Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Social Scientific Study of Involuntary Migration

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Before and after Exile

Involuntary Migration and Ideas of Israel[1]

This article draws attention to differences in the characterisation of Israel in the poetry of Jeremiah and the judgement oracles of Ezekiel. Whilst both conceive of Israel as an ethnic entity, comprised especially of elites and associated particularly with the city of Jerusalem, Ezekiel demonstrates a much stronger interest in Israel's past history and a much more sustained focus on the homeland. We argue that these issues are resonant with the concerns of other involuntary migrants and likely relate to the involuntary migrant experience of the authors and audiences of Ezekiel.

Keywords: Israel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, migration, ethnicity

Introduction

This essay is interested in the way that the biblical texts attest to changes in ideas about Israel in response to social, political and economic stimuli. It attends most particularly to the social, political and economic crises that arose as a result of the defeat of the kingdom of Judah and the destruction of its capital at Jerusalem in the early years of the sixth century B.C.E. To tease out the consequences of these events on ideas about Israel, we will focus on the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, paying particular attention to these books' use of the name Israel and to the words and ideas with which Israel is associated. Analyses of these references to Israel, and to the image of Israel that arise from them, reveal that there are significant similarities in these books' understandings and depictions of Israel, but also some notable differences.

In particular, the book of Ezekiel has a much stronger interest in Israel's past history and a much more sustained focus on the homeland.

Recent work in the political and social sciences offers several useful, heuristic models for understanding these differences. Especially productive are the theoretical discussions in anthropological studies of ethnicity regarding identity and its formation in response to exposure to outsiders; recent research on the social and psychological effects of involuntary migration; and analyses of the short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of colonial domination on subject populations. The contention of the present article is that the differences in Jeremiah and Ezekiel's portrayals of Israel may be accounted for in terms of the experience and consequences of involuntary migration on individual and community identities, which especially characterise the experience of the author and audience of the book of Ezekiel.[2]

The discussion will begin with an analysis of Israel in the book of Jeremiah and an analysis of Israel in the book of Ezekiel. This will be followed by a comparative discussion in light of recent research in the social sciences, with particular reference to research on the relationship of involuntary migrants to the homeland and to work on the ways in which involuntary migrants recollect and engage with narratives about the past.

I Israel in Jeremiah

The origins of the book of Jeremiah and its subsequent development remain amongst the most contested issues in biblical scholarship. Our ability to delve into the finer points of these arguments is limited by the scope of this volume. For present purposes, it is important that Israel dominates the book's poetic sections in chapters 2–20 and 30–31.[3] Although argument continues over whether any of this material derives from an historical prophet called Jeremiah, this poetic content is still usually thought to comprise the oldest part(s) of the book. With the exception of the so-called Little Book of Consolation within Jeremiah 30–31, it is also widely considered to antedate the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.[4] Furthermore, it is explicitly focused on

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2   The use of the singular for author and audience here and in the following is a convention of convenience, rather than a commitment to single authorship. The book of Jeremiah and the book of Ezekiel are both composite works, not only between which but also within which there is abundant evidence of differing opinions on the nature of Israel.

3   This tendency is so strong that it may be considered a legitimate point of departure even despite an inevitable degree of uncertainty in the identification of poetry and prose.

4   There are some who argue that chapters 30–31 also antedate the fall of Jerusalem, amongst which M. A. Sweeney is perhaps the most prominent; see M. A. Sweeney,

the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its environs. Although it is intimately preoccupied with the prospect of imminent devastation, it does not focus on those who were deported in 597 or on their experience of forced migration. Within Jeremiah this may be contrasted especially with the prose narratives of chapters 40–44, which reflect on internal displacements within Judah after 586 B.C.E.[5] The concentration of Israel in the poetic sections of the book of Jeremiah, together with the probable date of much of this material, means that this material most likely reflects ideas about Israel which do not take the experience of forced migration into account, at least not directly. This observation contrasts, as we will see, with the social location of Israel in the book of Ezekiel.

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First, some general observations are needed. Israel appears well over a hundred times in MT Jeremiah and just under a hundred times in LXX Jeremiah.[6] Discounting the MT's predilection for introducing the title "God of Israel" at every opportunity, these appearances are approximately evenly divided between the book's prose and its poetry. The most superficial examination, however, reveals a clear distinction in the prose and poetry's respective presentations of Israel. In the poetry, Israel almost invariably appears alone. In the prose, by contrast, it is frequently attached to Judah. This is especially apparent in the use of formulaic phrases such as "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" and "the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah." Given the broadly agreed trajectory of the book's development, in which the poetry largely antedates the prose, this also suggests a provocative possibility, namely, that Israel's association with an entity called Judah is a relatively late development in its conceptualisation. This will sound familiar

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"Jeremiah 30–31 and King Josiah's Program of National Restoration and Religious Reform," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 569–583.

5   For the terminology of internally-displaced involuntary migrants, see C. A. Strine, "Is 'Exile' Enough? Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Need for a Taxonomy of Involuntary Migration," in this volume, and the brief theoretical discussion in D. Chatty and P. Marfleet, "Conceptual Problems in Forced Migration," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 32 (2013): 10–11.

6   125 times in MT, 88–91 times in LXX. The imprecision of the LXX numeration relates to variations in the manuscript traditions. The majority of the difference between MT and LXX relates to a particular fondness for the phrase "God of Israel" in MT, which is characteristic of MT in general but a particularly frequent plus in MT Jeremiah. Except for two appearances in the oracles against the nations, neither of which occur in the corresponding LXX text, the phrase is also exclusively confined to the book's prose.

to those who have argued that "Israel" was brought south from the northern kingdom, perhaps after of the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.E., and to those who have argued that Jeremiah's Israel poetry derives from an early period in the prophet's activity, in which he was prophesying to the former northern kingdom.[7] Closer inspection, however, suggests something quite different.

First, where Israel appears alone, it exhibits a strong association with the southern kingdom and, in particular, with Jerusalem. It therefore cannot be simply identified with or as the former northern kingdom. To this point we will return below. Second, the book attests to a change in ideas about what Judah is, over the course of the period covered by the book's development. The details of these changes are beyond the scope of the present article and will be addressed more thoroughly elsewhere.[8] In sum, the book attests

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[7] On the fall of Samaria as the catalyst for the appearance of Israel in Judah, see, e. g., I. Finkelstein, "Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology," *JSOT* 30 (2006): 259–285; I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Free Press, 2001); D. E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); W. M. Schniedewind, "Jerusalem, the Late Judaean Monarchy, and the Composition of Biblical Texts," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology* (ed. A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 375–393; W. M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); W. Schütte, "Wie wurde Juda israelitisiert?," *ZAW* 124 (2012): 52–72; W. Schütte, *Israels Exil in Juda: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der Schriftprophetie* (OBO 279; Fribourg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016). It is also assumed by the majority of studies of monarchic Judah and its texts. There are significant political, archaeological, and sociological objections that may be made to this proposal, but discussion of these is beyond the capacity of the present article.

