in Ezek 8 by a description of the people's cultic infractions, particularly through weeping over Tammuz, that prompt and justify the fall.[13] This is a trope that occurs repeatedly in the work: the people, the priests, the leaders, violate Yahweh's statutes and in so doing, they contaminate and defile Yahweh's dwelling. Ezekiel is travels in a vision by the spirit of Yahweh to Jerusalem, where, peeping through a hole in the wall, he observes all kinds of misdeeds taking place, including iconography on the walls, incense burning in front of idols, and bowing down to the sun god in the east.[14] This vision thus adds to the "evidence" that supports Yahweh's defense of his decision to destroy Jerusalem.

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[13] Isaac Gluska has suggested that this weeping over Tammuz reflects a literary import of Babylonian religious practice but his proposal has been contested by other scholars, particularly Jonathan Stökl, who argue that it was highly likely that Israel and Judah also possessed a cult like Dumuzi and Ištar. See Gluska, "Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel," in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein* (ed. Y. Sefati, P. Artzi, C. Cohen, B L. Eichler, and V. A. Hurowitz; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 718–737, esp. 725–726. See Stökl's brief rebuttal in "Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture," 233.

[14] See comments in Greenberg, *Ezekiel I*, 169–170, especially on the sequence of actions involved in the peeping.

By repeatedly highlighting Ezekiel's being shown and seeing the abominations (esp. 8: 6, 7, 9, 12), the passage counters the thinking of the people reported in 8:12 כי אמרים אין יהוה ראה אתנו "for they say, Yahweh does not see us," and more importantly, complicates their claim that, עזב יהוה את הארץ "Yahweh has abandoned the land." Although Yahweh may have physically left the temple as a resident, this passage suggests that he remains interested in its happenings and keen to show that he has not simply abandoned it but rather that the people's actions have in effect relinquished their right to be his people.[15] That this passage is about the forfeiture of rights has already been observed by Frank Moore Cross.[16] He argues that Ezek 8:6 provides concrete evidence of legal terminology. The verse states

ויאמר אלי בן אדם הראה אתה מהם מה הם עשים תועבות גדלות אשר בית ישראל עשים פה לרחקה מעל מקדשי

He said to me, "Mortal, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, לרחקה from my sanctuary?

This verse has resisted easy interpretation by scholars because of the infinitive לרחקה from the root רחק. Scholars have either interpreted this verse as meaning God is far from the sanctuary, or that the people committing the abominations have distanced themselves from the sanctuary. Neither option offers a smooth reading: if it were God being distanced, we would have expected the causative *Hiphil* infinitive, rather than the *Qal* form. On the other hand, the notion that it is the people themselves who are distanced also makes little sense unless it is understood purely in a metaphorical sense.

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[15] Greenberg regards this passage as "ironically prophetic," showing that Yahweh had not departed the temple at the time people assumed he had, but rather left after witnessing their impropriety. See discussion in Greenberg, *Ezekiel I*, 200–205.

[16] Frank Moore Cross, "A Papyrus Recording a Divine Legal Decision and the Root *RHQ* in Biblical and Near Eastern Legal Usage," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions. Fs. Menahem Haran.* (ed. M.V. Fox et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996) pp. 311–320.

Pointing to the Akkadian term *rêqu*, Cross suggests that the infinitive in Ezek 8:6 indicates a technical legal aspect meaning, "to relinquish claims," or "to forfeit rights,"[17] found in Ancient Near Eastern texts, which use this root as a cession formula.[18] This meaning, when applied to Ezekiel 8: 6, offers a better idea of what is at play: by their abominations, the people have forfeited their claim, or given up their right to the sanctuary. This Akkadian idiom reinforces the strength of the metaphor, which is to articulate the distance between the people and God that has resulted on account of their malfeasance.

This concept of distance and forfeiture emerges again in Ezek 11: 15–17:

בן אדם אחיך אחיך אנשי גאלתך וכל בית ישראל כלה אשר אמרו להם ישבי ירושלם רחקו מעל יהוה לנו היא נתנה הארץ למורשה
לכן אמר כה אמר אדני יהוה כי הרחקתים בגוים וכי הפיצותים בארצות ואהי להם למקדש מעט בארצות אשר באו שם
לכן אמר כה אמר אדני יהוה וקבצתי אתכם מן העמים ואספתי אתכם מן הארצות אשר נפצותם בהם ונתתי לכם את אדמת ישראל

> [15]Mortal, your kinsfolk, your own kin, your fellow exiles, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, "They have *gone far* from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession."
> [16]Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them *far away* among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while in the countries where they have gone.
> [17]Therefore say: thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. (NRSV, *italics my own*).

These verses contain a play on the meaning "to be far" and its legal usage, "to forfeit claim" drawn from Akkadian. In verse 15, the people who remain in Judah are said to claim that those are in exile are "far from Yahweh," and *so* the land has been given to them as a possession. The force of

[17] Cross, "The Root *RHQ*."

[18] See also Yohannan Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine* (Leiden, 1969). Muffs discusses several technical formulae used for describing transfer of goods and ownership. Among them is the same root רחק, which is used to describe the relinquishment of property.

the term "to be far" however, is made clear by a consideration of its use in forfeiture deeds in Akkadian.[19] Ezekiel 11: 15 can thus be read straight, as pointing to the literal fact that the people are far from the sanctuary because they are in exile (and thus are dispossessed of the land), or it can be read with the additional meaning of the legal idiom of forfeiture. The claim becomes significantly richer when one considers this later valence. The people are far from the land because of their own doings and as such, they have forfeited their claim to be YHWH's people. It is noteworthy though, that Yahweh is positioned as denying the validity of this claim by presenting the counter claim that he has remained a sanctuary for them in Babylon. That is, the remainers' claim for possession of the land has been denied in favor of the right of the exiled. This claim dovetails nicely with the work's larger argument that the first group of exiles, though sinful, nonetheless would be preserved as a remnant, while the people who remained in Jerusalem after the initial wave of exile, would be punished more severely and would not retain their right to the land.[20]

Ezekiel 44:10 echoes this same logic, wherein the prophet is instructed to tell Israel of YHWH's displeasure with them, particularly with the Levites, who have gone far from YHWH:

כי אם הלוים אשר רחקו מעלי בתעות ישראל אשר תעו מעלי אחרי גלוליהם ונשאו עונם

But the Levites who "went far from" me, (ורחק) going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment.

Like many other passages containing loanwords, this verse has resisted easy analysis. The MT is difficult to understand– this verse is situated in a passage detailing who has access to the

[19] Muffs, 177–78.

[20] This response of Yahweh also fits in well with the surrounding passages' criticism of the remainers' complacency about their cultic and social infractions.

temple, and who may and may not enter it. Once again, the basic or literal meaning of the text, the Levites went physically, even metaphorically far away is not very compelling. The association with the Akkadian cession formula, however, lends new clarity to the passage, and makes Ezekiel's critique even more effective: the reason Ezekiel mentions Israel straying after idols is because it is precisely the equivalent of the Levites' forfeiture of YHWH. Cross argues that the question here is not so much in relation to the geographic proximity but rather that "The question is rather of lost rights or privileges."[21] In each instance described above, the meaning of the Hebrew becomes clearer, more forceful in light of the Akkadian cession formula. Ezekiel uses this legal, technical meaning to condemn the people and critique their actions.

