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Migration and the Prophetic Imagination

C. L. Crouch

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew Scriptures are the story of migrants. Adam and Eve are evicted by their landlord (Gen 3). Cain wanders the earth in search of asylum (Gen 4).[1] Noah and his family flee climate change (Gen 6–9). The ancestral narratives (Gen 12–50) begin with God's instruction to Abram to "leave your country and your father's house" (Gen 12:1), setting the stage for four generations of migrations due to famine (Gen 12; 26; 42–23), civil conflict (Gen 27), and human trafficking (Gen 37).[2] The Hebrews leave economic exploitation and attempted genocide in Egypt (Exodus) and spend decades as stateless persons (Exodus–Numbers). After settling in the Cisjordan, cultural inflexibility presents difficulties for life alongside the host population (Deuteronomy–Judges). David migrates repeatedly to evade threats to his life (1 Sam 19–24; 27; 2 Sam 15–19); his ancestresses Ruth and Naomi were both migrants (Ruth).[3] Political instability and military invasions trigger refugee flight and forced displacement from the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 17), followed by similar migrations from the southern kingdom of

1. González Holguin, *Cain, Abel, and Politics*.

2. Strine, *Get Thee Out*; Southwood and Strine, eds., "Involuntary Migration and Joseph Narrative."

3. Strine, "Fear and Loathing in the Levant"; Flanders, "'Without Ruth.'"

Judah (2 Kgs 23–25). Some of the descendants of the population deported to Babylonia eventually return to the homeland (Ezra–Nehemiah).[4] Much of the latest literature in the Hebrew Scriptures directly addresses the challenges of life in diaspora (Esther, Daniel, Gen 37–50).

The prophetic books are especially attentive to the concerns of migrants. Amos is a Judahite from Tekoa who migrates to the environs of Samaria in pursuit of prophetic work, where he warns his host population of their own looming deportation (Amos 4–7). Hosea, though not himself a migrant (as far as we know), also warns the people that they will be expelled from their homeland as a result of political and cultural issues (Hos 8–11). Ezekiel speaks from the experience of those deported from Jerusalem to rural Babylonia in the sixth century BCE, lamenting the loss of the homeland and attempting to explain why such a catastrophe has occurred. Jeremiah responds to this and to subsequent waves of forced migration to Babylonia, as well as to the internal displacements that characterized the experience of those remaining in the homeland. Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55) seeks to persuade those who have grown up in a foreign land to migrate back to their parents' and grandparents' traditional homeland, even though they have never seen it themselves.

The Hebrew Scriptures preserve the story of God's migrant people: a story written by migrants, for migrants, and about migration.[5] The pervasiveness of migration in the Hebrew Scriptures not only affirms the ongoing significance of migration for Christian life and practice, but brings to the fore the power of migratory experiences as catalysts of personally and communally transformative theology. To recognize the recurring role of migration in the story of God's people is to admit not only that the Old Testament is indispensable to a Christian theology of migration in the twenty-first century, but to recognize that experiences of migration have stood at the heart of the theological project for more than three millennia.

The Hebrew Scriptures' extended attention to stories of and issues arising from migration means that they preserve a variety of voices on the subject. This polyphonic chorus acknowledges many different forms of migration, as well as a wide range of possible theological responses to it. A contemporary theology of migration must likewise recognize the diversity of modern migratory experiences, together with the legitimacy of a wide range of individual and collective responses to these experiences. The range of perspectives offered by the prophets, in particular, model theological innovation, adaptation, and flexibility in rapidly and radically changing

4. Southwood, *Ethnicity and Mixed Marriage Crisis*.

5. Strine, "Migration, Dual Identity, and Integration," 106.

circumstances. The following attends especially to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the two prophetic books that respond to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Judahite kingdom in the sixth century BCE. These events triggered multiple instances of displacement, to which these books respond in complex ways.

JEREMIAH

The book of Jeremiah preserves a multilayered collection of prophetic material, produced in response to the changing social, political, and theological circumstances that accompanied decades of repeated displacements. The fluidity of the Jeremiah traditions—this "book" is preserved in two different versions, both with canonical status in the Christian churches—gives the impression that this literature represents theological work in progress.[6] Each version captures the tradition at a different moment and, together, they convey the extent to which rapidly shifting circumstances required an ongoing commitment to theological creativity.