The presence of Israel in Jeremiah is linked to the prophet's ministry to the former northern kingdom by, among others, P. C. Craigie, P. H. Kelley and J. F. Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1–25* (WBC 26; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1991); J. M. Henderson, "Jeremiah 2–10 as a Unified Literary Composition: Evidence of Dramatic Portrayal and Narrative Progression," in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. J. Goldingay; LHBOTS 459; London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 116–152; W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah (1–25)* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); and W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah (26–52)* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989); J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999); J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004); and J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21C; New York: Doubleday, 2004); W. H. Schmidt, *Das Buch Jeremia: Kapitel 1–20* (ATD 20; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); and W. H. Schmidt, *Das Buch Jeremia: Kapitel 21–52* (ATD 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

[8] C. L. Crouch, *Israel's Crisis, Judah's Cradle: Identities in the Crucible of Babylonian Hegemony* (SOTMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

to an originally territorial conceptualisation of Judah, in which the term functioned as the name for the state centred on Jerusalem. Whilst there are people who live *in* Judah, these people are not themselves *called* Judah. Judah is not a name of a people; it is the name of a territorial region and the state associated with it. This idea of Judah dominates the book, including the prose sections widely considered to constitute its later parts. For the majority of the period whose intellectual history the book of Jeremiah reflects, in other words, there is no evidence that people called themselves "Judah." Underscoring the dominance of this territorial idea of Judah are a few remarkable exceptions. In a small number of verses, Judah *does* appear to refer to people – not to a place where people live, but to the people themselves. When this occurs, it is almost invariably in the context of a close parallel between Israel and Judah, as though they were coterminous entities. These references almost invariably appear in the prose sections, including several verses widely identified as amongst the latest in the entire book. This suggests that both the change in the idea of Judah and its conflation with Israel occurred at a relatively late stage.[9] Contextual considerations suggest a date after the Babylonian conquest – relatively shortly thereafter for the use of Judah to refer to people and perhaps toward the end of the sixth century for Judah's conflation with Israel.[10]

The evidence of the book of Jeremiah is that that Israel's relationship with Judah undergoes a significant change in the course of the period covered by the book's development. For present purposes, the implication of these changes is that any attempt to get to grips with the biblical texts' understanding of Israel requires an awareness of the possibility that ideas about this entity altered over the course of its history, as well as a recognition that its relationship to other entities also changed. In the current context, this justifies attending first and foremost to the ideas about Israel offered by the book's poetic sections, which represent an earlier stage in the history of these ideas, prior to Israel's amalgamation with Judah.

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 9 A few passages imply that this transition, and the eventual equation of Judah with Israel, was not uncontested; note especially the allegory of the two sister-wives in chapter 3, in which Judah and Israel are similarly personified but Israel is the overtly-favoured sister, and the similar preference for Israel in Jer 9:25 (ET 9:26).

10 Evidence for a connection between the fall of Jerusalem and the development of an ethnic conceptualisation for Judah is clearest in Jeremiah 40–44; see Crouch, *Israel's Crisis*.

We return, then, to Israel, which appears 18 times in the poetry of Jeremiah 2–20. Of these, the majority (13) are concentrated in chapters 2–6.[11] Five times Israel stands alone in the nominative (2:3, 14; 10:16), vocative (4:1), or as the object of a preposition (2:31); much more frequently, it occurs as the final noun in a construct chain or in apposition to another noun. The most common phrase is "house of Israel" (2:4, 26; 3:20; 5:11, 15; 10:1); once this is "all the families of the house of Israel" (2:4). "Sons of Israel" (more fully, "the supplicant weeping of the sons of Israel," 3:21), "virgin Israel" (18:13), and "the remnant of Israel" (6:9) all appear once, as does "rebellious Israel" (3:12). Israel also occurs in titles for or statements about Yʜᴡʜ: "hope of Israel" (14:8; 17:13) and "salvation of Israel" (3:23). The texts which speak of Israel in these terms invariably describe it in human terms, using verbs ordinarily applied to human individuals or groups.[12] Israel is an active agent in these chapters, capable not merely of being acted upon, but of acting in the world and engaging with other entities, especially Yʜᴡʜ. (On occasion this goes so far as full-blown personification, as in the passage concerning "virgin Israel.") Throughout, Israel is an entity which does things in the way that human beings do. The extent of this characterisation and the range of verbs associated with Israel thus very strongly suggests Israel is conceived as a human entity or as a collective entity representing a group of human individuals. There are two particular aspects of this which are of interest. First, these texts characterise Israel as a people who share a common nar-

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11 Jeremiah 2:3, 4, 14, 26, 31; 3:12, 20, 21, 23; 4:1; 5:11, 15; 6:9; 10:1, 16; 14:8; 17:13; 18:13. Given the diachronic concerns of the present discussion it should be noted that, within this group, 10:1, 16 appear in an idol polemic which is generally considered to have close ties to similar material in Deutero-Isaiah, whilst the personified Rebellious Israel in 3:12 is entangled with the allegory of Yʜᴡʜ's sister-wives and, in particular, with calls to return from exile to Zion in 3:12–14; the passage thus presupposes Israel's experience of forced migration. The allegory proper is generally considered to be a later commentary on the poetry's preference for Israel, although the idea of Israel as an entity prone to rebellion against its god is reiterated so frequently elsewhere as to make the inclusion or exclusion of 3:12 in the present analysis largely immaterial. Nevertheless, little to no weight has been placed on these three verses in the following. It will also serve here to note that the inclusion of 5:11 in the present discussion, despite the fact that the line includes both "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah," is predicated on the fact that it appears in a poetic section (5:1–17) otherwise concerned only with Israel (thus 5:15); the inclusion of the house of Judah on the line renders it awkwardly lengthy (see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 183; W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986], 1:118; J. Schreiner, *Jeremiah 1–25,14* [Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1981], 42–43). These considerations suggest that Judah is an inclusive insertion in a passage which spoke only to Israel and which should be interpreted accordingly.

12 A fuller account may be found in Crouch, *Israel's Crisis*.

rative about their past as well as certain religious beliefs, and for whom the (perceived) genetic continuity of its constituent members is significant. Second, this group is described as social and economic elites who have a particular connection to the capital city of Jerusalem. We now turn to the details of these claims.

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In the book of Jeremiah Israel is conceived as an ethnic entity. Although there remains little agreement on how precisely ethnicity ought to be defined, there is a broad consensus that it constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon which gives particular prominence to ideas of cultural and genetic continuity amongst group members, even though such continuity may be equally imagined as real.[13] Jones, for example, describes ethnic groups as "*culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent.*"[14] This emphasis on genetic links amongst members of the group is probably the characteristic of ethnic identities to most frequently find its way into discussions of biblical texts, though it is by no means the only feature of such entities. Also pertinent to the present context are ethnic groups' tendencies to recount stories about the group's shared past, as well as the role of religious practices in the formation and solidification of shared identity.[15] Although they are by no means the

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13 For much fuller discussions of ethnic identity and ethnic change than can be undertaken here, see C. F. Keyes, "The Dialectics of Ethnic Change," in *Ethnic Change* (ed. C. F. Keyes; London: University of Washington Press, 1981), 3–30; M. Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996); S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997); and the classic essays in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Note also the theoretical distinction between ethnic identities, which tend to prioritise cultural aspects of group cohesion identity, and nationalist identities, which tend to emphasise political and territorial claims. See C. Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 211–239; A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); J. Hutchinson, "Ethnicity and Modern Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (2000): 651–670; E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); J. A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Anthropology, Culture and Society 1; London: Pluto, 1993); R. H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Greenwood, 1989).

14 Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84; italics original.