Ezek 12: 1–16

Ezekiel 12 presents a fascinating episode in the prophet's mental time-travel into his past.[22] He recalls that Yahweh told him to prepare for himself an exile's baggage and to גלה יומם לעיניהם "go into exile by day in their sight", digging a hole through a wall, covering his face, and going out in

[21] Cross, "A Papyrus Recording a Divine Legal Decision," 319.

[22] On the theory of "mental time-travel" see Thomas Suddendorf, Donna Rose Addis, and Michael C. Corballis, "Mental Time Travel and the Shaping of the Human Mind," in *Predictions in the Brain: Using Our Past to Generate a Future,* (ed. Moshe Bar; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 344–354.

the dark with his bag.[23] Seven times, Yahweh's instructions include the order to do this action לעיניהם "in their sight," the importance of the exiles' seeing Ezekiel's charade is critical.[24]

In Ezekiel 12: 7, we also get one of the few notices of the prophet claiming to have fulfilled Yahweh's command ואעש כן כאשר צויתי "and I did as I was commanded." The interpretation of this charade is provided only several hours later: in Ezek. 12:8, Ezekiel states that the word of Yahweh came again to him and asked him, whether or not the rebellious house of Israel asked him what he was doing. Yahweh told him to tell them that it was an oracle concerning the prince in Jerusalem and everyone in it. Just as Ezekiel mimed going into exile, so will they—the people in Jerusalem—go into exile.

The oracle's interpretation, which is now revealed to be anticipatory of a future event, also contains the outcome that Ezekiel's minimalist charade portrays: the prince of Jerusalem will be

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[23] Many scholars read this sign-act as emblematic of Ezekiel's trauma, and suggest that it ought to be interpreted in light of studies on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher cites the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and its list of symptoms of PTSD, focusing on the symptom of reliving the traumatic incident. He argues that this is exactly what Ezekiel is doing. Trauma studies indeed has much to contribute to how we understand the points of emphasis in biblical literature about the fall of Jerusalem, but it seems to me that there is a rush to highlight these individual episodes in Ezekiel as emblematic of the prophet's suffering. The difficulty is Smith-Christopher's landing upon "reliving" as a symptom of trauma is that it significantly under-theorizes the role of memory in the work as a whole. Indeed, the entire Book of Ezekiel is positioned as a retrospective, and the memories he recalls are not uniformly traumatic. By considering this larger frame, trauma as an explanatory model must grapple with the challenge of the author's active drawing upon Babylonian idioms, imagery, and views. The expanse of engagement with Neo-Babylonian culture, both explicit and implicit, suggests a high degree of acculturation to the Babylonian world that undercuts the argument that Ezekiel "refuses to accept imperial realities." See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Deconstructing Terror in Ezekiel: The 'Valley of Bones' Vision as Response to Trauma," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions* (ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[24] Greenberg argues this is to "force himself on their attention" because he has already been prophesying for over a year to no avail. Within the story world, the point is not to effect any behavioral change but rather to provide a defense of the deity's actions and cause them to understand the situation better (Ezek 12: 3). See Greenberg, *Ezekiel I*, 209.

caught in Yahweh's net and brought to Babylon, but he will not see the land, and he will die there. His retinue will be scattered and killed, though a handful will be permitted to escape so that they can tell of their abominations. The result says Yahweh is that they, those newly scattered ones, will know that it was Yahweh's doing. This interpretation also clarifies that Ezekiel's actions were not representing his *own* past of going into exile, but rather showing the exiled Judeans that those who were left behind in Jerusalem too would be sent into exile.

Ezekiel 12: 17–20

This vision and its explanation are followed by another future-oriented memory, in which Yahweh told him to perform another mime in which he was to eat his bread with shaking and to drink his water while trembling and fearful. Then he was to tell the people that this is how the people in Jerusalem will eat and drink. Their land will be made desolate of everything in it, because of the violence of its inhabitants. The result of this vision is that Ezekiel's audience will recognize Yahweh as being responsible.[25] This memory serves to establish a kind of totality of recognition: in the previous memory, the people around Ezekiel are indirect recognizers in first vision, privy to the thought process of the newly exiled group, but in the second vision they are explicitly addressed. The issue that seems to stand behind this is a two-part misunderstanding: the first, a misidentification of which group was "worse" (in terms of behavior) and worse-off (in terms of suffering), and the second, where Yahweh was during this time.

[25] Greenberg dismisses this as simply a "recognition formula" without analysis of its function in this particular passage, and how it relates to the recognition of the previous passage (Ezek 12: 1–16).

Ezek 12: 21–28

Closely linked to this issue of recognizing that Yahweh was in control of Jerusalem and the Judean's fate is the matter of *when* this destruction will take place. Yahweh's word comes again to Ezekiel and asks him about a proverb concerning the land of Israel, יארכו הימים ואבד כל חזון "The days are prolonged and every vision fails" (Ezek 12: 22). Yahweh tells him that there will no longer be false or flattering visions about Israel's future for whatever Yahweh speaks will happen and crucially, will not be delayed. This recollection is immediately followed by a near identical one in which Yahweh quotes the people responding to Ezekiel's words, חזון אשר הוא חזה לימים רבים ולעתים רחוקות הוא נבא "The vision that he sees is for many years ahead; he prophesies for distant times" (Ezek 12: 27) Although this may seem basically the same as the previously quoted proverb, the difference is significant, for placed as it is, it is a caution against thinking that even *this* word (Ezekiel's) will come to fruition sometime in a distant future, rather Yahweh's words will have immediate fulfillment.[26]

That the issues in this section of the narrative are about Yahweh's ability to correctly identify who is to be punished and when then seems to form the prompt for the sustained recollection in the chapters that follow, of the mechanisms and framework by which Yahweh judges humans. Ezekiel's memories cluster together a series of recollections that pertain to justice broadly and to whether or not the exiled people are in a worse position—something they seem to believe—than their Jerusalem kinsfolk.

[26] On the further differences between the two quotations, see discussion in Greenberg, *Ezekiel I*, 229–231.

Ezekiel 17

Vanderhooft has argued that the political allegory in Ezekiel 17 bears strong signs of acculturation and that the Babylonian milieu informs and shapes this narrative.[27] In Ezek 17, the prophet is instructed to propose a riddle and speak an allegory to the people. Verse 3 marks the beginning of the allegory, in which great eagle comes to Lebanon and breaks off the top shoot of a cedar, carrying it off to the Land of Trade, the merchant's city. The eagle then plants a seed in the land, watering and caring for it so that it grows and sprouts a vine, extending its tendrils forth. A second eagle comes, and the vine extends its tendrils towards this eagle, inviting it to water the vine. From the bed in which it was planted, it is taken up and replanted in a place with abundant water in order to thrive and sprout "noble" shoots. But, asks YHWH, when the vine is pulled up by the roots, will it not then wither and die? Will it survive the transplanting? YHWH instructs Ezekiel to explain this allegory to the people as a description of the situation of the exile: the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took away all its nobles and elite to Babylon. This king even made a covenant with one of the members of the royal house of Jerusalem. The purpose of this covenant was to keep the Judean king in a subjugated position, so that he would not assert himself. Yet this royal member disregards the covenant and forms an alliance with Egypt. Because of this covenantal infraction, YHWH says that he will call the Judean royal to task, and make him die for his disregard of their agreement. God will bring him to Babylon to be judged.

