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**Is “Exile” Enough?**  
**Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Need for a Taxonomy of Involuntary**  
**Migration**

**Abstract:** The prophetic books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel exhibit many similarities. From their historical setting around the final days before Jerusalem’s destruction and the deportation of its elite to Babylonia, to a large shared theological vocabulary, to a number of shared image-rich metaphors, these books have long invited scholars to explore their likenesses. And yet, the two books diverge sharply in their tone, their advice for how to live in Babylonia, and their vision for the future of YHWH’s people. This article argues the divergence follows from distinctly different experiences of involuntary migration which these texts depict and to which, therefore, they respond.

**Keywords:** Involuntary Migration, Exile, Jeremiah 29, Rechabites, Al Yahuda,

**Introduction: Involuntary Migration as a Key to Jeremiah and Ezekiel**

It is not unique to observe that many similarities exist between the prophetic books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>1</sup> The two books share distinctive images (e.g., the eating of a scroll: Jer 15:16; Ezek 2:8–10), metaphors (e.g., the prophet as watchman: Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17–21, 33:1–9), and a critical view of the Judahites, who are admonished with those metaphors in nearly identical ways (e.g., as irresponsible shepherds: Jer 23:1–8; Ezek 34:1–16). In a recent treatment of the issue, D. Rom-Shiloni summarizes that the various studies on the topic offer

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<sup>1</sup> The topic is treated in every commentary, and even forms the basis for an entire monograph by J. W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Prosareden Jeremias* (Neukirchen: Van Gorcum, 1955).

“fairly clear evidence of indirect connections between the prophets (and/or their presumed schools), and some even proceed to suggest direct influence of one prophet on the other.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet as W. Zimmerli explains, this “very marked connection between Ezekiel and Jeremiah offers a special problem,” namely, that despite all the similarities in language, metaphor, and imagery there remain “deep differences between the two figures, which can be seen at many points.”<sup>3</sup> Rom-Shiloni probes that insight and correctly argues that scholars need to attend more closely to the differences between the two texts. What if Ezekiel’s failure to mention Jeremiah by name, she asks, is not happenstance that still supports “agreement and full continuity,” but rather an omission that belies “disagreement and disjunction?”<sup>4</sup>

To explore this hypothesis, Rom-Shiloni focuses on instances where Jeremiah and Ezekiel borrow the same language from Deuteronomy but apply it in divergent ways. Her discussion of the way that Jer 29:5–6 and Ezek 28:25–26 each employ Deut 20:5–7—where building houses and planting vineyards represents divinely ordained residence in a place—underscores just some of their divergence: whereas the book of Jeremiah draws on this language in order to urge those deported to Babylon “to accept their deportation as a permanent position, with no prospect of return,” the book of Ezekiel uses this language to declare that such divinely ordained, peaceful living can only occur once the Judahite community deported to Babylonia returns to their home in Judah.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> D. Rom-Shiloni, “Ezekiel and Jeremiah: What Might Stand Behind the Silence?,” *HeBAI* 1 (2012): 213.

<sup>3</sup> W. Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (trans. R. E. Clements; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), 44, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Rom-Shiloni, “Silence,” 213.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 223–227.

Rom-Shiloni concludes that “the profound differences between Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the use of these traditions cannot be overlooked,” and that there is “a great ideological distance between the two contemporary prophets of YHWH.”<sup>6</sup>

Insofar as her argument goes, Rom-Shiloni is correct. Nevertheless, there are further differences between Jeremiah and Ezekiel that she does not explore. Another massive contrast between Jeremiah and Ezekiel, highlighted by comparing the command to “seek the peace of the city” in Jeremiah 29 and the “extreme exclusivity” of Ezekiel, relates to their willingness (or lack thereof) to countenance open, positive engagement with the host population in Babylonia.<sup>7</sup> By advocating acceptance of their position in Babylon and an effort to profit by its success, Jeremiah 29 provides an admonition for Judahites to relate positively to the Babylonian host population. Meanwhile, Ezekiel’s “extreme exclusivity” cannot even fathom reconciliation between divergent Judahite perspectives, let alone positive engagement between the Judahite community in Babylonia and its Babylonian hosts.<sup>8</sup> These divergent viewpoints regarding whether and how the Judahites forcibly deported to Babylonia should interact with their Babylonian hosts highlight an important dimension of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 228–229.

<sup>7</sup> Rom-Shiloni terms Ezekiel’s ethnocentrism “extreme exclusivity,” a helpful way of describing its primary position. See eadem *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th-5th Centuries BCE)* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 139–197, though she recognizes some of the later material in the book softens that rhetoric somewhat, allowing for marginally more inclusive exclusivity. The situation in Jeremiah, with its various layers of redaction and different social settings for those redactions, is far more complex (Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 198–252.).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. C. A. Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), esp. pp. 228–268, on Ezekiel’s hidden polemic against the Babylonians.

difference between Jeremiah and Ezekiel that neither Rom-Shiloni nor other commentators consider.

Here, I shall argue that commentators do not discuss this issue because they fail to recognize that Jeremiah and Ezekiel reflect two fundamentally dissimilar social contexts in Babylonia. Biblical scholars speak of “the Babylonian exile” as if it were a homogenous experience; while they may tangentially recognize the possibility of differing experiences of “exile,” they do not appreciate the major differences in social setting presumed by texts such as Jeremiah 29 and Ezekiel 1–3. Whereas this part of the book called Jeremiah envisions an audience forcibly deported to a major, urban, and multicultural area—the city of Babylon—the book called Ezekiel envisions an audience captured and placed in a remote, isolated, mono-ethnic setting. These two contexts—generally collapsed by biblical scholars into a single category of “exile”—must be distinguished. Indeed, the two settings reflect a distinction that the social scientific study of involuntary migration now considers essential to understanding the phenomenon of involuntary migration. Jeremiah and Ezekiel draw on a common core of Yahwistic theology—thus, their widely noted similarity—but do so in order to respond to two disparate environments. Their differences follow from their efforts to adopt and adapt the tradition in distinct, even contrary ways.

I shall support this position with a combination of insights from the social scientific study of involuntary migration, close readings of relevant passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and a comparison of paradigmatic figures in each book that epitomize the attitude towards migration and integration with outside groups that each book espouses. This will show that Jeremiah and Ezekiel simultaneously share so much theological language and so many religious concepts, while disagreeing so pointedly, because they envision two fundamentally different experiences of involuntary migration. Although this

essay evaluates a single case study—the relationship between the book of Ezekiel and the book of Jeremiah—it will demonstrate the need for this level of detail regarding the multiple and varied *experiences* (plural) of involuntary migration among those deported to Babylonia in interpretations of the many other relevant texts across the Hebrew Bible.