15 See especially A. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Routledge, 1969), who discusses these features at length; similar catalogues may be found in the literature previously noted.

only characteristics typical of ethnic identities, these three features serve as a useful shorthand for present purposes.[16]

Each of these features are recognisable in the depiction of Israel in Jeremiah. First, family language pervades the texts which speak of Israel, casting it as a group of people related by blood. We may note, for example, the extensive family language which appears in Jeremiah 2. There are references to the families of the house of Israel (v. 4), to the ancestors (v. 5), and to grandchildren (v. 9). Israel is described as children (3:22; 4:22; 5:7) and presumed to have children (2:30) and to have both sons and daughters (5:17). Jeremiah 3:21 laments the tears of the children of Israel.[17] This emphasis on family is underlined by a number of references to the house of Israel, depicting Israel as a great extended family.[18] Although reality is undoubtedly more complex, Israel imagines itself as the descendants of a single household, emphasising the interrelatedness and genetic and social continuity of Israel. This is a community of fathers, sons and daughters, and grandchildren. They are descended from a common house and collectively comprise all the families of the house of Israel (2:4). This family is referred to as a "people" and, in particular, as "my [Yʜᴡʜ's] people," reinforcing the evidence that Israel is conceived as an ethnic entity.[19] The divine epithet also underscores the community's shared religious traditions, which centre on Israel's shared worship of Yʜᴡʜ.[20] "Daughter of my people" (also "virgin daughter of my people"), which probably refers to the city of Jerusalem, appears as a term of particular pathos.[21]

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16 For a much fuller discussion, see C. L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (VTSup 162; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 99–104.

17 Cf. Jer 6:11, which refers to infants, and 6:21, which foresees the destruction of both parent and child together.

18 Jeremiah 2:4, 26; 3:20; 5:11, 15. See *DCH* 1:151; *TWAT* 1:637–638; G. H. Wilson, "בית (*bayit* I)," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (vol. 1; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 656.

19 Jeremiah 5:14, 21, 23; 6:13, 21; 14:10; 15:20. The lexica rightly observe that עם may be used to connote kinship or may be used somewhat more generally. That the term frequently denotes close family ties, however, is apparent from the conceptually related terminology offered by O'Connell, all of which is familial (R. H. O'Connell, "עַם," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* [vol. 3; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997], 428–429; cf. *DCH* 4:431, 448). In Jer. 5:9, 29 Israel is also described as גוי, a term more usually applied to non-Israelites. In context, it appears motivated by the analogy: the reference to "a nation such as this" (5:9, 29) is a prelude to a declaration that Yʜᴡʜ is bringing "a nation from far away" (5:15) to avenge its behaviour.

20 Jeremiah 2:11, 13, 31, 32; 4:22; 5:26, 31; 6:14, 27; 8:5, 7; 9:1; 15:7; 18:15.

21 Jeremiah 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21, 22, 23; 9:6 [ET 9:7]; "virgin daughter of my people," 14:17. On the association between Israel and Jerusalem, see below.

Second, Jeremiah's poetry reflects an assumption that its audience subscribes to an interrelated group of narratives about Israel's past. That is, it presumes a shared story about Israel's origins, which is retold as a reflection of Israel's present. These origins are first and foremost in the extraction of the ancestors out of Egypt by Yₕwₕ (2:6), which is closely related to the recollection of the wilderness (2:6) and culminates in Israel's arrival and residence in a fertile land (2:7; cf. 3:19).[22] The following material uses this shared story of Israel's origins as the basis from which to launch accusations about Israel's behaviour and the consequences thereof. Thus, for example, the demand in 2:14 regarding Israel's current status ("Is Israel a slave? Is he a servant of the house?") alludes to the tradition that Israel was extracted from slavery in Egypt. Similarly, the sexual metaphor for the relationship between Israel and Yₕwₕ relies on idealising the wilderness as a honeymoon period (2:2; cf. 2:31–32). Although rarely explicit, many of the descriptions of the coming devastation also seem to identify Israel's past as a key point of reference for the accusations now laid at Israel's door. Most crucially, the land is a gift from Yₕwₕ, which Yₕwₕ may revoke if Israel fails to care for it adequately.[23] The foregrounding of Israel's traditions in Jeremiah 2 highlights a shared collective memory and identity, providing the basis on which the subsequent accusations and judgments are founded. Like shared ancestry, whether these shared historical origins are real or imagined is largely beside the point.

Before moving on, Israel's shared religious traditions merit brief attention. The name of Israel appears in epithets for Yₕwₕ, as well as in a wide range of complaints about Israel's cultic and moral failings. Biblical scholars are understandably prone to focusing on the theological aspects of these texts, but it is useful also to recognise that the ideological and ritual aspects of religion often play a key role in the formation and perpetuation of ethnic identity.[24]

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22 Whilst addressing shared traditions, it is worth noting that Jer 2:8 implies a tradition about a shared law, though it does not indicate its origins; cf. 5:4–5, 8:8. Jeremiah 2:4 also invokes ancestral traditions associated with (the house of) Jacob; as usual in Jeremiah, Jacob appears to function as an alternative name for Israel (cf. 10:16; 30:10; 31:7, 10–11; 46:27–28; 51:19). The prevalence of Jacob in the book's later parts is a matter of interest but beyond the scope of the present discussion.

23 Initially Jer 2:7; then 2:15; 4:7, 20, 23–28; 6:8; 12:7–11; cf. also cf. 3:1, 2; 17:5–8.

24 See Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*. It is worth explicit acknowledgement here that human identities are invariably a messy and inextricable admixture of different affiliations and affinities. The purpose here is not to emphasise the ethnic character of Israel to the exclusion of, for example, its religious aspects; rather, it is to highlight features of Israel's character that explain its different manifestations in different contexts. Indeed, as we shall shortly observe, Israel's ethnic characteristics intersect and interplay with its social and political profile in provocative ways.

In particular, we should note that Israel is distinguished from all other groups by its ambition to be not only Yahwistic, but exclusively so. Israel is a peculiar people not merely because its particular deity is Yнwн – a feature of its religious belief that is distinctive enough in its own right – but also because Israelites are instructed to engage in a highly unusual, monolatrous worship practice.[25] The pervasiveness of the cultic concerns in the Jeremiah poetry highlights this particular significance of Yahwism.

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We may now turn our attention to two further features of this idea of Israel. First, Jeremiah's poetry associates Israel very closely with Jerusalem. Second, Israel comprises, or is at least associated very closely with, a social stratum that wields significant social and political power, who may justifiably be described as the city's elites or ruling class(es).

Israel's association, even identification, with the ruling classes is apparent in a number of passages. The opening accusations against Israel, for example, are directed toward those in authority: the priests, the rulers (lit. the shepherds), and the prophets (2:8; cf. 5:31; 6:13 // 8:10; 14:17). The next salvo demands whether "Israel is a slave, a house-born servant" (2:14). The rhetoric expects the answer "no," evoking the exodus tradition to argue that Israel is the antithesis of enslaved or lowly. Indeed, the greater the contrast, the greater the effect. At its most rhetorically effective, the verse suggests an Israel which has left its modest origins long behind – an Israel which now holds the reins of power in the land. The protestation in 2:20 seems to play on this imagery. Although Israel is neither a slave nor a house-born servant, he is still expected to serve Yнwн. The rhetoric of 2:34 ("on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the innocent poor") similarly suggests that the Israel to which the oracle is addressed are not themselves amongst those innocent poor. The accusations of 2:16–18 (cf. 2:36–37) also suggest that Israel constitutes an entity of significant power. Israel is condemned for its international political machinations, in terms which imply that Israel may be held directly responsible for these alliances. Israel, this suggests, is in the seat of power. Indeed, the house of Israel is described by 2:26 as comprising kings, officials, priests and prophets, in a shopping list of those in authority.[26]

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25 For further discussion of this point see Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 102–103, 115–132.