Vanderhooft has argued that this allegory and its interpretation represent the historical events of the exile: the first eagle is the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar, and the vine is the Judean royal, Zedekiah. Ezekiel states that there was a treaty between these two individuals, but

[27] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 164–167.

that Zedekiah disobeyed the terms of the treaty and formed a second alliance with Egypt. The second eagle in this image is then presumably the Pharaoh.[28] The allegory and subsequent explanation of the covenant in Ezekiel 17 implies that Babylonian rulers may have followed their predecessors in securing loyalty through covenant treaties.[29] Indeed M. Tsevat has argued that the explanation of the allegory actually provides concrete information about Babylonian imperial practice that is otherwise unavailable from this period.[30]

In Ancient Near Eastern treaties, the parties often invoke their respective deities as witnesses to the covenant, and it is the responsibility of these deities to impose punishment for any covenantal malfeasance.[31] Along with Vanderhooft, I suggest that in this passage, YHWH might

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[28] Political treaties are well-attested from the Neo-Assyrian period, in which a large power would often form a treaty with smaller states in order to secure their loyalty and exact tribute. There are well-established formulae found across the ancient Near East with respect to treaties. These arrangements were legally binding and followed a standard formula. On account of the relationship formed in a covenant, the suzerain was able to establish his stipulations and requirements for his continued support, followed by the invocation of witnesses, usually the deities of the respective parties involved.

[29] Brinkman notes that there is no information in the cuneiform record about such treaties formed between Babylon and other nations. J.A. Brinkman, "Political Covenants, Treaties, and Loyalty Oaths in Babylonia and Between Assyria and Babylonia," in *I Trattati nel mondo antico. Forma Ideologia* Funzione, ed. L. Canfora, M. Liverani, and C. Zaccagnini (Rome: Istituto Gramsci, 1990) pp. 81–112. That being the case, this example in Ezekiel may fill a gap in our understanding about the relationship between Babylon and the nations it sought to subjugate.

[30] M. Tsevat, "The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Vassal Oaths and the Prophet Ezekiel," *JBL* 78 (1959): 201.

[31] For a discussion of treaties in the Hebrew bible, particularly with regards to deities and curses, see Delbert Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964). See also Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969). Werberg-Møller provides a helpful review of Hiller's work; see Preben Wernberg-Møller, review of *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* by Delbert Hillers, *CBQ* 27/1 (1965): 68–69; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Analecta Biblica 21A; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978); For a brief review of Akkadian treaties, see A. Kirk Grayson, "Akkadian treaties of the Seventh Century B.C." *JCS* 39 (1987) 127–60; Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (State Archives of Assyria 2;

be envisioned as a witness to the treaty between Judah and Babylon.[32] This suggestion finds evidence in vv. 19, in which God swears an oath by his own name stating that he will repay Judah for the covenant that Judah disregarded and broke. Two features in this verse suggest that the deity is envisioned as a witness: first, Yahweh swears by his own name to punish Judah, and second, Yahweh refers to the covenant with a first common singular possessive suffix.[33]

The imagery contained in this allegory is also worthy of careful study. Ezekiel employs images that are familiar in a biblical setting, but also have broader application. The reference to the cedars of Lebanon at the very outset of the allegory utilize an image popular in biblical and Near Eastern literature about cedar wood that was used for building temples and palaces. While this is a trope in both biblical and extra-biblical writing, it is reminiscent of the images of Mesopotamian kings, particularly Nebuchadnezzar cutting down cedars in order to transplant them or use them in building endeavors.[34] Oppenheim, Greenberg, and Vanderhooft all observe that this image played a prominent role in imperial imagery of the Mesopotamian royal gardens.[35] Lang takes this a step further, and argues that what Ezekiel has in mind is a pair of royal figures that

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Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988). For a more general treatment of treaties and letters in the ancient Near East, see Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

[32] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 166.

[33] Vanderhooft and Japhet also note that this is the interpretation found in the Chronicler, who states explicitly that Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah swear an oath by God. Ibid, 166; Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronciles* (OTL; Louisville: West Minster John Knox, 1993) pp. 1070.

[34] See for example, the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar in the Wadi Brisa relief which shows the king cutting down a cedar tree in Lebanon. See brief treatment in Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 154 n.20; Da Riva, *The Wadi Brisa Reliefs.*

[35] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20,* 310; A.L. Oppenheim, "On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 24 (1965): 328–33; Vanderhooft, Lecture 11/12/11.

stand on either side of a sacred tree.[36] Thus in this image, the kings of Judah, are the cedar and vine, while the sacred tree would be Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh.[37] A further aspect of this allegory is the reference to clipping the shoot of a plant, which may have in mind transplantation of flora from one location to another, a practice which many near Eastern kings were famed for. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, is well-known for his gardens, and so it is possible that Ezekiel has this literal imagery in mind as he composes this allegory.[38]

Ezekiel 21: 23–28

Ezekiel 21:23–28 offers a slightly different view of the destruction. Like the previous oracles, it is future oriented to Ezekiel's past self. Ezekiel is told to mark two roads—two options for the king of Babylon: one leading to the Ammonites, and the other to the Judeans. The language of the passage makes explicit that this was a divinatory procedure, a confirmation by means of an oracle for a military campaign. The king קלקל בחצים שאל בתרפים ראה בכבד "shook arrows, he sought of the teraphim, he inspected the liver" (Ezek 21:26). Ezekiel 21:27 announces the results of the procedure: בימינו היה הקסם ירושלם "into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem." Although directed at Ezekiel's Judean audience in Babylon, liver divination is not attested as a practice in

[36] Lang, *Kein Aufstand*, 29–49.

[37] For information on how the tree is used with symbolic meaning in Near Eastern imagery, see Barbara N. Porter, "The Meaning of the Assyrian Tree Image: Iconographic Evidence," in *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography* (OBO 197; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003) 21–37.

[38] Other scholars have noted this possibility, but have also pointed to the manner in which Lebanon imagery influences the Garden of Eden and Jerusalem as House-of-YHWH. See for example, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 310; Lawrence E. Stager "Jerusalem and the Garden of Israel" *Eretz Israel (Cross Volume)* 26 (1999): 183–88; Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*.

the biblical corpus but was a prominent means of obtaining oracles in the wider Ancient Near East.[39] The divination procedure portrays the siege against Jerusalem from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective. Using divination, he inquires where to go, and the lot falls on Jerusalem. The people dismiss the divination as false, but the oracle warns them that they will be captured.

Standing behind this passage is a long history in the ancient Near East, especially from the Assyrian period, of kings seeking oracular confirmation before embarking on military campaigns. While no cuneiform record from the Neo- Babylonian period exists on this topic, the text in Ezekiel points to the continued prominence of extispicy as a mode of divination. Vanderhooft correctly notes the irony inherent in this passage: Mesopotamian divination provides the oracle for Nebuchadnezzar to go forth, but this is actually YHWH's plan against Jerusalem.[40] Greenberg suggests that the information about extispicy in this passage may clarify the phrase, ירושלים הקסם היה במינו (21:27). He argues that the third masculine singular suffix in the first word of the clause refers to the liver, and thus translates, "In its right part, is the omen Jerusalem."[41] If Greenberg's proposal (and following him, Vanderhooft) is correct, it demonstrates Ezekiel's familiarity with Babylonian divination practices, which he then uses as a means of identifying and punishing Jerusalem for cultic malfeasance. Vanderhooft has argued further that this passage may

[39] Vanderhooft observes, "Mesopotamian extispicy practices were known as far west as the Levant, as the discovery of liver models at Middle Bronze Age Hazor proves." Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 168. See also Hayim Tadmor and B. Landsberger, "Fragments of Clay Liver Models from Hazor" *IEJ* 14 (1964) pp. 201-217.