Though it is not often observed, Jeremiah is one of the most robust scriptural witnesses to displacement, depicting the repeated migrations of the population of Judah in the run-up to and in the aftermath of the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem in 586 BCE.[7] The final decades of Judah's independent existence were dominated by a series of ill-advised political decisions, in which the small kingdom's loyalty vacillated between the major empires of Babylonia and Egypt. Most of the book already presupposes the deportation of the kingdom's senior leadership to Babylonia in 597 BCE, attending instead to the politically, socially, and geographically tumultuous decade that followed. Despite the consequences that the Babylonians inflicted in 597 BCE for Judah's refusal to pay taxes and submit to imperial authority—including the deportation of its king, Jehoiachin, and other senior leaders—those who remained in the kingdom continued to look for a route to greater independence. After deporting Jehoiachin, the Babylonians put one of Josiah's sons, Zedekiah, on the throne, hoping that his indebtedness would make him pliably subservient. This turned out to be a misplaced hope; although the narratives about Zedekiah in the Masoretic

6. On the two books of Jeremiah, see Crouch, *Introduction to the Study*, 31–37. This essay follows the numeration of the Masoretic tradition that lies behind most modern translations. For an accessible English translation of the Greek tradition, see Pietersma and Wright, eds., *New English Translation*.

7. But see Davidson, "Imperial End"; Strine, "Embracing Asylum Seekers"; Crouch, *Israel and Judah*.

Text of Jeremiah depict him as weak-willed, they also intimate that he was willing to entertain the possibility of alliances with Egypt and with the other smaller kingdoms of the Levant (Jer 27:3; 37:6–7).[8] These ventures were deemed by the Babylonians to constitute rebellion against the empire, prompting a second invasion into the kingdom of Judah and an eighteen-month siege of the capital city of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:20—25:4 // Jer 52:3–7; also Jer 32–35; 37–39).

As the Babylonians began their approach to Jerusalem, many of the kingdom's rural residents concluded that to remain in their hometowns and villages posed a greater risk to their lives than any risk that flight could pose to their livelihoods, and elected to seek refuge in the fortified capital of Jerusalem.[9] The Rechabites of whom Jeremiah makes an example in Jeremiah 35 are internally displaced migrants of this kind, as are perhaps the Judahites who witnessed Jeremiah's acquisition of a field in Jeremiah 34.[10] This type of migration, in search of security from political violence, is a common cause of refugee movements even today.[11]

With the Babylonians camped on Jerusalem's doorstep, however, and ultimately bursting through its gates, the capital ceased to be the hoped-for refuge (Jer 8:14–15). Again, people fled in search of safety, some dying in the attempt (Jer 6:1; 39:4–9; 52:7).[12] Some of these people escaped across the Jordan River, into neighboring Ammon, Moab, and Edom (Jer 40:10–11). The dominance of the Transjordanian territories in the named destinations of displaced Judahites probably reflects the fact that "refugees cannot simply

8. In *Last King(s) of Judah*, Birdsong argues that this is expressed more strongly in the MT than the LXX.

9. On factors influencing decisions to migrate, see Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession*, 16–17. Sarah K. Lischer cites work by Will Moore and Stephen Shellman that "one will leave one's home when the probability of being a victim of persecution becomes sufficiently high that the expected utility of leaving exceeds the expected utility of staying" ("Conflict and Crisis," 324; the cited work was later published as Moore and Shellman, "Whither Will They Go?").

10. On the Rechabites as involuntary migrants, see Strine, "Embracing Asylum Seekers." Steed V. Davidson examines the presentation of this otherwise unknown group as "drawn into the center and absorbed by the center," in "'Exoticizing the Other,'" 198.