The argument proceeds in six stages. First, there is a review of scholarship, demonstrating that the possibility of simultaneous yet substantially different experiences of forced deportation to Babylonia do not figure in analyses of the Hebrew Bible. Second, there is a review of the relevant social scientific concepts, to supplement the initial insights from the historical record about the differing experiences of involuntary migration. Third, the article examines the social setting that these texts envision, drawing out the unique contours of the involuntary migration experience to which each book responds. Fourth, the argument deals with key passages from Jeremiah and Ezekiel that explain what constitutes a faithful Yahwistic life in these circumstances. Fifth, this piece explores one migrant paradigm chosen by each text. Finally, these points are drawn together to reflect on what they tell us about the relationship between the books called Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the need for further development of the vocabulary and categories biblical scholars employ to analyze involuntary migrant experiences.

### **“Exile”: A Homogenous Concept in Biblical Studies**

The experience and concept of “exile” has become central to the study of the Hebrew Bible, rising for many scholars to the level of *the* defining concept for understanding this collection of texts. Despite this prominence, scholars persist in speaking of “exile” as a single experience shared by all involuntary migrants.

The assumption that “exile” is a single, unified experience is implicit. One indication of its presence, however, follows from the way scholars employ

the term “exile.” Rom-Shiloni, for instance, in an extended and otherwise perceptive work on the differences among texts dated to the sixth century B.C.E., speaks about “the Judean Exiles in Babylon” and “Those Who Remained in Judah” as two, opposed communities.<sup>9</sup> When she narrows her focus to the “Judean Exiles in Babylon,” she still speaks of “the Exiles” as a group with a single, shared experience—even though her detailed analysis identifies a number of “Babylonian exilic ideologies” which she suggests developed in chronological sequence.<sup>10</sup> Thus, while she observes different ideologies emerging from Babylonia, for her these variations resulted only from development over time. There is no consideration of how different social settings that existed concurrently within Babylonia might have produced such variation. One also notices that she speaks about exiles in Babylon—the city—and not exiles in Babylonia, the wider area of which Babylon was the chief city. This is a common slippage in terms, on which more in a moment.

J. Ahn, by contrast, does concentrate on chronological development, helpfully exploring how subsequent generations of exiles have differing experiences. His work is often and correctly cited as an example for how biblical scholars can and should engage with the social scientific study of involuntary migration. Nonetheless, he only considers differences arising from chronological change, not from different social settings between groups in Babylonia. Indeed, in summarizing his work, Ahn also speaks of these groups’ experience in “Babylon”—like Rom-Shiloni, focusing (wittingly or unwittingly) on the urban setting alone.<sup>11</sup> Ahn’s work is a welcome advance in chronological

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<sup>9</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 1 *et passim*. The capitals, signifying a proper noun and a category, are hers.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, in her Summary and Conclusions (e.g., Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 256).

<sup>11</sup> J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011),

differentiation among the experiences of involuntary migration, but it remains inattentive to the potential significance of temporally simultaneous variations in social setting.

Related to this chronological perspective, scholars often differentiate the experience of “exile” (i.e., forced deportation from Judah to another location) from return migration (i.e., the experience of subsequent generations of Judahites returning to Judah). This insight first gained prominence in the work of D. Smith-Christopher and more recently in the work of K. E. Southwood, both of whom focus on Ezra–Nehemiah.<sup>12</sup> While welcome, this work still presumes only a chronological axis, obscuring the works’ ability to recognize differences existing simultaneously among communities in different social settings.

Beyond the chronological dimension, some scholars now attend to a geographical dimension of difference, which recognizes divergent experiences among the groups forcibly deported to Babylonia, those fleeing to Egypt, and those remaining in Judah. For example, B. Kelle’s overview of scholarship on the “exile” observes that “the exile is not a singular event,” rightly calling for studies of it to attend to a broad range of sociological, anthropological, and psychological dimensions. When he discusses what expanded interdisciplinary perspectives one might pursue, however, he prefers to draw on diaspora

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259–261.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., D. Smith-Christopher, “The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of Post-exilic Judean Community,” in *Temple Community in the Persian Period* (ed. T. Eskanazi and K. Richards; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 243–265; D. Smith-Christopher, “Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the ‘Foreigner’ in Post-exilic Biblical Theology,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 117–142; K. E. Southwood, “‘And They Could Not Understand Jewish Speech’: Language, Ethnicity, and Nehemiah’s Inter-marriage Crisis,” *JTS* 62 (2011): 1–19; K. E. Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).



studies, highlighting that diaspora involves dislocation to more than one location. Kelle emphasizes, then, that scholars need to bear in mind all the communities that leave Judah, not just those in Babylonia, when studying the sixth century B.C.E. This is progress, reflected at least in part by Kelle's uses of the term Babylonia, not Babylon. Yet while Kelle opens up the possibility of recognizing variations in experiences among involuntary migrants, he does not pursue the issue further.

Perhaps D. Carr comes closest to making distinctions between different social settings for groups within Babylonia, though he falls tantalizingly short of doing so fully. In his extensive reconstruction of the diachronic development of the Hebrew Bible, when discussing "the Babylonian exile," he engages with some social scientific studies on involuntary migration. In particular, Carr discusses J. Peteet's exploration of the way that Palestinian refugee camps "have proven fertile grounds for the growth of extremely nationalist elements," suggesting this is an insight helpful for interpreting the rhetoric of the book of Ezekiel.<sup>13</sup> Carr stands at the precipice of demarcating differing social settings for involuntary migrants, just short of contrasting the way that some Judahites were settled together in places where they had limited contact with other groups with the way that other groups were settled in the urban, multicultural setting of Babylon.<sup>14</sup> But then he reverts to speaking about how social scientific

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<sup>13</sup> D. M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254.

<sup>14</sup> Carr, *Formation*, 253–254; cf. idem, "Reading into the Gap: Refractions of Trauma in Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (ed. B. Kelle, F. R. Ames, and J. L. Wright; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 303. The "city of Judah" he discusses is now more commonly known as āl-Yāhūdu or, **in the writing of L. Pearce and C. Wunsch, "Judahtown"** (Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* [CUSAS 28; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014.]).

studies “can help us more reliably identify *exilic* features in texts,” disregarding any differentiation between the social setting of Ezekiel and that of other texts from the same period.<sup>15</sup> Carr resolves that the separate (scribal) groups with competing ideas in Babylonia that gave rise to various strands within the Pentateuch must have known and interacted with one another—leaving little to no room for disparate experiences among them.<sup>16</sup> In the end, Carr attributes what divergence he finds among the texts emerging from the Judahites in Babylonia during the 6th century as a result of chronological development, like so many others.