[40] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 169.

[41] Greenberg, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Parting of the Ways: Ezek. 21: 26–27" in eds. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al, *Ah, Assyria…: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ScrHier 33; Jerusalem: Magness, 1991) pp. 270–71.

also indicate something about Babylonian divinatory and military practice that is not mentioned in the cuneiform records from the period.

Taken together, these memories of Jerusalem's anticipated fall revolve around cultic violations and misrecognitions that are then recalled as justifications for Yahweh to destroy Jerusalem. but additionally, they may also function as a response to a perceived view of the first exiles that they are the ones who have suffered while the people they left behind in Jerusalem "have it better." Ezekiel's visions, prefaced by statements of his location among the exiles and the elders, counter such a position. Even more crucial in this apparent defense of Yahweh's actions is a claim that he was not an inattentive or inactive deity but one thoroughly involved in the polity's downfall. That is, Yahweh's defense implicitly argues that he cannot be accused of having abandoned the Judeans, even if his "glory" departs Jerusalem. He remains an attentive, if destructive, deity.

Ezekiel 34

In Ezekiel 34, we get a very different, even more allegorical, view of the reasons for Jerusalem's fall: Ezekiel recounts what seems at first to be a rather specific charge against Israel's shepherds. As becomes quickly apparent, the shepherds stand in for the leaders of the people. They are charged with not caring sufficiently for their flock and operating solely for their own gain. In response to their carelessness and willful neglect, Yahweh claims that he himself will come and restore his flock and will then set up a better shepherd, David, over the people.

There are at least two conceptual domains of shepherding in which this oracle can be understood: the first is of literal shepherding, and the second of the metaphorical use of king or

leader as shepherd. Andrew Mein has recently written about the first domain, and argued persuasively for an economic concern to be at play in this passage: shepherds in the ancient Near East, he argues, typically worked for a wealthy land and flock owner.[42] While they were permitted to keep some of the products of the flock, they were to turn over profits to the owner. From this perspective, the charge is one of misappropriation of economic resources that rightly belong to Yahweh. The second domain concerns the element of compassion in shepherding: shepherds care for their flock, looking after the injured ones, and bringing back those that have wandered far off so that they do not fall prey to wild animals. This latter domain emphasizes the selflessness of shepherds, and is unsurprisingly one that appeals to more theological interpretations of the text.

Both domains may in fact be in play in this extended metaphor. As divine sovereign, Yahweh is the real owner of the flock, Israel, and he appoints representatives, shepherds, to look after the flock. They are tasked with ensuring their flock's well-being as well as ensuring that their profits—the sacrifices—are delivered regularly and consistently. The economic and caregiving domains overlap and the success of one implies success of the other.

Across the ancient Near East, including in the Levant, shepherding offers a rich conceptual world: kings adopt the epithet of shepherd as a way to signal their concern for their subjects. The title "shepherd" combines the domains of protection and provision, and Andrew Mein notes, of profit. It signals a leader who can navigate difficult terrain, metaphorical and literal, in order to secure food and safety for his flock. Yet, I suggest that when Ezekiel draws on shepherding imagery, he may have a particularly well-developed deployment of this metaphor in mind, namely,

[42] Andrew Mein, "Profitable and Unprofitable Shepherds: Economic and Theological Perspectives on Ezekiel 34" *JSOT* Vol 31.4 (2007): 493–504.

Nebuchadnezzar's portrayal of himself as shepherd. In his monumental inscription at Wadi Brisa, the Babylonian monarch announces: "I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the loyal shepherd, the favorite of Marduk, the august city-ruler, the beloved of Nabû, the pious prince…" The *inūma* section of the inscription lists the positive actions the king has undertaken, and again describes the king's actions through shepherding imagery: "He handed over to me the shepherd-staff which keeps people safe, and instructed me to act as his provider…" And, again in WBC VII 27–37:

> I shepherded with greatest care the widespread people that my lord Marduk gave to me. I directed them on the proper course and towards the correct behavior. I protected the loyal, I destroyed the enemy. I made them bow their neck to Babylon. I united all people peacefully under Babylon's eternal shade.

As this inscription suggests, Nebuchadnezzar's shepherding qualities extend beyond Babylon to all people that fall under Babylon's sway. In describing his takeover of Lebanon, Nebuchadnezzar says that it was under Marduk's direction that he brought order to Lebanon.

> (In Lebanon), where a foreign king had exercised kingship, and whose produce the enemy took away by force, so that its people fled, had taken refuge far away. With the strength of my lord Nabû and Marduk, I sent [my armies] regularly to Lebanon for battle. I expelled its enemy above and below, and I made the country content. I reunited the scattered people and I brought them back to their place. What no former king had done, (I did): I cut through the high mountains, I crushed the stones of the mountains, I opened up passes, I prepared a passage for the cedars for the king Marduk…

At the end of the section, he states, "I let the inhabitants of Lebanon lie in safe pastures, I did not permit anyone to harass them. So that nobody would oppress them, I installed an eternal image of myself as king to (protect them).[43] These passages are fascinating for the claims they make. This inscription, set up at Wadi Brisa's remote mountain region was designed to make literal

[43] I built [...] I […] I put […] [*I reunited the scattered*] people, in the totality of all the lands. I wrote my inscription and placed it with my image in the mountain passes and I set it up for the future. May a future king read it, may he always be mindful to speak the gods' praise." (WBC IX 13–58).

the claims advanced in the inscription. The inhospitable terrain in which this inscription and image was cut into the rock reinforced the idea that this was a king who could accomplish difficult and arduous tasks. For our purposes, even more crucial in the monarch's description of himself is that embedded within a framework of devotion, Nebuchadnezzar describes his care for his people *as an extension* of his care for the gods, at whose wish he is able to rule. He is a selfless shepherd who cares for his people only to better serve the gods.

In Ezekiel 34, the remembering character Ezekiel recounts Yahweh's injunction to him to prophesy against the "shepherds of Israel." They were to be chastened for securing their own provisions but not giving them to their flock, for letting the flock wander and be scattered:

> את הנחלות לא חזקתם ואת החולה לא רפאתם ולנשברת לא חבשתם ואת הנדחת
> לא השבתם ואת האבדת לא בקשתם ובחזקה רדיתם אתם ובפרך

> You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.

Through Ezekiel's voice, Yahweh accuses Israel's shepherds of not fulfilling their roles properly. Instead of caring for their flock, they allowed them to be broken, eaten, and scattered. Because of their failures, Yahweh announces that he will appoint a new shepherd over his people (Ezek 34: 23):

> והקמתי עליהם רעה אחד ורעה אתהן את עבדי דויד הוא ירעה אתם והוא יהיה להן לרעה

> And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Given Ezekiel's familiarity with Babylonian royal discourse, it is possible his characterization of a new Judean leader draws on terms popular in Neo-Babylonian royal discourse. He translates this Neo-Babylonian image into a local, Judean idiom by naming David as singular and divinely

appointed shepherd.[44] The coopting of imperial discourse into a local one has already been documented by Payne, Lavan, and Weisweiler in their work on cosmopolitanism and empire.[45] That Ezekiel might do so as well is prompted not only by this passage but also other sections of the work in which a Babylonian backdrop is clearly at play, such as in Ezekiel 17 with the eagle and transplanting imagery, or the reference to divinatory practices in Ezekiel 21.