26 Jeremiah 2:28 ("you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah") is Judah's only appearance in the entire chapter. It is a notoriously vexed verse, not least because a longer version appears elsewhere (11:13) and LXX 2:28 reflects that long form, rather than the shorter version of MT 2:28. Whatever the exact verbiage, the sense is evident: Judah has as many gods as it has cities, or as Jerusalem has streets, namely, a lot. The

Worth attention is the relationship between these constituents of Israel and two common phrases involving Judah, namely, "the king(s) of Judah" and "the officials of Judah." Although kings and officials are thus linked to both Israel and Judah, these associations are distinctively presented. Whilst "the king(s) of Judah" and "the officials of Judah" appear quite frequently, they are never so described in relation to Israel, even though, as in 2:26, the entity known as Israel clearly includes kings and officials.[27] That is, these royal and official members of the Israelite community are never called "the king(s) of Israel" or "the officials of Israel." This suggests that, although Israelites could be kings or officials, their political authority was expressed not over an entity called Israel but rather over the entity called Judah. This coheres with the observations made to this point: Israel was an ethnic entity but not, at this time, a territorial one; Judah, by contrast, was a territorial entity but not, at this time, an ethnic one. Judah was the state and territorial object over which kings and officials presided; Israel was the community from which they came.

That Israel should be understood as comprising an elite group within Judahite society is reinforced elsewhere. In the only instance in which Yнwн is said to be the God of the powerless (5:4), for example, it is overtly declared that the powerless are quite unaware of this. Though the text seems to reflect an idea of Yahwistic worship by the whole population, it also indicates that this has gone unrecognised and unimplemented. Yahwistic practice, at least

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issue is whether Judah, addressed unusually in the vocative, refers to a territory called Judah, or if it refers to people called Judah. The entity in question has, it seems, both cities and gods. The "cities of Judah" are encountered repeatedly, in contexts which conceive of Judah in territorial and geographical terms. It appears especially frequently with Jerusalem (e.g., "in the cities of Judah and in the squares of Jerusalem," 7:17, 34 ["from"]; 11:6; 33:10 [40:10]; 44:6, 17, 21 [51:6, 17, 21]). The paralleling of Judah's cities with Jerusalem's streets by LXX affirms that it understood Judah in 2:28 geographically. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the section is of some interest. Verse 26 brings to the fore the looming shame of the house of Israel – the kings, princes, priests, and prophets. The shame of these the power players, however, will be "like the shame of the thief." The cause of their shame is the impotence of the other gods which they have worshipped, who will turn out to be nothing but stone and wood; their worshippers will be revealed as fools. It is precisely at this moment that Judah is invoked. Probably the verse has merely been brought across from 11:13; even so, it is curious that the Israel's association with Judah occurs precisely in the midst of a crisis of social standing: "like the shame of a thief who is found out, thus is the house of Israel shamed" (v. 26). The implication is that Israel, which holds itself above and apart from the general population of Judah (and, in religious terms, is [meant to be] distinguished by its exclusive worship of Yнwн) has lowered itself by adopting the worship practices of the common, non-Israelite population.

27 The sole occurrence of "king of Israel" is in 41:9, in the antiquarian aside about the Mizpah cistern.

on a conscious level, is restricted to the powerful, who are aware of their ob-
ligations but elect to ignore them (5:5). It is on account of these elites' failure
to uphold an exclusive Yahwism that disaster looms for the house of Israel
(5:6–7, 11). Indeed, Israel is about to be relieved of extensive wealth: crops,
bread, flocks, herds, vines and fig trees (5:17). They have "become great"
and "accumulated riches" (5:27), "grown fat" and "become sleek" (5:28) by
maintaining houses "full of deceit" (5:27) and trusting only in their own
material strength (5:17; cf. 2:15).

As the wielders of economic resources and political power, it is hardly
a surprise to find this upper-class Israel particularly associated with Jeru-
salem, the kingdom's principal city.[28] Alongside their persistent interest
in Israel, these chapters are intensely focussed on the fate of the southern
kingdom, especially Jerusalem. It is in Jerusalem that the addressees of this
material are located, and their fate constitutes its overriding concern.[29] Thus,
for example, 2:1 sets up the whole of the poetry as a proclamation that occurs
in the city. Jeremiah's condemnations are focused on Jerusalem's people by
5:1, whilst 6:1 adjures them to flee from it. Jeremiah 5:15 warns Israel of a
looming conqueror, again in a passage clearly concerned with the city's con-
quest. Jeremiah 6:9 puts Israel in the middle of the disaster about to befall
the city. The "daughter of my people" epithet for Jerusalem also associates
"my people," Israel, with the capital.

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In light of the foregoing, it seems appropriate to describe Israel in the poetry
of Jeremiah as an ethnic entity, characterised especially by an extensive use
of language emphasising genetic continuity and kinship amongst members
of the group. These members also share a common story of Israel's origins,
on the basis of which their present misbehaviour is condemned and their

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28 As noted above, the location of Israel in Jerusalem contradicts the common assertion
that the Israel of the Jeremiah poetry originally referred to inhabitants of the former
northern kingdom.

29 It is worth note here that the book of Jeremiah is unusually interested in the fate of the
general population, even if it does not form the focus of its accusations; this is reflected
in the frequency with which the attention paid to Jerusalem is complemented by a wider
lens that includes Judah (e.g., 4:5–8, 13–18). There is not, in other words, a focus on
Israelite Jerusalem which is absolute or exclusive; these chapters do sometimes take a
wider view. Usually this occurs in descriptions of the looming destruction, however,
and seems therefore likely to reflect a recognition that the actions of the elites in Jeru-
salem have implications for the state as a whole. Jeremiah 4:17 explicitly acknowledges
that Jerusalem's rebellion has brought about disaster for the cities of Judah. Jeremiah's
awareness of these implications contrasts with the book of Ezekiel, which has almost
no interest in the general population of the kingdom.

looming judgment assured. This shared origin story is also closely inter-
twined with Israel's distinctively exclusive devotion to Yhwh. Moreover,
the membership of this group seems to be dominated by well-connected
members of the kingdom's elites, who are possessed of significant wealth and
associated especially with the capital city of Jerusalem.

II Conceptualising Israel in Ezekiel

Though it responds to an historical moment more or less contemporary to
that represented by the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel addresses a
very different audience. Unlike Jeremiah, addressing an audience in Jeru-
salem, Ezekiel speaks to a community whose members have been forcibly
uprooted from Judah, deported to Babylonia, and settled in the ancient
equivalent of a refugee camp.[30] The core of the book appears to address
this audience in the relatively immediate aftermath of the deportations of
597 B.C.E., with the book's dated oracles concentrated around 586 B.C.E.[31]
Although the book has been the object of various editorial processes, this
is generally less convoluted than that to which the book of Jeremiah was
subjected. Indeed, Ezekiel remains widely recognised as perhaps the most
theologically and stylistically coherent of any of the prophetic books. There
are, as is to be expected, a variety of proposals concerning its transmis-
sion history, with various conclusions concerning the redactional layers
involved. Our focus will be on chapters 1–24, which address the theological
and practical crises arising in the aftermath of the deportations of 597 B.C.E.
This allows us to hone in on the immediate consequences of these chang-
ing ideas about Israel and to highlight shifts triggered most directly by this
experience.[32]

   The book undoubtedly also reveals later developments in ideas about Is-
rael, many of which are fascinating and merit attention in their own right.
As in Jeremiah, many of these differences occur in patterns that mirror
common proposals about the book's formation. As only one example, there
is a striking change in the language used to describe Israel's relationship to

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30   See Strine, "Is 'Exile' Enough?," in this volume.