These scholars’ conflation of the “exiles” and their texts into a single entity contrasts with growing evidence from the historical record of the sixth century B.C.E. that, while some Jerusalemite deportees found themselves in an urban, cosmopolitan setting (e.g., Babylon), others were placed in rural, rather isolated areas where they interacted almost exclusively with fellow Judahite deportees. While the urban, cosmopolitan setting of Babylon where Jehoiachin and some of his former royal court were settled is well attested in the ration tablets and royal inscriptions of Nebudchadnezzar, newer evidence from the cuneiform texts regarding the Judahites in Babylonia during the sixth century B.C.E. substantiate that other communities of Judahites lived in fundamentally different social settings outside Babylon.<sup>17</sup>

In recent publications concerning the texts from *āl-Yāhūdu*, *ālu šam Našar*, and the archive of *Zababa-šar-ušur*—often known together as the *āl-Yāhūdu* corpus—L. Pearce identifies “glimpses of aspects of the day-to-day experience of Judeans in Babylonia” that “establish an urban-rural

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<sup>15</sup> Carr, *Formation*, 255, emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>17</sup> See the summary and references to relevant publications in L. E. Pearce, “Continuity and Normality in Sources Relating to the Judean Exile,” *HeBAI* 3 (2014): 179–180.

divide...among the Judeans from the inception of the exile.”<sup>18</sup> Not only was this a geographic divide, in which a “physical distance separated the urban Judean elite situated in Babylon from a segment of the population relocated in the countryside,” but the evidence “also hints that a social demographic may have characterized the divide as well.”<sup>19</sup>

Pearce explains that communities in these rural locations lived as “groups of ‘ethnically’ homogenous state dependents, concentrated in a town named for their place of origin.”<sup>20</sup> Close analysis of the texts from *āl-Yāhūdu* in particular reveal that it was known initially as the “town of the Judeans” and, in a few years, simply “Judahtown.” The Judahites living in these rural areas found themselves “in the context of a community composed largely of their own people” that meant their “position in the Babylonian economy was comparable to that of other deportee populations.”<sup>21</sup> The available evidence suggests this began as an experience of near isolation from other communities, in a status

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>20</sup> Eadem, “Judean’: A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia?,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 271; cf. C. Wunsch, “Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” in *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.* (ed. A. Berlejung and M. P. Streck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 248–249; F. R. Magdalene and C. Wunsch, “Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience,” in *Slaves and Households in the Near East* (ed. L. Culbertson; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011), 127.

<sup>21</sup> Pearce, “Special Status,” 274–275; cf. Wunsch, “Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” 252, and Magdalene and Wunsch, “Slavery,” 115–117. Wunsch explains that this meant interaction with Babylonian officials for rent, tax, corvée payments, and the writing of other legal documents, but this sort of interaction cannot be equated with or assumed to reflect an open, positive attitude towards integration that sees an adoption of the hosts cultural practices.

akin to a royal slave indentured to work on state-organized building projects.<sup>22</sup> When that work ended, the exiles functioned as farmers with state-provided bow-fiefs, which they maintained in order to pay a substantial amount of rent and tax, thereby enriching the imperial apparatus of Babylonia.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that Pearce and Wunsch recognize that the evidence from the *āl-Yāhūdu* texts do not entirely rule out contact between the people in “Judahtown” and the Babylonians. Reflecting on the evidence of tablet No. 1 from the Sofer collection, they remark that “the settlement of the Judeans—in spite of being predominantly inhabited by Judean deportees—was by no means culturally insular,” but reflects interaction with the Babylonians on administrative and routine business matters at a local level.<sup>24</sup> Yet, they note that none of the names mentioned in this document “bears a name that points to a Judean background” and that only the first two witnesses “seem to be Judeans.”<sup>25</sup>

It is important to connect this evidence to that of tablet No. 2, which speaks of a debt to be settled by *Ṣidiqī-Yāma* with *Bēl-šar-uṣur*.<sup>26</sup> As the creditor in the situation, it seems that *Bēl-šar-uṣur* was likely acting as “an

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<sup>22</sup> B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1979), 98–99; cf. M. Jursa, “On Aspects of Taxation in Achaemenid Babylon: New Evidence from Borsippa,” in *Organisation des Pouvoirs et Contacts Culturels dans les Pays de l’Empire Achéménide* (ed. P. Briant and M. Chauveau; Paris: de Boccard, 2009), 239 and Magdalene and Wunsch, “Slavery,” 126–128.

<sup>23</sup> Wunsch, “Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” 25–27.

<sup>24</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles*, 99.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere *Bēl-šar-uṣur* is known as *Yāḥu-šar-uṣur*. Pearce and Wunsch comment that the interchange of *Bēl* and *Yāḥu* is extraordinary, suggesting that we are dealing with a person actively seeking to make a positive impression on the royal administration in order to find a career in this area (*ibid.*, 101).

intermediary” between a group of farmers who owed payment to the Babylonian authorities in return for the land they were entrusted to farm. Since Bēl-šar-ušur is known elsewhere as Yāḥu-šar-ušur, and thus likely to be a Judean with aspirations of working in the Babylonian royal administration, it seems likely that he was functioning as a link between the Judahite involuntary migrant community and the imperial power that had settled these involuntary migrants to farm the land. Such figures—linguistically and administratively capable of providing the interface between the dominant power and the subaltern community—must logically have existed for the Babylonians to benefit from the presence of the Judahite deportees on the land. It is the case, therefore, that evidence for the interaction of isolated figures with Judahite backgrounds with Babylonian administrators could be entirely consistent with the larger population of an involuntary migrant community being isolated from its host population.<sup>27</sup>

This new evidence impinges directly upon the question raised at the opening of this paper, namely, how the social settings presumed in Jeremiah 29 and the book of Ezekiel differ. It is instructive that Pearce remarks:

It is also impossible to exclude the possibility that Ezekiel’s appearance in the town on the Chebar canal might reflect the early settlement of members of the Jerusalem elite in the Nippur countryside, outside of the urban environment of Babylon or other cities.... [F]urther exploration of the location and nature of the settlement of members of the Judean elite is necessary to understand the socio-economic contours of the exile and the forces contributing to prophetic responses to it.<sup>28</sup>

This is precisely what this essay aims to do, using Jeremiah and Ezekiel as a case study. By framing the ideological differences between Jeremiah and Ezekiel

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<sup>27</sup> On the role of this practice in contingently settled, isolated populations, see B. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 98–117, esp. 98–99.

<sup>28</sup> Pearce, “Continuity and Normality,” 181.

within the cross-cultural evidence for how dissimilar experiences of involuntary migration shape correspondingly dissimilar responses to that experience, one can see that Jeremiah and Ezekiel adopt and adapt the tradition they inherit in divergent ways because they respond to fundamentally divergent experiences of forced migration. The argument demonstrates that biblical scholars need to employ a disarticulated vocabulary and more extensive taxonomy of involuntary migration; the anodyne term “exile” does not reflect the different experiences of involuntary migration reflected in texts both within and without the Hebrew Bible. Supplementing existing concepts within biblical studies by employing terms and categories prominent in the social scientific study of involuntary migration will enable scholars to identify crucial differences among the wide range of involuntary migrant experiences, resulting in sharper insights on the biblical texts and the cultures behind them.