In verse 29 of this passage, Yahweh says he will establish a מטע לשם "plant of renown" for his people so that they no longer go hungry or "bear shame."[46] Although most scholars have understood this as another stereotyped claim of reversal—from desolation to luxuriance—the phrase is unusual, and used only in Ezekiel and Isaiah where it consistently refers to instances of Yahweh planting, transplanting, and establishing gardens.[47] It may thus in fact be that Ezekiel has in mind practices of growing gardens as a symbol of one's success at rule, and more concretely, of imperial practices of transplanting, as also attested in Ezekiel 17.

Part III

Having first examined in this chapter Yahweh's involvement and primacy in the destruction, and then the work's emphasis on shepherding and proper stewardship; I turn now to a third issue, the cultic renewal that Jerusalem's destruction paves the way for.

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[44] On David's portrayal as a *nāśī*, see Madhavi Nevader, "Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40–48" in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (ed., Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers; *BZAW* 478; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 268–291.

[45] Payne, Lavan, and Weisweiler, *Cosmopolitanism and Empire*.

[46] The term *lšm*, "for renown," is also used in Deut 26: 19. See also Isa 55: 13, Jer 13:11, and Jer 33:9 where the term is acts as a mnemonic device for Yahweh.

[47] For a representative view, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel II*, 703–704.

Temple Restoration

The texts described above, with their emphases on cultic malfeasance and the lack of good stewardship paint a rather bleak view of Jerusalem's future, and yet by the end of the work, Ezekiel recounts a fantastical memory of a promised restoration of Yahweh's temple. So how does the work move from this multi-layered retrospective of destruction to its anticipated restoration of Jerusalem?

Ezekiel's recollections of his interactions with Yahweh emphasize an unstated conviction that the transformation of Israel, particularly its cult, is only possible in a contained setting far from the polluted Judean land with its negligent rulers and sinful population. That this transformation takes place under Babylonian auspices is hinted at both obliquely and explicitly in numerous ways. It is perhaps unsurprising that this confrontation is reflected in Ezekiel's sustained use of Neo-Babylonian imagery and its deployment as a tool with which to diagnose the failures of the Judean community.[48]

The chronological notices that preface many of Ezekiel's visions, and that I mentioned briefly at the outset of this paper, allow for a sequencing through extraliterary points of orientation, namely, Nebuchadnezzar's reign and his involvement with Judah. On the surface, it seems possible to account for this chronological scheme by noting that Judah's kingship has collapsed and so there is no "domestic" calendrical scheme, or that Ezekiel finds himself in Babylon and thus naturally uses the local, royal chronology. Yet this orientation also allows for the creation of a "field of reference" to borrow Benjamin Harshav's term that broadens significantly the fictional world of this text. Despite its only oblique references to Nebuchadnezzar as the King of Babylon, the text

[48] On the Book of Ezekiel's use of Neo-Babylonian imagery to critique his own community, see Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon."

is, in fact, suffused with Neo-Babylonian imagery and vocabulary.[49] Although scholars have focused on how imagery may have influenced selective portions of the Book of Ezekiel, I suggest that their findings have not yet found application as an explanatory model for understanding the movement of the work from destruction and the reordering of political infrastructure to temple restoration as the culmination of the entire work.

Let me give a little bit of background on what I mean by the structure by looking at some Neo-Babylonian material, before turning to what I mean by its expression in Ezekiel. In contrast to their imperial forebears in the north, the Neo-Babylonian kings accorded less weight in their royal inscriptions to military exploits and far more to temple building and restoration projects.[50] Most royal inscriptions concerned building of temples, though some pertain to the construction of defensive structures, particularly boundary walls. Unlike the Assyrian kings, there are no explicitly militaristic inscriptions and even in those that do recount military exploits, language of expansion is limited. David Vanderhooft has argued that in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions, the expansion of imperial reach is presented primarily to signal the king's success at his role as a restorer and

[49] Scholars have amply demonstrated Ezekiel's familiarity with and deployment of Akkadian vocabulary and imagery. See for example, Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon," Caroline Waerzeggers, "Babylonian Kingship in the Persian Period," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (ed., Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers; *BZAW* 478; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 181–222; idem, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon, Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity* (ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 131–146; Nevader, "Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince" ; Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies."

[50] Vanderhooft offers an overview of the differences between royal strategies of communication in Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian inscriptions. More recently, da Riva has offered a comprehensive analysis of Neo-Babylonian inscriptions in which she also treats how these inscriptions differ from their imperial forbears. See Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, esp. p. 40, and da Riva, *Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions.*

provider of temples. That is, imperial expansion is presented literarily as a secondary interest, embarked upon only in the quest for building and renewing temples.[51]

Although Vanderhooft does not address the origin of this interest for Nebuchadnezzar, it may in fact predate the monarch's ascension to the throne: as crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar also held the position of *šatammu* (high priest) of Eanna,[52] and was affiliated with temple practice. This early profession is reflected in his inscriptions through an abiding interest in presenting himself as a restorer of temples and a shepherd of people. Here, I think it is instructive to return briefly to Andrew Mein's claims about shepherds being the employees of some kind of landowner or wealthy farmer. In that system, the shepherd is a caretaker. This is precisely the way in which Nebuchadnezzar portrays his role: he works in service of the gods. In his inscriptions, he describes his restorations of temples by first recounting the steps he took to pave the way so to speak for these projects, whether it was gathering cedars of Lebanon or uniting scattered people to work on the temples as corvée labor. Only after undertaking these initial steps does he embark on the restoration of a temple itself.

In Ezekiel too, we have a similar interest exhibited. The narrator's focus in the work, as I have claimed, primarily concerns at least in the beginning and middle, Yahweh's role in the destruction and the people's cultic malfeasances. But by the end of the work, the narrator moves from this destruction and the annihilation of Jerusalem's enemies to an imagination of renewal of the cult. Shalom Holtz and Tova Ganzel have recently persuasively shown that Ezekiel's temple architecture is closely dependent on Neo-Babylonian templates of temple construction.[53] But what

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[51] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 23-45.

[52] See Rocio da Riva, 2008, 8; Wiseman 1985, 9–10; Beaulieu 2002, 99–123.

[53] Shalom Holtz and Tova Ganzel, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," *VT* 64 (2014) 211–226. See also M. S. Odell, "'The Wall is No More:' Temple Reform in Ezekiel 43:7-

I am suggesting is that it is not just the architectural template that the Book of Ezekiel uses, but also the *literary* template. That is, the Book of Ezekiel broadly mimics the contours of Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, in which the temple reconstruction and restoration is described as the pinnacle achievement of the king. In Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, this achievement comes at the end of narratives, even though it is signaled throughout. This is different than many Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, in which the pinnacle of achievement is characterized by the construction of markers of heightened order like gardens.

Ezekiel takes up and refashions this inscriptional style to propel the work forward, and in so doing, suggests a new convergence of imperial and divine power, a creative recombination of theo-political potentiality.