31   For discussion see W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 1* (BKAT 13/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirch-
      ener Verlag, 1969), 12–15.

32   There are, of course, various redactional issues that arise in these chapters. Very rarely,
      however, do these issues have significant implications for our discussion of ideas about
      Israel in the immediate aftermath of the deportations. Specific redactional issues will
      therefore be addressed in the notes as they arise.

the land, as the "dirt of Israel" (אדמת ישראל) used throughout most of the book suddenly vanishes, replaced by references simply to "the land" (הארץ). As has been widely recognised, Ezekiel 40 marks a new beginning, and this is reflected in its distinct notions of what Israel is and how it relates to various places and people. Similarly, the sign-act of the two sticks in 37:15–22 engages in a convoluted attempt to articulate the proper relationships between Judah and Joseph, both of which are somehow related to Israel. Whatever the passage is trying to communicate, its idea of Israel differs markedly from the preceding chapters. Because I address these later developments elsewhere, we shall here try to avoid muddying the conceptual waters by restricting our focus to Ezekiel 1–24.[33]

<div align="center">*</div>

Israel is named 89 times in Ezekiel 1–24.[34] Only four times is this in isolation: once in the vocative (13:4) and three times as the object of a preposition, twice with reference to proverbial sayings (12:23; 18:3), and once in reference to the sojourner (14:7). Again, the overwhelming majority are *nomen rectum* in a construct chain, most commonly "the house of Israel."[35] Several times this is part of a longer phrase, such as "all the house of Israel" (3:7; 5:4; 11:15; 12:10; 20:40), "the iniquity of the house of Israel" (4:4, 5; 9:9), "(all) the dung-heaps of the house of Israel" (8:10; 18:6, 15), or "all the evil abomina-

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33 Crouch, *Israel's Crisis*.

34 Ezekiel 2:3; 3:1, 4, 5, 7 (twice), 17; 4:3–5, 13; 5:4; 6:2, 3, 5, 11; 7:2 [LXX 7:1]; 8:4, 6, 10, 11, 12; 9:3, 8, 9; 10:19, 20; 11:5, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 22; 12:6, 9, 10, 19, 22, 23, 24, 27; 13:2, 4, 5, 9 (twice), 16; 14:1, 4, 5, 6, 7 (twice), 9, 11; 17:2, 23; 18:2, 3, 6, 15, 25, 29 (twice), 30, 31; 19:1, 9; 20:1, 3, 5, 13, 27, 30, 31, 38, 39, 40 (twice), 42, 44; 21:7, 8, 17, 30 [ET 21:2, 3, 12, 25]; 22:6, 18; 24:21. The most prominent redactional issue involves the back end of ch. 20, often thought to be developing material that originally ended around v. 31. Even Greenberg admits to "a disjointedness in the oracle that throws doubt on its unity" (*Ezekiel 1–20* [AB 22; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983], 377). There is little in these verses that alter the conclusions drawn from the rest of Ezekiel 1–24. Some vocabulary changes slightly, but the only significant differences are the idea that Yнwн "rules" over Israel (v. 33) and a more sustained – though not unparalleled – attention to the future. Anticipating the discussion below, we might observe that a reference to the future in the historical vision of a community of involuntary migrants would not be unussual; see L. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (London: University of Chicago, 1995), 193. Similar concerns have been raised with reference to some of the more positive material in, e. g., 11:14–21. Again, however, there is little to distinguish Israel here from Israel in chapters 1–24 more broadly.

35 Ezekiel 3:1, 4, 5, 7 (twice), 17; 4:3, 4, 5; 5:4; 6:11; 8:6, 10, 11, 12; 11:5, 15; 12:6, 9, 10, 24, 27; 13:5, 9; 14:4, 5, 6, 7, 11; 17:2; 18:25, 29 (twice); 20:13 (also vv. 27, 30, 31, 39, 40, 44); 22:18; 24:11. LXX 2:3 has πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ισραηλ for MT בני ישראל.

tions of the house of Israel" (6:11).[36] The community's senior members are "the elders of Israel" (14:1; 20:1, 3) or "the elders of the house of Israel" (8:11, 12; [20:3]). The "prophets of Israel" (13:2, 16) will not be recorded in "the writing of the house of Israel" (13:9) but will be destroyed from the midst of "my people, Israel" (14:9). As the judgment oracles approach their climax, "the prince(s) of Israel" also make an appearance.[37] The "sons of Israel" are unusual in MT; their greater prevalence in LXX perhaps suggests a change in preferred terminology over time.[38] One instance concerns "the corpses of the sons of Israel" (6:5). Devastation will extend to "(all) the remnant of Israel" (9:8; 11:13). "Each man from the house of Israel" occurs twice (14:4, 7). "God of Israel" is much less prevalent than in Jeremiah; save once, it is always a reference to "the glory of the God of Israel."[39] A particularly distinctive group of phrases in Ezekiel relate to Israel's relationship with its homeland: Ezekiel speaks of "the hill country of Israel" (6:2, 3; 19:9), "the high hill of Israel" (17:23; 20:40), "the homeland of Israel"[40] and "the boundary of Israel" (11:10, 11).[41]

Ezekiel 1–24 characterises Israel as a human entity which acts and is acted upon, even more than the Jeremiah poetry. It depicts Israel as sharing a story of its origins in an exodus from Egypt, as part of much more pervasive interest in Israel's history, and reflects an expectation of Israel's participation in a substantial complex of religious tradition. Israel is again depicted as an extended family. It is also made up of social and economic elites (or, rather, those who were elites in Jerusalem, although they may not be in Babylonia). The connection to Jerusalem is particularly pronounced and is combined with extensive references to and a unique language for Israel's homeland. We examine each of these aspects of Israel in turn.

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36 On 9:9, see below.

37 Ezekiel 19:1; 21:17, 25 [ET 21:12, 25]; 22:6.

38 Ezekiel 2:3; [3:1]; [4:3]; 4:13; 6:5; [12:24]. Brackets indicate LXX ὁ υἱός Ισραηλ in lieu of MT בית ישראל.

39 Ezekiel 8:4; 9:3; 10:19; 11:22; the exception is 10:20, with respect to which it is perhaps relevant that chapter 10 has sometimes been seen as an expansion of the temple vision.

40 Ezekiel 7:2 [7:1]; 11:17; 12:19, 22; 13:9; 18:2; 21:7, 8 [ET 21:2, 3]; also 20:38, 42.

41 אדמת ישראל is distinct from ארץ ישראל, which occurs once in the oracle against Tyre, in an apparent reference to the former northern kingdom (27:17), and twice in the restoration oracles in chapters 40–48 (40:2; 47:18). The translation "homeland of Israel" resists the tendency to conflate the two phrases into a single "land of Israel" and attempts to convey the earthiness that seems intended. It could also be rendered "dirt of Israel" or "earth of Israel."