### **The Study of Involuntary Migration**

The study of involuntary migration—also known as refugee studies or forced migration studies—is young. Some trace its origin to the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees,<sup>29</sup> but a greater number place its origin in the early 1980s.<sup>30</sup> Though the discipline is still defining its methods and only beginning to deliver findings usable elsewhere, the data has now reached a tipping point. As E. Colson remarks, “we have acquired an ethnographic base sufficiently large so that we ought to be able to generalize about likely

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<sup>29</sup> R. Black, “Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: From Theory to Policy,” *International Migration Review* 35 (2001): 57–78; for the UN document see <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>.

<sup>30</sup> D. Chatty, “Anthropology and Forced Migration,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (ed. E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh *et al.*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

consequences of forced uprooting and resettlement.”<sup>31</sup> The development of such generalizations—that is, cross-cultural models regarding involuntary migration—enables scholars from other disciplines to draw on this research.

One of the major contributions arising from this study of involuntary migration is a more detailed taxonomy of these experiences. One could, given the space, outline various spectra on which involuntary migration experiences may be plotted. Is the migration more or less voluntary? Do the migrants exhibit positive identification with the home country or self-alienation from it? Are the migrants members of the first generation or representatives of subsequent generations? Are people displaced within the boundaries of their homeland or outside its borders? Do the forcibly displaced retain any agency over where they settle, or are they placed by an outside agent? Since Jeremiah and Ezekiel closely resemble one another along these dimensions, another dimension will feature most prominently in what follows, namely, whether the involuntary migrant community in question dwells among or in isolation from outside groups.

Though not a simple binary opposition, it remains the case that involuntary migrants, throughout documented history, have generally resided either in “camps” set apart for them, or in urban areas where they interact with members of outside groups. Crucial for present purposes is Colson’s observation that “[t]hose in the official settlements [e.g., camps] were less likely to develop reciprocal ties, and so trust relationships, with neighbouring hosts.”<sup>32</sup> Predictable as this attitude may be, its disparity with the responses of

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<sup>31</sup> E. Colson, “Forced Migration and the Anthropological Response,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16 (2003): 3. It is important to note that she continues on to observe that one must still recognize “that human beings are creative and can come up with surprising, never before imagined, solutions.”

<sup>32</sup> Colson, “Anthropological Response,” 7–8.

those living in close proximity with outside groups is a significant factor for understanding responses to involuntary migration.

L. Malkki's work among the Hutu displaced from Burundi during the 1990s illustrates this dynamic best. Two distinct groups of Hutu settled in Tanzania as involuntary migrants: one community lives in the urban center called Kigoma, inherently mixing with other groups, while another community resides in a government-run camp in the remote area of Mishamo, essentially cordoned off from outsiders. Malkki's research demonstrates that "[i]t is the Hutu 'spatially isolated and insulated' in Tanzanian camps...who have constructed a new nationalism complete with a mythical past that demonizes the Tutsi [who persecuted them] and looks forward to a future in a Burundi cleansed of Tutsi."<sup>33</sup> Their response to involuntary migration, in other words, is characterized by ethnocentrism. By contrast, the Hutu living in urban, integrated Kigoma develop "rival constructions of order and morality" that tend towards the pragmatic management of their identity. Instead of identifying as refugees, they shape their identity in such a way as to support "key axes of assimilation" with the wider population.<sup>34</sup> These Hutu, in contrast to those in the camp, exhibit an openness to positive engagement with outside groups.

The disparity between the responses of integrated urban and isolated rural groups, based on this and other ethnographic work, furnishes the following interpretive heuristic: whereas involuntary migrants in integrated

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<sup>33</sup> I use Colson's summary of Malkki's work because it succinctly communicates the importance of her research (Colson, "Anthropological Response," 10). See also J. M. Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), esp. her concluding remarks on p. 220.

<sup>34</sup> L. H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 153–154. The three key axes are intermarriage, pursuing legal naturalization, and personal socioeconomic opportunities.



living environments respond with a pragmatic approach to identity, a willingness to see ethnic boundaries as movable or porous, and an openness to engaging with other groups in order to succeed socially and economically in their new context, involuntary migrants in isolated living environments display a propensity for rehearsing histories of communal origin in order to establish and reinforce a strong communal sensibility and ethnic consciousness that generates decisive diacritics for in-group/out-group identification, and an almost-millenarian outlook on the necessity to return “home.”<sup>35</sup> Despite their shared background and common ethnic identity, radically different social settings prompt these groups to employ these shared resources in profoundly different ways.

This model, which resembles closely the different social contexts presumed in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, offers important insights for recognizing and understanding their divergent perspectives.

### **Social Settings of the Imagined Audiences**

Identifying the actual audience for any biblical text is fraught with uncertainty. With Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there is evidence that the texts began their lives as texts during the sixth century B.C.E. among Judahites displaced from Jerusalem. How far beyond this one can go is debatable. For current purposes it is necessary to refine this consensus only with reference to the social settings presented within the literary frame of each book. Both texts offer important details about the audience they envision hearing these texts; whatever the relationship of this imagined audience to the actual ancient, historical audience of the text, this material establishes a profile for the (imagined) audience’s past

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Colson, “Anthropological Response,” 9, who summarizes the issue thus: “The ethnographic record points to camps and resettlement communities as seed beds most conducive to the growth of memory and the pursuit of the myth of return.”

experiences, current circumstances, and future hopes. Indications that each book envisions a different involuntary migrant experience for its audience appear most clearly in Jeremiah 24 and 29 and Ezekiel 1–3; 12; and 17.

### *Jeremiah: The City of Babylon*

Neither the term Babylon (בבל)<sup>36</sup> nor Chaldea (כשדים)<sup>37</sup> appears prior to Jeremiah 20—a lacuna that reflects the centrality of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 1–25. Starting with chapter 20, however, both Babylon and Chaldea rise in prominence. Jeremiah 24 indicates that they are not simple synonyms. Chapter 24 begins thus:

YHWH showed me two baskets of figs, placed in front of the Temple of YHWH. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had exiled King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and the officials of Judah, and the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to *Babylon*. (24:1)

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<sup>36</sup> בבל occurs 169 times: 20:4–6; 21:2, 4, 7, 10; 22:25; 24:1; 25:1, 9, 11–12; 27:6, 8–9, 11–14, 16–18, 20, 22; 28:2–4, 6, 11, 14; 29:1, 3–4, 10, 15, 20–22, 28; 32:2–5, 28, 36; 34:1–3, 7, 21; 35:11; 36:29; 37:1, 17, 19; 38:3, 17–18, 22–23; 39:1, 3, 5–7, 9, 11, 13; 40:1, 4–5, 7, 9, 11; 41:2, 18; 42:11; 43:3, 10; 44:30; 46:2, 13, 26; 49:28, 30; 50:1–2, 8–9, 13–14, 16–18, 23–24, 28–29, 34–35, 42–43, 45–51:2; 51:6–9, 11–12, 24, 29–31, 33–35, 37, 41–42, 44, 47–49, 53–56, 58–61, 64; 52:3–4, 9–12, 15, 17, 26–27, 31–32, 34.