9," in M. J. Boda and J. Novotny (eds.), *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (Münster, 2010), 339-355; C. Castel, "Temples à l'époque néo-babylonienne: une même conception de l'espace sacré," *RA* 85 (1991), 69-187. Jacob Milgrom however argues for parallels between Ezekiel's temple and the Apollo temple at Delphi. See further, J. Milgrom, "The Unique Features of Ezekiel's Sanctuary," in N. S. Fox, D. A. Glatt-Gilad, and M. J. Williams (eds.), *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay* (Winona Lake, Ind., 2009), pp. 300-301.

Part III

Memory and Composition

Hypothesizing Networks of Contact and Cultural Exchange

To examine memory in Ezekiel is, of course, to simply study Ezekiel, because the entire work is framed as a retrospective. This framing has largely been understudied by scholars, who have focused on selective tropes, ideas, and themes in the work. Yet the entire composition is held together by this character who remembers and looks backwards on his past. In so doing, he does not recount memories of his own reactions to what Yahweh said to him, but rather recalls Yahweh's speeches as direct speech. It is a relentless litany of memories that center on Yahweh's right to destroy Jerusalem because of its malfeasances.

Recent work on the novel and neuropsychology demonstrates that different temporal orientations towards memory can produce profoundly different identities and mindsets.[54] One such mindset-issue is the adaptive significance that future-oriented memories, as seen in Ezekiel, can have.[55] Suddendorf and Corballis, two cognitive memory theorists, have argued that although distorted memories, particularly found in people with capacity for vivid imagination, can be maladaptive, the "broadcasting of one's mental time travel," that is the communication of one's memory and past, can be extremely productive not only for the individual whose memories are

[54] See, for example, Nalbantian, 263.

[55] Yet regular prospective ("future") thinking, as in Ezekiel's visions of the temple restoration, can also mislead one in the present. In Jane Austen's *Emma*, for example, Emma obsessively engages in matchmaking, spurred on by a distorted memory of having been responsible for her governess Miss Taylor's marriage to Mr. Weston. This distorted memory leads her to be overconfident in her ability to arrange a match for her friend Harriet, and when that attempt fails spectacularly, she is convinced of her inability to succeed in getting a match for herself.

being communicated but also for the recipients of the communication. In light of Ezekiel's fantastical view of Jerusalem's restoration, the pitfalls and advantages of retrospective and distorted memories are thought-provoking. If, to name just one possibility, Yahweh is behind Jerusalem's fall, as Ezekiel's memories suggest, then why not also be convinced that Nebuchadnezzar is the people's only ticket for restoration?

In the previous sections, I have argued that the Book of Ezekiel exhibits deep engagement with Babylonian culture. But how might such modes of influence have taken place for a Judean exile? Caroline Waerzeggers's recent article, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile," argues that examinations of literary parallels must be balanced by studies of social contact. She argued that the genre of chronicle writing—historiography, as she called it—circulated largely within a domestic setting in a carefully articulated section of Babylonian society. [56]Her study suggested that Judean and Babylonian chronicle texts could come into networks of interaction formed in the mercantile sphere, the agrarian countryside, and what she has term the "oblate population," particularly in Ebabbar. Although Waezeggers claims that it is "unlikely that these [temple/ oblate] encounters were conducive of cultural exchange,"[57] her own finding of at least one instance of a temple scribe coming into social contact with a Judean trading family suggests such networks could have facilitated cross-cultural exchange. Waerzeggers downplays this possibility, arguing that Marduk-Remmani's mercantile connections rendered him an unusual kind of temple official and that one cannot generalize from such an individual case.

Yet David Vanderhooft's essay, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon" suggests the existence of another such figure, namely, the author of the Book of Ezekiel, who also occupies multiple social

[56] Waerzeggers, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile."

[57] Ibid., 141.

roles and actively draws on them. This chapter suggests that the Book of Ezekiel may in fact provide even more evidence of oblate–political–literary interaction than previously thought.

Concluding Remarks

What can we say, in the end, about Ezekiel's representation of the fall of Jerusalem? For one, this is a profoundly autobiographical work in which the remembering character conveys very little of his own thoughts, feelings, or reactions. Rather, Ezekiel remembers the fall through a series of his past interactions with Yahweh. For Ezekiel, the fall is a lengthy two-part affair and is in effect, a representation *of* a representation. That is, Ezekiel never recounts his memory of experiencing the fall of the city; what he recounts is his memory of representing the fall of the city through mimes and oracles. Across the entire work, Ezekiel speaks to the exiled Judeans in Babylon, and it seems his audience is the first group of exiles. Although he references the arrival of a refugee from the second destruction, he never mentions the second arrival of exiled Judeans,[58] suggesting that within the story world, Ezekiel the remembering character imagines that the remnant that Yahweh is Ezekiel's cohort of exiles. Additionally, Ezekiel's frequent use of legal and royal imagery characterizes Yahweh as a divine king whose vassal Judah has broken a covenant. By using the legal language of forfeiture, Ezekiel portrays Yahweh's actions as merited by the behavior of the Judeans.

Like Kings and Lamentations, the Book of Ezekiel pivots around ideas of kingship and the correct exercise of power. Yet this work is concerned not with the failure of Yahweh to safeguard

[58] The observation that Ezekiel does not discuss the second group of exiled Judeans nor the failure of the prophecy against Egypt, establishes a crucial data point outside the fictional world created by the story, for locating the work somewhere before 573 BCE and the death of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jerusalem, but rather to actively present a defense of his actions. In many ways, the composition is like a divine lawsuit: it presents the "facts" of the case, namely, that Judah committed various forms of cultic and social abominations that required Yahweh to respond. The depth of their malfeasances was such that Yahweh had to completely destroy Jerusalem. The emphasis, however, in the latter half of the work, particularly in Ezek 34 and Ezek 37, on the selection of a new leader, highlights that Yahweh was not interested in the complete annihilation of Judah from the earth but rather of a complete overhaul of its political and cultic apparatus.

Ezekiel shares important similarities in terms of how such polemical discourses were represented. Like Lamentations, we have a work in which only one party to the "lawsuit" speaks. Just as Yahweh did not speak in Lamentations, there is no corresponding response from the people in Ezekiel. As a rhetorical strategy, this is an effective and sustained argument for the defendant Yahweh. It seems no accident too, that with the kind of views put forth in the composition, that the author would select the prophetic genre over lament poetry as in Lamentations, or a historiographic style as in Kings. The figure of the prophet is one who speaks both on behalf of the people as well as acting as a conduit for the deity's views. Although Ezekiel is not portrayed as speaking for the people, he is a spokesperson for Yahweh, and his memories of his interaction with Yahweh subsume any other kind of roles he may have played. What is highlighted throughout is his prophetic function. Within the story world, he is a carrier for Yahweh's claims. Outside the story world, at the level of the composition, the cast of characters establishes a rather competing model to that of Lamentations and of Kings. Although all three revolve around the idea of kingship, Ezekiel represents a destruction that is entirely the fault of the people, and imagines a future restoration in which the deity will return to his position in the temple through little help from the people. In other words, Yahweh occupies center place throughout the work, and the restoration of

the people and the selection of a remnant is only incidental to the broader project of ensuring *Yahweh's* restoration. If one read only this work about the fall of Jerusalem, history might indeed be kind to Yahweh, since his words and deeds dictated Ezekiel's memory entirely.

Conclusion

Literary and Cultural Afterlives of Jerusalem's Destruction

"It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," said the White Queen to Alice.[1]

In the end, we return to the beginning. What does the fall of Jerusalem look like in individual biblical texts? In the texts from Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Kings, memories of the fall are drawn on and represented in multiple, competing ways.