As in Jeremiah, genetic language pervades Ezekiel 1–24, casting Israel as a sprawling family of extended relations, referred to collectively as "the house of Israel"[42] or, more occasionally, "the sons of Israel."[43] There are also frequent references to relationships amongst the current generation and its "sons" and "fathers." Thus, for example, Ezekiel's commissioning observes that the current rebellion against Yhwh is part of a longer history of ancestral transgression (2:3), whilst Israel's punishment is justified in Ezekiel 20 by the intergenerational nature of its offences, as the sins of the fathers (20:4, 18, 24, 27, 30, 36, 42) have been imitated by the sons (20:18, 21, 31).[44] The cultural traits of the group have been well taught and well learnt; unfortunately, these practices were the wrong ones. The extended discussion in Ezekiel 18 of a proverb used in the homeland of Israel also concerns intergenerational punishment. The house of Israel in Babylonia is told that its sons and daughters left behind will die (24:21, 25). Ezekiel speaks to the "sons" (2:4), "sons of your people" (3:11), and "daughters of your people" (13:17). Again, whatever the complexities of this reality, Israel imagines itself as the sons and daughters of a single ancestral house.

Ezekiel 1–24 also depicts Israel as a "people" and as "my [Yhwh's] people."[45] That an errant "man of Israel" is cut off from "my people" in 14:8 (cf. 14:9) confirms that Yhwh's people is Israel, as does the declaration that the no-longer-errant "house of Israel" will be Yhwh's "people" in 14:11. The people also constitute Ezekiel's audience in 24:18, 19. Other instances of Israel as a people anticipate our discussion of Israel's socio-economic status. The "people of the land" are listed with the king and prince, all of whom will brought low by Yhwh (7:27). The rhetoric implies that these "people of the land" are elites. Ezekiel later speaks to the people of the land with words addressing "the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the homeland of Israel" (12:19). Together with a reference to inhabited cities laid waste (v. 20), this suggests an Israelite elite governing the countryside from the major cities. They are also the perpetrators of oppression, extortion, and wrongful treatment of the poor, needy, and alien (22:29). "My people" are closely identified with

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42 Ezekiel [2:3]; 3:1, 4, 5, 7 (twice), 17; 4:3, 4, 5; 5:4; 6:11; 8:6, 10, 11, 12; 11:5, 15; 12:6, 9, 10, 24, 27; 13:5, 9; 14:4, 5, 6, 7, 11; 17:2; 18:25, 29 (twice); 20:13, 27, 30, 31, 39, 40, 44; 22:18; 24:11.

43 Ezekiel 2:3; [3:1]; [4:3]; 4:13; 6:5; [12:24].

44 There are also references to sons, daughters, fathers, mother, sisters, and daughters-in-law of Jerusalem in, e. g., 5:10; 22:7–11 and chapters 16; 18 and 23. Although these are probably Israelites, given the close association between Israel and Jerusalem, these passages do not make this explicit.

45 Ezekiel 13:10, 18, 19 (twice), 21, 23, cf. 13:17, where it becomes a pejorative(?) "your people."

the "princes of Israel" (21:12), whilst the "officials of the people" (11:1), who have privileges of temple access, and the "council of my [Yʜwʜ's] people" (13:9) breath similarly rarefied air.

Ezekiel 1–24 expects its audience to subscribe to a shared story of Israel's past. This is most obvious in Ezekiel 20, in which Israel's ethnogenesis is traced to the exodus from Egypt (20:5–10). In the wilderness Yʜwʜ provided Israel with unique instructions – statutes, ordinances, and Sabbaths (20:10–26).[46] Despite several false starts – a depiction of the past whose unrelenting negativity is unique to Ezekiel – Israel eventually enters the land. Although this is only made explicit in 20:28 (a likely annotation), the promise of exile in 20:23–24 presupposes it. As in Jeremiah, this shared story about Israel's origins forms the basis for condemnations of its behaviour. The fate of the house of Israel is tied to its failure to act as Israel ought to act, especially in cultic matters ("the dung-heaps of Egypt they did not forsake … they walked not in my statutes … they profaned my Sabbaths … they poured out libations there," 20:8, 13, 21, 28, *et passim*). Israel's distinguishing feature is its relationship to Yʜwʜ (20:7). Its failure to maintain this relationship and its associated worship practices threatens again and again to bring about Israel's end. This is reflected in the punishment meted out for Israel's failure: it will be dispersed amongst the nations, undoing of the extraction from Egypt which made it a people in the first place.

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The foregoing has inevitably already insinuated Israel's association with Jerusalem, which is especially pronounced in Ezekiel 1–24. This is more or less explicit throughout; the city and its inhabitants are the focus of a reiterative prophetic diatribe directed at "the house of Israel" or variations thereof. To pick out a few passages – Jerusalem is equated with and is the heart of the Israelite homeland (12:19; 21:2–3) and the princes of Israel are located in the city (21:30; 22:6, cf. 12:10), as are its elders (8:11–12). "Israel's high hill" is Jerusalem and its royal and cultic complexes (17:23; 20:40). Israel's abominations and idols are concentrated in Jerusalem (8:6–10). The house of Israel now in Babylonia have family still in Jerusalem; they too were from there (24:21). The consistent description of the exiles as the house of Israel and their clear origins in Jerusalem underscore this intimate association. Some of the house of Israel still remain in the city (9:8; 12:1–16, esp. v. 10).[47]

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46 Note that this shared legal heritage is presumed by the discussion in chapter 18.
47 Ezekiel 9:9 is an exceedingly rare mention of Judah in the book of Ezekiel. In the present context it is interesting to note the contrast between Ezekiel's query about the extent of Yʜwʜ's destruction (9:8), which concerns only Jerusalem and refers only to the house

Indeed, the house of Israel is being gathered to Jerusalem for punishment (22:18–19) – implying the existence of Israelites further afield but so essentially tied to the city that their destruction must occur there. The expectation that Israel *ought* to be judged in Jerusalem is a prerequisite for the subversion of these expectations in 11:5–11.[48] The sign-act depicting the siege of Jerusalem is also called a sign for the house of Israel (4:1–3, cf. 5:1–4).[49]

Israel's association with Jerusalem reinforces our suspicion that it comprises, or is at least associated closely with, a social stratum that wields significant power. This is explicit in a number of passages. Israel conducts its worship in the flagship royal cultic complex, the Jerusalem temple (Ezekiel 8–11). It has both oral (12:23; 17:2; 18:3) and written (13:9) traditions and, without becoming bogged down in the arguments over the extent of sixth century literacy, the latter pushes Israel's demographic odds toward the upper echelons. Israel's leaders are "princes of Israel" and the allegory about disloyal kings is addressed to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 17). Israel is condemned for its abuse of power (Ezekiel 22); it and its princes are possessed of the power of life and death (11:6; 22:6). The book's unrelenting focus on Jerusalem belies an elite bias, ignoring the rest of the country and its inhabitants. The demographics of Babylonian deportation practices mean that the house of Israel in Babylonia, at least, will have been Jerusalem's elites, creamed off in an attempt to thwart further rebellion.[50]

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Ezekiel 1–24 underscores the conclusions drawn from the poetry of Jeremiah, namely, that Israel is an ethnic entity that conceives of itself as an extended family, with a shared story of its origins in Egypt. Their fate is

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of Israel, and Yнwн's answer (9:9), which mentions Judah as well as the house of Israel, in a condemnation of both city and countryside. The phrasing suggests that Yнwн's emphasis on the extent of the destruction requires an explicit declaration that it extends to Judah, not merely to the house of Israel / Jerusalem.