<sup>37</sup> כשדים occurs 46 times: 21:4, 9; 22:25; 24:5; 25:12; 32:4–5, 24–25, 28–29, 43; 33:5; 35:11; 37:5, 8–11, 13–14; 38:2, 18–19, 23; 39:5, 8; 40:9–10; 41:3, 18; 43:3; 50:1, 8, 10, 25, 35, 45; 51:4, 24, 35, 54; 52:7–8, 14, 17.

On its own, this is hardly illuminating; the deportation of the Davidic king to Babylon is reported many times. But compare verse 1 with verses 5–7:

Thus said YHWH, the God of Israel: As with these good figs, so will I single out for good the Judean exiles whom I have driven out from this place *to the land of the Chaldeans*. I will look upon them favorably, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not overthrow them; I will plant them and not uproot them. And I will give them the understanding to acknowledge me, for I am YHWH. And they shall be My people and I will be their God, when they turn back to me with all their heart. (24:5–7)

Although W. McKane asks whether this pericope presents the group forcibly deported to the city of Babylon with Jehoiachin in 597 B.C.E. as the *entirety* of the good Judahite community in Babylonia, most scholars focus on *where* this text was written.<sup>38</sup> They therefore miss a subtle but important point, which McKane grasps: the distinction between Babylon, the city, and Chaldea, the surrounding lands. However one adjudicates McKane’s observations about the Jehoiachin community, the fundamental observation of a distinction between Babylon, the city, and the land of Chaldea, the rest of the Babylonian territory, remains.<sup>39</sup>

Occurrences of the phrase ארץ כשדים reinforce this distinction. This is particularly the case in Jer 25:12 and 50:8. The former specifies that, when the “seventy years” of service to the King of Babylon end, YHWH will punish the king, his nation, and ארץ כשדים (the land of Chaldea). Listing them in this

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<sup>38</sup> W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 1:609.; cf. R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1986), 480–488.

<sup>39</sup> J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 2:233 notes that S, V, and LXX<sup>A</sup> have city, not land, in v. 8; this strengthens the distinction between the urban Babylon and the remaining areas around it.

fashion suggests they represent distinct locations, not parallel synonyms.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, the latter verse calls out Judahites from both the midst of Babylon (מתוך בבל) and also the land of Chaldea (ארץ כשדים). Reflecting on the material in Jeremiah 26–45, the so-called “Supplement” to the material in Jeremiah 1–25, M. Leuchter remarks that “[a]t every turn, the Supplement addresses the Judean community in Babylon arising from the various deportations to that *city*.”<sup>41</sup> In short, the evidence shows that Jeremiah 24; 26–45; and 50 depict and presume a Judahite community forcibly deported to the *city of Babylon*. These texts envision an audience familiar with a large metropolitan area, inevitably engaging people from both the host and other foreign societies. The evidence of these texts is strengthened significantly by the letter in Jeremiah 29, which will receive full treatment below.

#### *Ezekiel: “Camp” Chebar*

Ezekiel presumes a radically different situation. The superscription to the book specifies a community of involuntary migrants by the Chebar canal (Ezek 1:3). This “obscure body of water” is “near” Nippur, though M. Greenberg explains that one must distinguish it from the Euphrates, which ran through the city of Nippur.<sup>42</sup> Nippur itself lies 60 or more miles from Babylon. Comparing the setting that the book of Ezekiel provides for itself with the evidence from the *āl-Yāhūdu* corpus suggests an area roughly bounded by Nippur, Karkara, and Keš, as a rural location in which it is likely that forced deportees worked on

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<sup>40</sup> LXX lacks all three phrases, so it provides no insight on the issue.

<sup>41</sup> M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26–45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145. Emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 40; cf. D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 84.

large irrigation projects, directed by the imperial Babylonian apparatus.<sup>43</sup>

The call narrative for Ezekiel in chapters 1–3 gives further indications about the setting. Chapter 3 locates the community of Judahite “exiles” in Tel Abib. Though the name is familiar, its meaning remains uncertain. D. I. Block represents the majority view: “[w]hile the name Tel Abib translates literally ‘mound of spring produce,’ as a Mesopotamian toponym it is derived from *til abubi*, ‘mound of the flood [debris]...a ruin-hill,’ popularly conceived as having been destroyed by the primeval deluge.”<sup>44</sup> Block, like Zimmerli and Greenberg, concludes that “[t]his name may have been applied to the present site in the aftermath of the Chaldean destruction of the region around Nippur,”<sup>45</sup> where the exiles were sent to rebuild. Alternately, one can argue compellingly that the literal meaning of Tel Abib—“mound of spring produce”—describes a place of agricultural fertility, whose links to a site used in the Mesopotamian *mīs pi* ritual to induct cult statues indicate a remote setting.<sup>46</sup> Ezekiel 3:22 reinforces this impression, describing the prophet going out אל הבקעה. This valley or plain is probably not a specific location, but—as Block observes—a symbolic space: “wasteland, an appropriate place for a private meeting with God.”<sup>47</sup> It implies that the prophet and the community amongst whom he lives inhabit an environment distant from other people.<sup>48</sup> Taken together, these texts specify a

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<sup>43</sup> Wunsch, “Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” 252–253; cf. Pearce, “Continuity and Normality,” 170–171.

<sup>44</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 135–136; cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 139; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 71.

<sup>45</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 136.

<sup>46</sup> C. A. Strine, “Ezekiel’s Image Problem: The Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction Ritual and the *Imago Dei* Anthropology in the Book of Ezekiel,” *CBQ* 76 (2014): 252–272.

<sup>47</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 153; cf. Strine, “Ezekiel’s Image Problem,” 258–260.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. I. Eph’al, “On the Political and Social Organization of the Jews in Babylonian Exile,” in *Deutscher Orientalistentag Vorträge* (ed. F. Steppat; Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981), 106–112; and L. E. Pearce, “New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the*

rural, perhaps desolate place, some substantial distance from a large population, wherein the Judahite community would have lived in relative, if not total, isolation from other groups. While one cannot anachronistically transfer what is known about the contemporary refugee camp to this context uncritically, the terminology of “camp”—with its connotations of external administration, isolation from others, and a site for dislocated people—provides a useful shorthand for this type of context.<sup>49</sup> Thus the moniker “Camp” Chebar, suggested in the heading to this section.