In the opening chapter, I discussed the ways in which scholarship on the fall of Jerusalem have drawn on contemporary events to characterize and imagine the biblical texts. In chapter 2, I turned to the question of how memory figures in these texts and is figured *by* these texts. In chapters three through five, I embarked on three case studies that examined different representations of Jerusalem's destruction.

For the narrative in 2 Kings 23:31–25, I argued that the narrator recounts the fall of Jerusalem from a pro-Babylonian perspective. Yet he also builds his authority by appealing to a Judean literary memory (2 Kgs 24:5 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"). The narrator gestures to a seemingly established, verifiable source signaling that what he is saying is already part of a recorded past. By telling the story of Jerusalem's destruction, through individual, named characters, the narrator also constructs a "portable" story about the fall, easily re-told because of

[1] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (The Millennium Fulcrum Edition, 1991), 79.

its central characters and its clear sequence of actions. As much as this story is its own story world, embedded within the narrative are refractions of the author's engagement with Babylonian imperial ideas, transformed into a Judean context. Written like history, the narrative is suffused with ideas of proper kingship, particularly in regards to justice, abundance, and protection. Although it is a story about a Judean king and the fall of Judah as a polity, it is not an unbiased or non-aligned text: its deft use of Babylonian imperial ideology suggests that it draws on a cosmopolitan world of ideas not only for the sake of endorsing them but also to actively generate a critique of Judean rulers. As a historiographic work, its form performs authority, and makes possible to generate a kind of "common core memory" about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's use of memory looks very different to 2 Kings 23:31–25. It is a much longer narrative, constructed around a priest named Ezekiel, and his memories of interactions with Yahweh. The entire story is staged as mental time-travel—the central character looks back and recounts his visions of Yahweh and their conversations and travels in remarkable detail. The consistent first-person voicing of the work, coupled with the frequent chronological anchors gives a sense of reliability. More important, perhaps, is the content of what he claims to remember: Yahweh, the Judean deity, speaking to him and explaining why he destroyed Jerusalem. Ezekiel-the-remember's narration of these visions includes references to storied figures from Israel and Judah's memory: King David, Noah, Daniel, and Job, as well as to claims about what people *thought* about Yahweh's system of justice. These references are an effective strategy because they gesture towards culturally, religiously inflected norms and beliefs about righteousness and fairness but then pivot to introducing a different perspective on Yahweh's role as dispenser of justice. But by situating it within a long tradition in which Yahweh participated in Judah's past, Yahweh's current actions are portrayed in a way that is consistent and justified.

Furthermore, Ezekiel's evocation of the location of his divine visions provide a geopolitical frame through which understand his memories not only as those of a Judean but as a Judean *in exile*.

Within this narrative Ezekiel's locational memory fulfills overlapping functions: it is a narrative produced through memory, and its content aims to provide evidence of Yahweh's continued presence among the Judeans. Ezekiel's memory of Yahweh's zeal for justice through references to Noah, Daniel, and Job may be seen as mobilizing the memory of these prominent righteous individuals for Yahweh's own theo-political defense. Using the visionary elements of his memory, Ezekiel's remembrances create a world between destruction and restoration, one accessible only through the mind, whether through the visions themselves or the memories of visions.

Lamentations provides yet another representation of the fall, one that looks profoundly different than Kings or Ezekiel. The poet confronts Yahweh for his failure to live up to his reputation. He attempts to provoke the deity's response by pointing to the various ways in which the Judeans are suffering, and by implying that their suffering diminishes Yahweh's standing. These poems represent the fall obliquely and focus on the aftermath of the destruction and in so doing, they disrupt any notion of the fall being swift or short-lived. Rather, they point to the undoing of the city's infrastructure that sustains people. In comparison to Ezekiel's deity, Yahweh in Lamentations is vengeful and cruel. This composition creates a way of thinking about Jerusalem's fall that competes with the claims in Ezekiel, particularly concerning sin, divine sanction, and divine justice. If the dominant idea in the city lament is that the deities have a right to destroy their cities, Lamentations uses the form to upend its claims by recalling a destruction in which the deity was not in fact (according to its author) justified in his actions.

Through their stories about Judah's relationship with its neighbors and with Babylon, the authors trade on ideas of empire, nation, and divine violence in ways that reproduce some ideas from the past but also co-produce new ones. In conclusion, what can we say about the kind of genres in which stories and poems about the fall of Jerusalem appear?[2] In the introduction, I argued that each of the compositions studied in this dissertation participates in a genre that is most meaningful for the kinds of claims the composition makes. What I mean by this, is that the

[2] In an essay on the performance of Babylonian kingship and its reception, Caroline Waerzeggers offers a tantalizing, if preliminary, account of the emergence of the genre of historical writing in Babylon and Uruk during the late first millennium b.c.e. She focuses on the Esagil temple library and its collections. Noting that the library mostly contained collections of scientific literature—technical astronomical texts, divination manuals, medical literature texts—she observes that one kind of literary activity that flourished during this period and that was preserved in the library, were writings about historical events. These writings were largely new compositions (rather than copies of older texts), and combined primary resources and archival data with historiographic traditions and ideologies. Waerzeggers argues that these compositions used generic conventions in experimental ways by recasting familiar narratives in multiple formats and through multiple perspectives. The compositions found in these library collections played with historical memories by analyzing them through present concerns. They had an interest in issues of kingship that were expressed in ways particular to their locations of composition. Thus, the Esagil temple library's works, composed in Babylon, were concerned with the expression of Babylonian hegemony and power and its impact on its subjugated populations abroad. The Uruk compositions, on the other hand, reflected more local concerns of rule: the king's job as protector of his city and role as judge, etc. One of the abiding interests of the works from Esagil was the "dynastic struggle" that troubled Babylonian kingship. Compositions explored this issue at both a macro and micro level through different genres (e.g. fictional royal letters, epics, royal inscriptions, and chronicles) and plots (e.g. rival kings vying for the throne, invasion and liberation, etc.), and they chose to use characters drawn from Neo-Babylonian lineages of kings rather than the more stereotypical use of Sargon, Hammurabi, Naram-Sin, or Shulgi. A particularly popular protagonist in these compositions was Nabopolassar, as was Nebuchadnezzar I. Waerzeggers has argued that these works represent an intricate collection of writings *about* historical events, but that they were first and foremost *representations* of events, issues, and ideas that were complex enough that they needed to be worked out and reworked. Her analysis of the emergence of this form of writing about the past provides a generative model with which to think about the impetus for the of biblical texts about the fall of Jerusalem. That Judean authors were interested in the past is abundantly clear. But what if, like their later Babylonian and Persian period counterparts, they wrote about the past to explore their present? Given the nature of the literature at hand, such a hypothesis is speculative at best, but may offer new ways of conceptualizing the prompts for such diverse portrayals to the fall of Jerusalem. Waerzeggers, "Babylonian Kingship in the Persian Period," esp. 209–219.

genre acts as a vehicle for carrying particular forms of arguments, claims, and ideologies. The prophetic genre, for example, with its emphasis on the "one who stands in the breach," offers a compelling structure through which to carry a retrospective narrative like the Book of Ezekiel whose protagonists are Yahweh and a prophet.