11. Lischer, "Conflict and Crisis," 319.

12. Mortality rates among those displaced in or from Judah in the early sixth century BCE are unknown. Estimates of death rates during Middle Eastern involuntary migrations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE, cited by Chatty, range from 20 to 50 percent (*Displacement and Dispossession*, 94, 96, 102). Chatty also notes the consistency with which narratives of migration across a wide range of population groups describe "traumatic physical hardship, accompanied by disease, starvation, and death" (295). The deaths of Zedekiah's sons narrated explicitly in Jer 39:6 are probably only the elite tip of a very large iceberg.

appear in another country and take over 'empty' space; they can only live in areas where they are able successfully to negotiate access with the local residents."[13] In practice, "such negotiations require a good understanding of the language, the structure of the local society, and usually some pre-existing relationship"; these conditions are "most likely to be found when refugees flee across the border into the neighboring country."[14] For those fleeing Judah, the language and cultural barriers to survival were lower across the Jordan than they might have been elsewhere. If the account of Jeremiah 27 is an accurate reflection of the era's political machinations, these countries' earlier interest in supporting Judah against the Babylonians may also have suggested them as potentially welcoming allies for those displaced by the empire. Those fleeing Jerusalem as it fell were probably also joining people who had fled across the Jordan directly from their homes, rather than going first to Jerusalem. Once the immediate military crisis had abated, a number of those who had fled chose to return to Judah (Jer 40:11; 43:5). Insofar as there is less interest in return migration among self-settled involuntary migrants, others may have decided to stay in the Transjordan.[15]

In 586 BCE, after Jerusalem's final defeat and the deportation of its remaining leaders (Jer 39:7–9; 52:11–23, 27–30 // 2 Kgs 25:7–17, 21), the government was relocated by the Babylonians to Mizpah, about seven miles north of Jerusalem. This is where those who had fled into the Transjordan are said to have gone upon their return (Jer 40:11–12). Given Mizpah's previously minor status in the kingdom, most of these "return" migrants probably originated elsewhere. The influx may well have overwhelmed the town; urban centers often "suffer serious consequences because of displacement," as incoming populations "overload social services, water supplies, and sanitation facilities and thereby hasten the deterioration of the urban infrastructure, already weakened by conflict."[16] Arrival at Mizpah may have represented a symbolic return home, but in practice this return was unlikely to have been accompanied by an easy transition back to the way things used to be.[17]

These already-repeat migrants were soon on the move again, anyway. After some unspecified amount of time, an assassination plot against

13. Bakewell, "Encampment and Self-Settlement," 133; cf. Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 29.

14. Bakewell, "Encampment and Self-Settlement," 133; cf. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, 7.

15. Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 182–83, 190–92; Colson, "Forced Migration," 7–10; Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession*, 297.

16. Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 25; cf. 42.

17. For a summary of the challenges of return migration, see Southwood, *Ethnicity and Mixed Marriage Crisis*.

Gedaliah—the native but non-royal Judahite appointed as local governor over the newly formed province—and ensuing civil war put the people on the road to Egypt (Jer 41–44). Gedaliah is killed by some distant member of the royal family, and the surviving leadership fears Babylonian reprisals for an act likely to be perceived as insurrection (Jer 41:1, 17–18). They seek safety in Egypt, pressing the remaining population into accompanying them. This includes Jeremiah and Baruch, despite Jeremiah's vociferous opposition.[18] The text suggests that these migrants do not intend to remain in Egypt; rather, they desire to return to Judah as soon as it is safe to do so, just as others had returned from the Transjordan (Jer 44:14; cf. Jer 40:11–12). This sort of temporary flight, or envisioned temporary flight, is especially common in civil wars, as people flee an area of fighting in the expectation of rapid return. The prophet denies that such a return will be possible, but the narrative acknowledges that at least a few of those who seek temporary refuge in Egypt will be able to return to the homeland (Jer 44:14, 28). In the meantime, the unrelenting instability raises serious questions of faith among the displaced, who wonder whether—or which—God is able to save them (Jer 42–44). In modern terms, some of the migrants depicted in the book of Jeremiah are internally displaced-involuntary migrants, while others are externally-displaced involuntary migrants or refugees.[19]

The migrants depicted in the book of Jeremiah also vary in the degree of agency they have over the decision to migrate. Almost all appear to migrate involuntarily—meaning under some degree of duress—although the nature of the pressure to move varies in kind and intensity.[20] At one extreme, Zedekiah and certain other individuals migrate to Babylonia because they are forced out of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and his army (Jer 39:7, 9). Jeremiah and Baruch also appear to be taken to Egypt against their will (Jer

18. Reimer, "There—but Not Back Again." Schiffauer's discussion of the function of morality and moralizing in the aftermath of violence-induced migration may illuminate the intensity of Jeremiah's rhetoric, insofar as remaining in the homeland to fight is commonly valorized over flight ("Migration and the Structure," 72).