Complementing this evidence is the fact that Ezekiel pays almost no attention to the city of Babylon.<sup>50</sup> Babylon appears only as the place where King Zedekiah will be forcibly taken (12:13; 17:12, 16, 20; 19:9). Unlike 2 Kings and Jeremiah, which make a point of mentioning the release of Jehoiachin from captivity in the city of Babylon, Ezekiel omits this information.<sup>51</sup> Some have contended that Ezekiel’s audience reaches Babylon, in the form of the elders who come to hear him (Ezek 8:1; 14:1; 20:1). Perhaps these references do envision a group making the three-or-more day journey to Chebar to hear Ezekiel, but this is not immediately clear from the title “elder” alone. Any community might have elders, and there are strong indications from some passages (especially Ezekiel 14, on which more below) that a local community, with domestic concerns, rather than an audience with national and political concerns is the envisioned audience of the book. Indeed, when Ezekiel describes the audience that hears but rejects the prophet’s message, they are those who “converse about you by the walls and in the doorways of their

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*Persian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 407–408.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Carr, *Formation*, 254–255.

<sup>50</sup> This is also true of the later texts in the Murašû archives; see Pearce, “New Evidence,” 400.

<sup>51</sup> C. L. Crouch and C. A. Strine, “YHWH’s Battle Against Chaos in Ezekiel: The Transformation of Judahite Mythology for a New Situation,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 883–903.

houses” (33:30), who come to listen for entertainment purposes.<sup>52</sup> This suggests a local group, not one dominated by people from the distant city of Babylon, 60 or more miles away. Thus, both the positive evidence (in the call narrative) and the negative evidence (absence of the city of Babylon) support the conclusion that the book of Ezekiel focus on a community in a remote, isolated locale.

Before moving on, it is necessary to address the logical objection that the evidence of Babylonian education in Ezekiel undermines this whole point. The collection of Akkadian loan words, Babylonian religious ideas and imagery in Ezekiel belies a sheltered existence for all of the people in Tel Abib, some say.<sup>53</sup> The evidence for access to Babylonian learning in Ezekiel is indeed strong, and growing stronger. It does not, however, require one to conclude that there was broad interaction between the Judahite deportees and the Babylonians. Rather, one might interpret this evidence more narrowly to indicate that Ezekiel (or the small group of supporters who wrote in his name) had access to such knowledge. As noted earlier, the Babylonians would have required at least one person who could provide an interface between the royal administration and the Judahite deportees. This person (or small group of people) would have needed some understanding of Akkadian and Babylonian economic practices, such as those documented in the *āl-Yāhūdu* texts. Indeed, perhaps the best explanation for why a member of the Jerusalemite learned elite placed in Tel Abib would have access to the resources needed to learn key aspects of Babylonian culture would be precisely so that he could acquire the requisite Akkadian language and comprehension of the Babylonian practices needed to serve as the link between the royal administration and the captive Judahite workers.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 264–267.

<sup>53</sup> **ADD CROSS REFERENCE to DALIT's points on this...**

<sup>54</sup> On Ezekiel's knowledge of Babylonian ideas, see A. Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati," in *Encounters by the Rivers of*

To draw this section to a close, one can see from the preceding discussion that Jeremiah has in mind an audience living in cosmopolitan Babylon, a major urban center where the Judahite deportees would necessarily interact with people from both its host group and also other cultures. Ezekiel, by contrast, focuses on those living in an isolated context with little to no interaction with outside groups. Sufficient evidence exists, then, to inquire whether the cross-cultural models for how people respond to these two rather different contexts fit with the responses advocated in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Does the cosmopolitan, integrated setting reflected in Jeremiah produce a pragmatic approach to identity and communal boundaries that allow for openness to outsiders and some degree of integration with them? Does Ezekiel, within the enforced boundaries of the “camp” setting, define and enforce in-group/out-group boundaries and offer a millenarian-like description of home?

### **Advice for Living in Babylonia**

To answer these questions, discussion shall focus on Jeremiah’s advice for living in Babylon (chapters 24; 29) and a selection of texts from Ezekiel that provide its advice for living in Babylonia (11:14–21; 14:1–11; 18:1–32; 20; 44:4–16).

#### *Jeremiah: A Tale of Two Cities*

Jeremiah 24, mentioned earlier, employs the image of good figs and bad figs to denote those whom YHWH will “single out for good” (24:4) and those who will be judged. What Jeremiah 24 fails to do is specify what makes a Judahite exile who has been forcibly displaced (24:5) a good fig. Later texts like chapter 29 take up that issue.

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*Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity* (ed. U. Gabbay and S. Secunda; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 163–216.



Chapter 29 preserves “a letter” from the prophet Jeremiah “to the priests, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem *to Babylon*” (29:1).<sup>55</sup> Describing the audience thus, chapter 29 recalls chapter 24, a text to which it alludes elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> The “letter” encourages these involuntary migrants in the city of Babylon to “build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit,” to marry themselves and to marry off their children in order to multiply the community. The advice finishes by commending the Judahites to “seek the welfare (שְׁלוֹם) of the city (עִיר)<sup>57</sup> to which I [YHWH] have exiled you and pray to YHWH on its behalf,” for it is there “you shall prosper.” McKane grasps that

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<sup>55</sup> On whether or not an actual letter is contained here, see D. L. Smith, *Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington: Meyer Stone, 1989), 128–132; and Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 119–133.

<sup>56</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 2:222–227 argues that Jeremiah 24 and 29 are paired at the ends of a chiasm; cf. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> Rom-Shiloni justifiably notes in her response (p. 000) that there is an important discrepancy between the MT and the LXX here: whereas as MT contains city (עִיר), LXX opts for land (γῆς). She chooses to emphasize the evidence of LXX and to link it to a number of instances where the referent of בָּבֶל could mean the entire land of Babylonia instead of just the city of Babylon (e.g., Jer 51:59–64, though I cannot see why one could not read בָּבֶל there as a single city instead of the whole land). She concludes that the referents of בָּבֶל are “inconsistent or vague” (p. 000) and that she prefers to see בָּבֶל connoting “both the land and the city interchangeably.”

It is impossible to disagree with Rom-Shiloni’s point that בָּבֶל can be ambiguous elsewhere in Jeremiah. Yet at least in the MT tradition of Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah’s tradents specified that בָּבֶל refers to the city. Whether this predated the LXX (which broadened the idea) or postdates the LXX (with MT narrowing it) is irrelevant: the tradents of Jeremiah 29 wanted to be clear that this text addressed the city of Babylon. Rom-Shiloni may be right that that this is “thin evidence,” but when coupled with the further points made in what follows—esp. the story of the Rechabites’ migration into the urban context of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 35—it is at least as equally defensible.

these are not practical steps for living *per se*, “but that they are expressions of ‘integration’ and are used to project Jeremiah’s advice that the exiles should take a long-term view of their residence in Babylon.”<sup>58</sup>

The instructions encourage the Judahite involuntary migrants to actively engage outside their Judahite community.<sup>59</sup> Jeremiah 29 advocates openness to outsiders, exhibiting a positive and hopeful attitude to what might come from those interactions. Or, in the words Malkki uses to describe the Hutu living in an urban context, it extols the pragmatic management of identity, to allow for “key axes of assimilation” likely to promote socio-economic opportunity.<sup>60</sup>

Though others have examined the importance of migration for interpreting Jeremiah 29, this particular theme remains untreated. Smith-Christopher, in his influential book *Religion of the Landless*, argues that Jeremiah 29 promotes non-violent resistance against the Babylonians.<sup>61</sup> For him, this call to violent resistance opposes the militant message of the prophet Hananiah.<sup>62</sup> Though he is correct to recognize the role of migration in shaping of the passage, this interpretation relies too much on potential allusions to

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<sup>58</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:742–743; cf. Rom-Shiloni, “Silence,” 225; and J. Hill, “‘Your Exile Will be Long’: The Book of Jeremiah and the Unended Exile,” in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (ed. M. Kessler; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 149–161.