The genre of city lament on the other hand, allows not only for the obvious "lament" function but also a way to diagnose failure. What is unique about Lamentations' lament poetry, in contradistinction to other laments, is that it plays on the genre's diagnosis of failure but rather than recounting the failure of people, it constructs a case for the failure of the divine king. It sits between elegy and prophetic lawsuit, and in so doing, creates an interpretation of the fall in which the deity could be held liable for the people's suffering. It offers a striking counter argument to a widespread idea of divine abandonment and justification for punishment by reframing the issue as one of divine overreach.

The narrative in 2 Kings 23:31–25 also narrativizes the fall of Jerusalem and frames it as a failure of the Judean human king. Yet by drawing on tropes found elsewhere in the broader work of Kings, it shows itself to be an innovating a tradition of which it is deeply a part of. Each of these works establishes a relationship to their shared past, and creates a post-memory through their telling. These memories, if read together, present strongly competing claims, but read independently, they are tightly structured, argumentative works. Rigney argued that the more carriers that were available for any occurrence, the stronger its memory would be.[3] The composition carriers for the fall of Jerusalem are certainly numerous, and they have made for a lasting memory, even as they commemorate its destruction.

[3] Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking."

Epilogue

"As I listened, I thought of the children of Israel, who hung their harps on the willows and mourned for Babylon."[1] So wrote Patrick MacGill as a young soldier during the Great War, reflecting on his experience of listening to his British and Irish fellow soldiers sing battle songs in the trenches of France. By drawing an analogy to the Judean exiles in Babylon, he made present an ancient past, reenacting it in the present.

In the same war, Jacques Péricard, a lieutenant in the French infantry was battling German forces but he and his forces were quickly losing ground. On April 8, 1915, Péricard looked around him and saw dead Frenchmen all around him and began shouting at them, *Debout les morts!* "Arise you dead ones!" To his surprise, these dead responded. They told him they would follow him, and according to Péricard's account, their souls fused with his. So emboldened, together they fired at the Germans, aided by grenades mysteriously found in the sandbags in the trenches. Péricard claims he was unable to remember exactly how it all happened but that he experienced a total bodily transformation, morphing into a superhuman with the ability to look in multiple directions at once, to fire from his rifle as well as jump away from a grenade.[2]

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[1] Patrick MacGill, *Soldier Songs* (E.P. Dutton & Co.: New York, 1918), 9.

[2] Although Péricard drew no overtly religious conclusions from this event, Maurice Barrès, who wrote about the story (ostensibly adding no details to Péricard's own), in his own writings drew a spiritual connection between Péricard's vision and the war-dead. Indeed, Barrès even proposed allowing these dead individuals *suffrage des morts*, "the right to vote," by allowing widows and mothers of the dead to vote in place of their husbands or sons. Maurice Barrès, preface to *Face à Face: Souvenirs et Impressions d'un Soldat de la Grande Guerre*, by Jacques Péricard (Paris: Payot, 1917), 15. The preface is a reprint of Barrès's article in *L'Echo*

The story sought to inspire young soldiers on the battlefield by weaving a tale in which long-dead ancestors would rise up from the ground to join these young men in battle. Yet as much as the tale is present and future oriented, its origins can be traced to a far distant literary antecedent: the premise of the plot develops out of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37) in which long dead people were resurrected by Yahweh to their full bodily form and stood up as an exceedingly large army (ויעמדו על רגליהם חיל גדול מאד מאד). Though the idea of resurrection was of course taken up in the New Testament, its use in Péricard's *Debout les Morts* strongly accords with the narrative in Ezekiel and the claim therein notion that the dead "House of Israel" would be raised up by Yahweh. In Péricard's account, there was no clear divine initiative, but the notion of a mass resurrection of an army host bears significant similarities to Ezekiel.

Péricard's story, as far-fetched as it seemed, caught on and became a rallying cry among ordinary people to encourage active support for the troops.[3] The myth spread quickly, becoming a widely used trope in propaganda posters as well as in satirical portrayals of the war. In a 1916 issue of *La Baïonnette*, a satirical journal for French soldiers at the front, there is a full-page illustration with the title *Debout les Morts*.[4] In the foreground of the illustration are two angelic figures in flight bearing swords and carrying a billowing Italian flag (possibly merged with a

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de Paris, 17 November 1915. See also the brief discussion of this story in Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 72–75.

[3] Despite popular retellings of this story and the frequent deployment of the phrase *Debout les Morts!*, religious leadership, particularly Catholic Church sought to distance itself from such myths and mystical claims. For an extended treatment of how Holy War ideology inflected the Great War, see Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014), esp. 15–16.

[4] "Notre Soeur l'Italie," *La Baïonnette*, 1916 No. 63.

French one), showing the transnational application of the phrase to the allied forces. In the background, one sees numerous graves out of which humans are rising, arms up in the air. The figures are numerous, and suggest the appearance of a heavenly host.

Scholars who study memory have termed this kind of relationship to the past exhibited by Pericard and MacGill, "prosthetic" memory.[5] For both, the destruction of Jerusalem and its exile act as mnemonic symbols that connects the Judeans of the Levant to the soldiers of World War I. For MacGill, it is through the shared experience of singing in the midst of war in a land far from one's own. For Pericard, it is through the bodily resurrection that Yahweh claims he will accomplish.

But what is it about the Judean exile that makes it a fertile trope and story to draw on? At a very basic level, we could perhaps dismiss such invocations of the past as mere piety, freely available, particularly to anyone with a Jewish or Christian background. And yet, of course, the answer is more complicated than this: if it were merely a question of accessibility, why not turn instead to the battle of Jericho and its standing as a story of hope and triumph? Ann Rigney has attempted to account for why certain events command more cultural interest and more frequent re-telling by arguing for the concept of "differential memorability." This concept suggests that events that center heavily on a civilian, victim, or subordinate population that is attacked in some way by a bigger power, such as the state, or a foreign government, becomes a more productive and generative traveling "form," available for future application. In this sense, MacGill's turn to the exiles in Babylon and Péricard's cry of *debout les morts!* trades on the sense of futility that

[5] See Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*.

the soldiers and Judeans alike could have experienced as mere pawns in a battle much larger and stronger than themselves.

Although it is a central "site" in Judean literary memory and in the communal memory of later Jewish communities, it has also become a mnemonic transnational symbol as the paradigmatic example of destruction.[6] The "fall of Jerusalem" has become an "event type" whose form has been repeatedly reimagined and re-inscribed in modernity, and has generated templates for the production of new memories. At the same time, as I have shown in my dissertation, the memory of contemporary events have been inscribed into interpretations of biblical texts, as in Dianne Bergant's use of 9/ 11 imagery to describe the fall of Jerusalem.[7] I draw on the examples of Patrick MacGill and Péricard because they illustrate the dynamism of literature, memory, and history and also because they show how deeply mobile memories are, and how transcultural they can be.

The examples of MacGill and Péricard provide an analogy for considering how the biblical texts studied in this dissertation were also carriers of culture and literature in their own times. For Kings to fold in Babylonian imagery into the narrative, or for Ezekiel to use Akkadian idiomatic phrases, or for Lamentations to draw on a scaffolding of masculinity, each composition shows its participation in a complex and changing cultural and political world. These compositions are responses *to* as much as they are representations *of* the stories they contain.

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[6] The fall of Jerusalem is commemorated each year on Tisha B'Av (the ninth of Av, the 11th month) in the Jewish faith, a commemoration which in turn has generated complex associations with another 9/11, namely, the fall of the twin towers in New York City in 2001.

[7] Bergant, *Lamentations*, 13.

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