19. Cohen and Deng define internally displaced persons as those "who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular, as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, *and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border*"; this is slightly modified from a 1992 definition employed by the United Nations (Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 18, italics added). The distinction between these and externally displaced persons, as highlighted, concerns state authority and national responsibility; it seeks to address the assumption of international movement assumed by most definitions of the term *refugee*. For discussion, see Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 16–18.

20. On the difficulty of establishing adequate terminology vis-à-vis "voluntary" and "involuntary" migration see Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession*, 16–17.

43:5–6). Harder to quantify, if no less real, were the consequences of the Babylonian presence in the region—first as an invading army, terrorizing the countryside with destruction and death, then as an occupying power, possessed of absolute authority to kill or deport anyone remaining. The final siege of Jerusalem also produced severe famine in the city and possibly beyond it, as the invading army disrupted agricultural activities and supply lines (Jer 52:6). Many of those faced with these realities weighed the odds and concluded that flight was their best, or only, chance of survival. The diversity of destinations named by the text—Egypt, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the catch-all reference to "all the other lands" (Jer 40:11)—suggests that the displaced may have had some degree of choice in the places to which they fled, as well as offering a hint of the diverse lengths to which people were prepared to go to escape the danger at home.

The narrative that the book of Jeremiah tells of Judah and Jerusalem's destruction thus acknowledges many different kinds of migration, incorporating all of them into the story of the people of God. The tradition depicts even the prophet as an involuntary migrant, forced to abandon the beloved homeland in which he is desperate to remain (Jer 40:4–6; 43:6). Nevertheless, Jeremiah's experience of migration is not the only one acknowledged by the book; there are many others. The book recognizes that no two experiences of migration are the same; the causes of displacement, the destination of the displaced, the desire or lack thereof to return, and the impact of this displacement on faith are all deeply personal, even as they form part of a wider social and historical picture. Especially significant is the way the book's portrayal of these experiences honors the fact that displacement, even in cases where migrants have some limited autonomy over departure and destination, is often deeply traumatic. The book's strange, disordered contents have sometimes been perceived as a stumbling block that must be overcome in order to discern the divine word; more recent readings have recognized that its unusual form reflects the disruption and disorientation inflicted by displacement and its trigger events, including war, political violence, and famine.[21] The acuity of this distress is so extreme that God weeps (Jer 8:18—9:1). Acknowledgment of traumatic suffering as fully within the life of the people of God is a crucial part of the divine word that Jeremiah conveys, even as this suffering raises questions about the nature of the God who allows it.

21. O'Connor, *Jeremiah*.

EZEKIEL

The trauma of involuntary migration provokes a deep and dangerous dive into the nature of God in the book of Ezekiel, too. Unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel responds to a specific instance of involuntary migration, namely, the deportation in 597 BCE of the kingdom's senior leadership to Babylonia. This was triggered, in political terms, by the Judahites' decision to shift their loyalties away from the Babylonians and to the Egyptians, whose imperial ambitions in the southern Levant appeared to be in the ascendant as the seventh century came to a close. Unfortunately, the Judahite leadership's loyalties were misplaced; the Egyptians, as in centuries past, would prove to be unreliable allies when the Babylonian king came to reassert his dominance. Already weakened by attacks from its nearer neighbors (2 Kgs 24:2), the kingdom capitulated quickly—encouraged, perhaps, by the fact that its king, Jehoiakim, had died shortly after rebelling. His young son Jehoiachin ruled for only three months before surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:8–24). The royal family and some other members of the most senior leadership were deported to and held captive in Babylon, but most of the deportees were resettled on rural agricultural estates in rural Babylonia. The book of Ezekiel witnesses to the experience of one of these; there may also have been others in the area.