48 The passage also implies that not all who live in Jerusalem are Israelites, though this is hardly surprising. Cf. Ezek. 11:15, which appears to reflect a crisis in who constitutes the true house of Israel, after the community was divided by deportation.

49 On the signification of the house of Israel and the house of Judah in the sign-act which follows, see C. L. Crouch, "Ezekiel's Immobility and the Meaning of 'the House of Judah' in Ezekiel 4," *JSOT* 44 (2019): forthcoming.

50 The most exhaustive analysis of Mesopotamian deportation practices remains B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979), especially 43–45; on Babylonian practice see O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 82–84; A. Faust, "Deportation and Demography in Sixth-Century B. C. E. Judah," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (ed. B. E. Kelle, F. R. Ames, and J. L. Wright; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 91–103.

linked to that story and to its implications for their shared life together, most explicitly by Ezek 20. Israel is still characterised by its exclusive devotion to Yʜwʜ, with its failures in this regard perceived as the principal cause of its destruction. Although the house of Israel has been riven in two by the deportations to Babylonia, it maintains its special connection to Jerusalem, where its members comprised the kingdom's elites.

III Involuntary Migration and Ezekiel's Israel

Two differences in Israel's presentation in these corpora are particularly pronounced. First, Ezekiel 1–24 places a much greater emphasis on narratives about Israel's past than does the Jeremiah poetry. This is most obvious, of course, in Ezekiel 20, a long and repetitive chapter devoted to a recitation of Israel's origins in Egypt and its subsequent failures to maintain the distinctively Yahwistic worship arising from those origins.[51] As a relentless account of Israel's sins from the very moment of its conception, the chapter forms the *pièce de résistance* of Ezekiel's argument that Israel's punishment is deserved. Although far less systematic, numerous other passages refer to the inheritance of Israel's sins from its fathers and the persistence of its crimes from generation to generation.

Second, Ezekiel 1–24 exhibits an explicit and pronounced interest in the homeland to which Israel is attached and from which some of its number have been excised. This is most apparent from a peculiar group of phrases concerning the land: "the hill country of Israel" (הר ישראל), "the high hill of Israel" (הר מרום ישראל), "the homeland of Israel" (אדמת ישראל) and "the boundary of Israel" (גבול ישראל). Almost all of these are unique to Ezekiel, and none occur in Jeremiah.

In this final section, these particular emphases of Ezekiel 1–24 will be considered in the light of recent research on involuntary migration. As C. A. Strine explains, the use of comparative research is undertaken insofar as it is heuristically useful, not as a strict framework into which the biblical texts should be forced.[52] Rather, comparative research draws our attention

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51 Chapters 16 and 23 are also substantial historical synopses and may also be understood as a reflection of this historicising outlook. Neither of these chapters, however, refers explicitly to Israel; they refer to capital cities (Jerusalem, Samaria, Sodom). In light of the close association between Israel and Jerusalem, these criticisms of Jerusalem should probably be read as criticisms of the city's Israelite elites; that this is implied rather than explicit probably relates to the name's origins and the confusion which would arise in the comparative context.

52 Strine, "Is Exile Enough?," in this volume..

to ways in which the human experience of Israel's involuntary migration to Babylonia may mirror the human experience of involuntary migration at other times and in other places. It encourages us to notice different things about the biblical texts and to explore new ways of thinking about them.

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Although all the elements of Ezekiel's story about Israel's past may be found in Jeremiah, Israel's story sits much more lightly to its context in Jeremiah. It is mentioned briefly at the beginning, but thereafter largely assumed. In Ezekiel, by contrast, Israel's past is a major focus. Compared to Jeremiah, this is a difference of degree, rather than kind.

   The extent to which Ezekiel emphasises Israel's past, as well as its unrelentingly negative portrayal of this history, resonates with stories told by other involuntary migrants about their own pasts. This historicising tendency seems to be especially prominent in (although by no means exclusive to) the kind of isolated migrant camps in which Ezekiel's Israel seems to have been located at Chebar.[53] These migrants' story-telling serves diverse functions. In the context of social, political, and economic upheaval, such stories help to hold a community together – they provide a shared point of reference for members of the community by reminding them of their shared history. For a community suffering significant levels of chaos and institutional disruption, the shared story (re-)binds the group together by reminding its members of what they have in common. The Babylonian invasions triggered major changes, and ultimately the complete breakdown, of major social and political institutions in Judah and Jerusalem. This is most catastrophically the case in the destruction of the city in 586 B.C.E., but for those deported with Ezekiel to Babylonia the breakdown begins already in 597 B.C.E. Though the major national institutional structures of court and temple staggered on for a little while longer in Jerusalem, their role in shared community life has already been destroyed for the deportees who no longer have access to them. In the absence of these concrete reminders of shared community, stories rise up to fill the gap.

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53 See Malkki, *Purity and Exile*. Chatty argues that this historicising tendency is prevalent even amongst non-camp migrants, though she implicitly acknowledges that this and related mythologizing is more intense in the camps (D. Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 297). We note, of course, that not all of the deportees from Jerusalem were sent to ethnic enclaves; the royal family, at the very least, was sent to Babylon. As we lack the perspective of those urban deportees, however, we are obliged to attend here to the perspective of the deportees at Chebar, as provided by Ezekiel.

History-telling is meaning-making. Stories about the past also provide an explanation of the present – about how and why the refugees' lives came to be as they are. One of the consequences of massive trauma is that it impinges on both individuals' and groups' ability to make sense of their surroundings. Story-telling is a form of reconstructing meaning: it attempts to explain, in the face of overwhelming trauma, the bare fact of survival.[54] Why are those who have made it to Chebar still alive, when others have died? Why are they in Babylonia, when others are still in Jerusalem? What are they living for? Ezekiel serves as an example: though formerly a priest, his routine and responsibilities – along with the meaning they provided – have been stripped away. How does a priest function with no temple? What purpose does he have in a foreign land?[55] Ezekiel's disorientation would have been mirrored in the lives of countless others. The narration of history amongst forced migrants constitutes an effort to reconstruct this world turned upside down. Indeed, C. Caruth argues that the very attempt to speak of a traumatic event is to attempt "to move away from the experience of shock by reintegrating it into a stable understanding."[56] Story-telling works to construct "categorical schemata and thematic configurations that were relevant and meaningful in confronting both the past … and the pragmatics of everyday life in the refugee camp."[57] Narrating the past, in other words, functions as an explanation of how the group reached its present situation, as well as a reflection on how its members ought to live now.

Especially prominent in migrants' story-telling is the aetiological function of narratives that bridge the gap between the past and the present. As L. Malkki has argued, story-telling amongst forced migrants goes

far beyond merely recording events. It represented, not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral terms.[58]

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54 See, among many others, C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (New Perspectives on the Past; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

55 On the implications of exile for Ezekiel's priestly identity see A. Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

56 C. Caruth, "Recapturing the Past: Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (ed. C. Caruth; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 154, with reference to K. Newmark, "Traumatic Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and the Shock of Laughter," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (ed. C. Caruth; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 236–255.