<sup>59</sup> L. Stulman, *Jeremiah* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 252–257. By contrast, Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 237 focuses only on the dynamic between the community in Babylon and those remaining in Judah, missing how strongly Jeremiah 29 advocates positive engagement with the host population. Thus, while she is correct that this text shows a strong preference for the community in Babylon, over and against the community still in Judah, her characterization of the text as “divisive rhetoric” is incompatible with its meaning within the broader context that it envisions.

<sup>60</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 153–154. The three key axes are intermarriage, pursuing legal naturalization, and personal socioeconomic opportunities.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Religion of the Landless*, esp. pp. 132–137.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

warfare in Deuteronomy 20 to be upheld.

Ahn considers Jeremiah 29 through the social scientific study of involuntary migration, focusing on the way that different generations of involuntary migrants respond to this experience. For Jeremiah 29, Ahn specifies that it is the perspective of the 1.5 generation—those who experienced the involuntary migration as children or early adolescents, coming to adult independence in the new context—that provides the interpretive lens for this “letter.”<sup>63</sup> Ahn concludes that the letter offers “words of hope” to this generation for their time in Babylon.<sup>64</sup> While this “letter” intends to engender hope in its audience, there is scant evidence in the text that it has the 1.5 or any other specific generation in mind. No information is given about the age of the priests, prophets, or exiles addressed; furthermore, by including the elders among its addressees (29:1), the text includes those who were already independent adults at the time of the deportation. By preserving the “letter” in the book, Jeremiah’s tradents also made it available to subsequent generations. So, while Ahn offers some insight to the significance of this “letter,” his particular approach overdetermines and unnecessarily limits its audience.

Although Leuchter does not approach Jeremiah 29 with migration as a central interpretive category, he apprehends a key point:

The exiles addressed in chs. 27–29 became the prototype for the exiles from the final deportation of 587 B.C.E., and the Supplement’s reworking of the older texts concerning the deportees of 597 went to support their ongoing applicability to this newer and larger community...Old covenants and ways of life rooted in the hills of Judah were not only illusory but an affront to divine will. *YHWH’s plan for Judah was to be found by the rivers of Babylon.*<sup>65</sup>

Indeed: not just by the rivers of Babylon but in the urban center itself, where

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<sup>63</sup> Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 156, esp. pp. 107–119, 154–158.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 49.

Jeremiah calls for Judahites to live with openness to the opportunities presented by the cosmopolitan *city* of Babylon.

*Ezekiel: Separate and Not Equal*

Ezekiel offers a harsh juxtaposition to Jeremiah—to the extent that Rom-Shiloni succinctly describes the book of Ezekiel as “separatist.”<sup>66</sup> A particularly strident example of this insular attitude occurs in Ezek 11:14–21. This disputation speech presents a purported saying of those still living in Jerusalem, who claim that their residence there shows that YHWH prefers them and has rejected the involuntary migrants who are no longer in Judah. Ezekiel rejects this claim—vehemently—and explains that YHWH now resides with his community as a *מקדש מעט*, a small or reduced sanctuary. This claim refutes the assertions of those remaining in Jerusalem by making the involuntary migrants into a closed, preferential community in which YHWH resides and supports a view in which life should continue on as much like it had in Jerusalem as possible, despite the unavoidable challenges of living in “Camp” Chebar.

Further evidence of Ezekiel’s inward-looking attitude emerges through its ethical discourses. A. Mein demonstrates that Ezekiel 14 and 18 reflect a “domestication of ethics.” That is, when explaining the past that has prompted YHWH to condemn Jerusalem, Ezekiel highlights the “national and communal sphere,” targets the monarchy and the political class, and criticizes decisions

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<sup>66</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 139, 265; cf. Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, esp. pp. 276–279. Contrast esp. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 2:351. Since Lundbom does not distinguish between Babylon, the city specified in Jeremiah 29, and the rest of Babylonia, he reads it as an example of any city, or indeed any community of people. That mistaken presumption allows him to suggest that Jer 29:7 might be helpful context for Ezek 3:15, for example.

affecting the whole community that “are symbolic of national independence.”<sup>67</sup> When attention turns to life in Babylonia, however, Ezekiel thinks and speaks within the boundaries of the community; the book outlines how one might organize life within a closed community where inhabitants are isolated from outsiders.<sup>68</sup>

Ezekiel shows strong interest in the history of “the house of Israel,” as a way of supporting its polemics against other groups. Three of the book’s 48 chapters are entirely dedicated to recollecting history (Ezekiel 16; 20; and 23); it is also a theme in a number of other sections. Though the historical allegories in chapters 16 and 23 are surely relevant,<sup>69</sup> chapter 20 provides the clearest example of the didactic use of history. Malkki highlighted how the Hutu in the closed camp of Mishamo developed a similar relationship to their history:

One of the most immediately obvious characteristics of the refugees’ telling of their history was its didacticism...There were lists of traits, lists of “symptoms,” lists of faults...The didacticism was in itself a central performative device, but it also reflected the refugees’ urgent preoccupation with documenting and rendering credible to outsiders the history that had brought them to Mishamo and that they could not escape living.<sup>70</sup>

The *Unheilsgeschichte* of Ezekiel 20 gives a scathing account of Israel’s behavior that includes negative details found nowhere else. First, the passage elaborates how past behavior warranted Jerusalem’s defeat and the involuntary deportation of Ezekiel and his compatriots (vv. 3–31). This diatribe includes a threefold assertion that YHWH’s treatment of the people seeks to keep YHWH’s name from being profaned among the onlooking nations (20:9, 14, 22).

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<sup>67</sup> A. Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 214.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–215, esp. 175–176 and 214–215.

<sup>69</sup> For discussion on these, see S. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156–205.

<sup>70</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 53.

An insular, ethnocentric attitude lies just below the surface here. It punctures the surface in v. 32, which opens a short disputation against some Judahite involuntary migrants that want “to be like the nations, like the families of the lands” by worshipping “wood and stone.” This suggestion is met with aggrieved promises of judgment from YHWH, who uses the image of a shepherd sorting a flock to explain that such transgressors have no place with YHWH. Indeed, Ezek 20:39 casts off such people; those who choose the path of religious assimilation are unceremoniously told to stop worshipping YHWH because they profane YHWH’s holy name.<sup>71</sup> Needless to say, this is a long, long way from praying for the welfare of the city of Babylon.