Ezekiel's community was located somewhere along a waterway referred to as the Chebar River, or perhaps the Chebar Canal (Ezek 1:1, 3; 3:15, 23; 10:15, 20, 22). Once the settlement is referred to as Tel Abib (Ezek 3:15). Its exact location is unknown, although it was probably in the environs of Nippur; a number of later cuneiform documents refer to individuals with Yahwistic names living in a place called āl-Yaḫudu ("Judah-town"), which seems to have been in this area.[22] Many of these documents are loan contracts, attesting to the eventual economic success of some of the deportees' later descendants. The original deportees were mostly settled on royal agricultural estates, where they were obliged to adopt a completely different kind of existence than what they had known as members of Jerusalem's royal, priestly, and administrative families (2 Kgs 24:12, 14–16). Although this reconstituted community may have sometimes been obliged to supply workers for imperial building projects, they were not slaves; the arrangement was more like a feudal system, in which the deportees were responsible to Babylonian administrators for the taxable proceeds of the property on which they had been settled. The quotidian conditions at Tel Abib are difficult to determine, but the lack of references to interactions between the

22. The texts published thus far appear in Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles*; Wunsch, with Pearce, *Judeans by the Waters of Babylon*, is eagerly awaited.

community and either Babylonian or other outsiders suggests that it was fairly isolated, away from major urban centers, and that the community was made up mostly or exclusively of other Judahites.

With these circumstances in mind, Ezekiel's theology bears strikingly similarities to the reactions of other involuntary migrants resettled in similarly isolated contexts. The nearest modern analogy for Ezekiel's circumstances is the refugee camp, where migrants are settled in close proximity to other members of their originating community, with few opportunities for engagement with members of the host community. This kind of isolation tends to provoke a particular anxiety about the community's physical and cultural boundaries, as well as a strong sense of the importance of the past. These interests are linked by the community's present circumstances, which constitute such a dramatic departure from previous experience that they require intentional explanation. This is most frequently sought in past events, with a special focus on transgressions within the community that led to the catastrophe. These transgressions are often identified as failures to maintain the community's cultural boundaries: the disaster is interpreted as the consequence of assimilation and "willful mixing" with outsiders.[23] This phenomenon has been extensively documented, and Ezekiel's accounts of Israel's history of transgression (Ezek 16; 20; 23) bears striking similarities to these more recent accounts, explaining that the people have been deported to Babylonia in punishment for their persistent worship of foreign gods.[24] In Ezekiel's case this explanation has a specific theological purpose, as well: what happened was not the random consequence of chance, nor the result of other powers' successes, but the result of crimes committed by the Israelite community, to which a just and almighty God has responded with appropriate severity.[25]

Ezekiel's depiction of a God whose commitment to justice leads to catastrophic punishment is one that many Western Christians find difficult to engage, having been raised on a spiritual diet that emphasizes God's love to the exclusion of almost all other divine attributes. Scripture reveals both a more complex deity and one that recognizes the spiritual and psychological needs of involuntary migrants. Surviving the defeat of Jerusalem

23. Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 216.

24. Malkki, *Purity and Exile*. Chatty argues that historicizing occurs also among migrants not isolated in mono-ethnic migrant camps, but acknowledges that it is more intense in camp settings (*Displacement and Dispossession*, 297).

25. The ability of stories about the past to transform to serve explanatory purposes was observed most influentially by Halbwachs, in *On Collective Memory*, but is now widely discussed. We are here less interested in the historicity of Ezekiel's narrative than we are in its function.

and deportation to Babylonia required making sense of what had happened—re-telling the story of Israel in a way that could take account of and include these catastrophic changes.[26] Indeed, this "ability to tell a coherent story of our life" appears to be one of the most essential elements of socially and psychologically stable identity.[27] Traumatic events like displacement threaten people's ability to narrate: they disrupt the structure and sequence of daily life, undermine the perceived causality of events, and challenge beliefs about divine justice. Displacement, in particular, creates a radical break between past and present—one that is physical, social, and psychological. Communally-shared stories are one of the things that support the (re-)construction of the social networks and theological systems that have been broken down by dislocation.[28] Ezekiel's attention to Israel's history of sin, though unremittingly negative, is a way of re-establishing the coherence of the world and the God that rules over it. As such, it is critical for the individual and group survival of Ezekiel's involuntary migrant community.

Moreover, identifying the Israelites' own behavior as the cause of the catastrophe powerfully reasserts their moral autonomy, even as such intense negativity appears to outsiders to be a dangerous form of self-blame. By denying that they have been passive victims of foreign domination, Ezekiel's narrative shifts the responsibility for what has happened onto the people—and thereby empowers them as moral agents going forward. As Daniel Smith-Christopher has observed, "*Our own* mistakes offer hopeful possibilities in ways that outside imperial conquest does not."[29] Though disastrous, the past points the way toward a better future.