57 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 55.

58 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 54.

Ezekiel's narration of the past in explicitly moral terms is therefore typical: the sins of the past are invoked to explain the crisis of the present. By invoking Israel's shared story about its origins in Egypt and subsequent relations with Yhwh, Ezekiel 20 uses the past to explain the present, emphasising Israel's shared guilt and the causal connection between their sins and their present predicament. As L. Allen puts it, the "spores of doom sown long ago were now spawning their terrible harvest."[59]

Especially resonant with Ezekiel's account is Malkki's observation of a tendency to construct these explanatory narratives in terms of the dangers of assimilation, submission to which has brought about the current disaster. Thus, she writes of a "mythico-historical chain of progressively greater impurity and danger," in which the causes of the disastrous present are all "in one manner or another linked with the dangers of assimilation. The danger lay in the careless denial of the importance of categories and in their willful mixing."[60] Ezekiel 20 places enormous emphasis on the danger posed by Israel's assimilatory tendencies. These temptations recur in every generation. The chapter's litany of past failures to repudiate the worship of other gods (20:7–8, 16, 18, 24, 30–31) and observe the Sabbath (20:13, 16, 21, 24) warn of the consequences for those who pursue such abominations in the present. This concern with heterodox religious practices as the cause of Israel's destruction is, of course, also characteristic of Ezekiel as whole. In Ezekiel 20, Israel's failure to uphold its peculiar attachment to Yhwh is the centrepiece in a "chain of progressively greater impurity and danger" that, by pointing toward Israel's past, provides the explanatory key to Israel's present.

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This brings us to Ezekiel 1–24's particular emphasis on the homeland, from which Israel's history of sin has taken it away. This is most immediately apparent in phrases with "dirty" significance: the "hill country of Israel" (6:2, 3; 19:9), the "high hill of Israel" (17:23; 20:40), the "border" or "territory of Israel" (11:10, 11), and the "homeland of Israel."[61] These are a regular feature of chapters 1–24. That they represent a particular concern is reiterated by the fact that most of them are peculiar to Ezekiel.[62] Here again, however, we have a difference in emphasis, rather than a wholly new departure. The idea of an Israelite homeland is implied in the Jeremiah poetry – there, too, the

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59 L. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Dallas: Word, 1994), 9.
60 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 216.
61 Ezekiel 7:2 [LXX 7:1]; 11:17; 12:19, 22; 13:9; 18:2; 20:38, 42; 21:7, 8 [ET 21:2, 3].
62 The only one of these phrases to occur outside the book of Ezekiel is גבול ישראל, which appears in Jdg 19:29; 1 Sam 11:3, 7; 27:1; 1 Kgs 1:3; 2 Kgs 10:32; 14:25; and 1 Chr 21:12.

exodus culminates in entry into the promised land. Yet in Ezekiel 1–24 the land serves as a point of persistent reference. Like Ezekiel's foregrounding of Israel's history, this accentuated attention to the homeland resonates with the experience of other involuntary migrants.[63]

The physical upheaval of involuntary migration poses particular challenges to individual and community identities. Whether we are aware of it or not, our sense of self and our sense of community is knit into the fabric of our physical surroundings. Torn away from familiar places and thrown into unfamiliar ones, our sense of self threatens to destabilise. One way in which individuals and communities counteract this is to emphasise a persistent connection to the place where they came from. These memories of – and claims on – the homeland function as "symbolic anchors" for those who have been uprooted from their territorial moorings.[64] As long as the land is there, these memories imply, the people rooted in it continue to exist. With its physical intransigence, memories of, references to and claims on the land work as a symbol of communal continuity. Those who were once united by their shared residence in a particular geographical space remain united by their shared attachment to that place, even if they themselves are no longer in it. In a substantial analysis of forced displacements in the Middle East over several centuries, D. Chatty has observed that the shared memory of the "'homeland' is one of the most powerful unifying symbols for the dispossessed."[65] In lieu of existence in the land, the community exists in shared reference to the land.[66]

This discourse of homeland is very often intensely visceral. Faced with dispossession and dislocation, displaced communities will almost literally attempt to (re-)root themselves through references to the soil of the homeland.[67] The most common of Ezekiel's distinctive land terminology, "the homeland of Israel," epitomises this tendency perfectly: this is literally Israel's *dirt* – the earth and soil to which it lays claim. Indeed, the intensity of these claims on the homeland are especially apparent in the passages in which the phrase is used: they comprise the repeated assertions of the

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63 See especially M. Al-Rasheed, "The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 7 (1994): 199–219; Malkki, *Purity and Exile*.

64 Chatty, *Displacement*, 25.

65 Chatty, *Displacement*, 25.

66 Al-Rasheed, "The Myth of Return," 201–202, 211. See also the literature cited by Mark Leuchter, "A Resident Alien in Transit: Exile, Adaptation and Geomythology in the Jeremiah Narratives," in this volume.

67 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 24, 29, 34; M. R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 8; Chatty, *Displacement*, 34.

deportees' claims to this land, together with promises to evict those not worthy of membership in the community from it. This discourse of land is this intensely caught up in Ezekiel's contention that the deportees represent the chosen people of Yʜwʜ. Despite its actual non-possession in the interim, these claims to Israel's homeland provide a crucial kind of stability, in stark contrast to the tumultuous changes which have arisen in and result from the migratory experience itself. Again, we must imagine the implications of the Babylonian deportations for everyday lives. How do these people live, whose entire mode of existence has collapsed? Appealing to the physical space in which the community's traditions originated becomes a means of sustaining "the continuity of their social and cultural inventory," even as they are forced to find an interim mode of existence in exile.[68]

In their absence, involuntary migrants "invent homes and home-lands … through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit."[69] That Ezekiel would emphasise the Babylonian community's ongoing connection to the homeland – even to the point of coining several neologisms for the purpose – is entirely in keeping with this wider phenomenon.

Conclusions

This article has drawn attention to certain differences in the characterisation of Israel in the poetry of Jeremiah and the judgement oracles of Ezekiel. Whilst both conceive of Israel as an ethnic entity, comprised especially of elites and associated particularly with the city of Jerusalem, Ezekiel demonstrated a much stronger interest in Israel's past history and a much more sustained focus on the homeland. We have argued that these issues are notably resonant with the concerns of other involuntary migrants and likely relate to the involuntary migrant experience of the authors and audiences of Ezekiel. In particular, they may be understood as attempts to explain the devastation of Jerusalem and the deportation of its inhabitants in terms of Israel's history, linking its sinful past to its disastrous present with special at-

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68 R. Zetter, "Reconceptualizing the Myth of Return: Continuity and Transition amongst the Greek-Cypriot Refugees of 1974," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12 (1999): 8, cf. M. K. Dorai, "The Meaning of Homeland for the Palestinian Diaspora," in *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home* (ed. N. Al-Ali and K. Koser; Transnationalism; London: Routledge, 2004), 92; cf. Swedenburg, "Popular Memory," 168, with reference to P. Wright, *On Living in An Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985), 95.

69 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 24.

tention to the dangers of assimilation, and to reiterate the stability of Israel's existence by rooting it to its Levantine homeland. Although this is only one small step toward a much more sustained analysis, it suggests Israel and the way in which it was described could change in response to specific social, political, or economic stimuli. This is a potentially rich avenue for future study, and recent research in the social sciences offers a fruitful lens through which these changes may be understood.

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