26. On these events as traumatic, see Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch als Trauma-Literatur*, 121–248.

27. King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity*, 23. Individual and collective memory do not work identically, but King suggests that in key respects they mirror each other, especially in the context of nationalist movements and in the context of traumatic events that have taken on a central role in the group's identity (5). The narrativization of the individual as a cipher for the community has been ably explored with reference to Jeremiah; see O'Connor, *Jeremiah* and "Terror All Around." On the significance of narrative in processing trauma, see Alexander, *Trauma*; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; Leys, *Trauma*; and Eyerman et al., eds., *Narrating Trauma*.

28. Feldman, "Home as a Refrain"; Peteet, "Transforming Trust."

29. Smith-Christopher, "Reading Jeremiah as Frantz Fanon," 116–17 (italics original); cf. Poser, "No Words," 36–38. In a similar vein, Joo has suggested that one of Ezekiel's key preoccupations is the narration of a history in which the migrant experience is fully reflected. Reading Ezekiel contrapuntally with Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, she suggests that both are characterized by an "off-centering" perspective designed to undermine officially-circulating versions of history—"an alternative story to the authoritative history . . . embodying the experiences of the migrant" ("'Off-Centering,'" 64). In Ezekiel's case, this is aimed at denying the theological and historical reality presented

THEOLOGY

Perhaps the greatest theological challenge posed by the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel arises from the fact that they are theological works composed largely in the midst of the events they describe. As such, they constitute emergency theology: urgent attempts to respond to a cascading series of crises, more or less as they are happening. Neither of these books are the kind of pristine, precisely arranged work that might have been composed in the uninterrupted quiet of a private study, though both have fueled profound work of this kind by later theologians. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel are depicted as literally down in the dirt as a consequence of their efforts to convey the word of God: Jeremiah in a filthy pit serving as a makeshift prison (Jer 38:6–13), Ezekiel prostrate on the ground for weeks on end (Ezek 4:4–7). Both are also portrayed as deeply ensconced in and representative of the story of the people as a whole, including the people's experiences of involuntary migration—Jeremiah is taken to Egypt, Ezekiel to Babylonia.

Given such circumstances, it should come as little surprise that the canonical forms of both books preserve a kind of theological messiness. In Jeremiah's case this is especially and overtly so, with a chaotic structure and inconsistent style that makes it very difficult to read as a book at all. In its disorderliness, the book offers scriptural acknowledgment of the disorientation and confusion common to experiences of involuntary migration and other forms of trauma.[30] Ezekiel, at the other end of the spectrum, appears orderly to a fault, scrambling to regain solid footing in a world turned upside-down—but the theology it conveys was perceived by the rabbis to be so potent, so radical, that the faithful were advised not read it until well into adulthood, and never alone.[31] Both of these prophets draw on deep reservoirs of older theological tradition, but are driven by their circumstances into the creation of something new. Radical circumstances call for radical theology.

Because both of these books underwent subsequent revision—in Jeremiah's case, probably quite significant revision—the fact that this roughness survives is worth pause. One might have expected the scribes who passed on these prophetic voices to smooth out their oddities, tone down their rhetoric, and bring them more closely in line with older orthodoxy. Instead, the prophetic traditions have been canonized in ways that recognize the exasperating elusiveness of speech about God in circumstances

by the Babylonian conquerors.

30. O'Connor, *Jeremiah*.

31. Simon, "Ezekiel's Geometric Vision."

where everything known and familiar has been yanked out from under one's feet. They recognize that attempts to articulate a theology appropriate to such circumstances may produce work that is imprecise, ambiguous, or even imperfect—and that, in the midst of crisis, such efforts are acts of true faith.[32] The contribution of the involuntary migrant theologies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to theology—not only to theology specifically concerned with migration, but to all kinds of theology—provides a model for theological and community conversations today. Like those whose voices are heard in Scripture, contemporary migrants' insights into the nature of God are a gift to the whole church.

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32. See also O'Connor, "How Trauma Studies," 216.

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