Lest one think a longer-term viewpoint might change Ezekiel’s response, the vision of a restored Jerusalem in Ezekiel 40–48 indicates otherwise. Perhaps the most pointed expression of ethnocentrism in the book occurs in Ezek 44:4–16. This passage often receives attention for its assertion that Ezekiel’s fellow Zadokite priests will displace the Levites at the Jerusalem temple. Yet, before addressing this matter, the passage unequivocally prohibits the presence of any foreigner (גֵר) in YHWH’s sanctuary.<sup>72</sup> Serious precautions prevail against the “abominations” (v. 7) that are thought to have profaned the temple in the past. This attitude recalls Malkki’s observation that “[i]t is the Hutu “spatially isolated and insulated” in Tanzanian camps...who have constructed a new nationalism complete with a mythical past that demonizes the Tutsi [who

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. C. A. Strine, “The Role of Repentance in the Book of Ezekiel: A Second Chance for the Second Generation,” *JTS* 63 (2012): 467–491.

<sup>72</sup> One could argue that Ezekiel 37–39 envision an even more radical solution: by suggesting that all people outside of YHWH’s purified people are destroyed in a cosmic battle, it presents the logical implication that there are not even non-Israelites who might approach the restored temple. For discussion, see C. A. Strine, “*Chaoskampf* against Empire: YHWH’s Battle against Gog (Ezek 38–39) as Resistance Literature,” in *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires* (ed. A. Lenzi and J. Stökl; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 87–108.

persecuted them] and looks forward to a future in a Burundi cleansed of Tutsi.”<sup>73</sup>

### **Sojourner: Positive or Negative?**

A final contrast between Jeremiah and Ezekiel arises from how each text utilizes an indicative migrant to illustrate its position. Jeremiah 35 cites the Rechabites as positive paradigm, whereas Ezekiel 33 presents Abraham as a negative one.

#### *Jeremiah 35: The Rechabites*

YHWH’s prompt for Jeremiah to visit the Rechabites in the Jerusalem temple in Jeremiah 35 comes unexpectedly. Not having appeared yet, why introduce the Rechabites now? That tension persists until v. 13, when YHWH announces the Rechabites offer a lesson for the Judahites.

To truly understand the lesson, one must carefully examine the story. Jeremiah goes to see the Rechabites in the temple, presents them with wine, and invites them to drink it. Their response invokes their eponymous ancestor, Jonadab ben Rechab, who commanded them “You shall never drink wine, either you or your children” (v. 6). Unprompted, they also announce that Jonadab prohibited them to “build houses or sow fields or plant vineyards...but you shall live in tents all your days, so that you may live long upon the land where you sojourn” (גור; v. 7).<sup>74</sup> The Rechabites explain that they have obeyed the command not to drink, but confess to disobeying the instruction to remain גרים because “when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon invaded the country, we said, ‘Come, let us go into Jerusalem because of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram.’ And so we are living in Jerusalem” (v. 11).

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<sup>73</sup> See above, note 33.

<sup>74</sup> On the promise to the Rechabites, see J. D. Levenson, “On the Promise to the Rechabites,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 508–514.

This ancillary information is crucial to interpreting vv. 12–16, which otherwise seem to contradict the Rechabites’ stated reality.<sup>75</sup> When YHWH declares that “the commands of Jonadab ben Rechab have been fulfilled” (v. 14), this judgement considers the ancestor’s prohibition against wine—and *nothing else*. Neither the prohibition against settling in Jerusalem nor the Rechabites’ admission they have breached this instruction is mentioned. Why the omission?

Leuchter recognizes the importance of this command, remarking that “[t]he reference to the Rechabites’ religious desperation” arises from “the shift from tent dwelling to urbanization in Jerusalem.”<sup>76</sup> Rightly, he observes that “the merit of sustaining tradition through adaptation in times of need does not imply a lack of conviction.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, he notes that it echoes the message of Jer 29:5–7.<sup>78</sup> One can go yet further. The reason the Rechabites offer for settling in Jerusalem is that “when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon invaded the country, we said, ‘Come, let us go into Jerusalem.’” Considered on the dimension of voluntary or involuntary migration, the Rechabites are involuntary migrants.<sup>79</sup> They are not in Jerusalem by choice, but because of a political and military situation beyond their control. In this the Rechabites correlate to the forcibly displaced Judahites now in the city of Babylon.

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<sup>75</sup> W. McKane, “Jeremiah and the Rechabites,” *ZAW* 100 (1988): 117–118.

<sup>76</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 97. Emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 98; contrast Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 655–656, who think this is an “irony” caused by editing of the passage.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. W. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 2:23.

<sup>79</sup> More specifically, they are conflict-induced, internally displaced, involuntary migrants. Both McKane, “Rechabites,” 118; and L. C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 392 recognize that the Rechabites are refugees, though neither pursues the insight further.



From this standpoint, Jeremiah 35 argues a faithful response to involuntary migration into an urban setting requires adherence to tradition—but only insofar as necessary to retain one’s identity. It simultaneously encourages acclimation to the new situation.<sup>80</sup> Chapter 35 thus reinforces the message of 29:5–7: it explicates life as a “good” fig as pursuing an open, engaging approach to outsiders that allows for—indeed demands—a certain flexibility with tradition and a pragmatic approach to drawing identity boundaries. Or as Leuchter remarks, “[t]he Rechabites demonstrate true piety by adhering to the spirit of their father’s mandate in the face of shifting tides.”<sup>81</sup>

### *Ezekiel 33: Abraham*

Ezekiel presents a sharp contrast in the way it responds to another paradigm of sojourning: the patriarch Abraham. Ezekiel 33:23–29 is a disputation speech that follows the book’s habit of recounting the interlocutor’s words as preface to giving YHWH’s counterargument. The quotation comes from those “who live in the ruins in the land of Israel”—that is, the post-587 residents of Jerusalem. These Judahites claim that “Abraham was one man and he possessed the land; but we are numerous: to us the land is given as a possession” (33:24). On the surface, the logic of the prophet’s response is equally transparent: the non-exiles have defiled themselves by their conduct, thus YHWH will judge them. The indictment, however, goes beyond this direct retort.

Ezekiel 33:23–29 evokes Genesis 15 in various ways and thereby alludes to a larger tradition about Abraham that, while no doubt comprised of smaller

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<sup>80</sup> Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 291–294. Though Stulman sees the passage dealing with “the moral formation of refugees who had undergone enormous hardship and were facing the challenge of forging a new identity,” he makes no comment on the silence of the passage regarding their residence in the urban context of Jerusalem.

<sup>81</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 98.

texts with particular emphases, never prohibits interaction with outsiders.<sup>82</sup> Ezekiel rejects the appeal to Abraham and in doing so opposes a tradition of Abraham as a figure who sojourns (גור) in the land, interacts positively with outside groups (e.g., Genesis 14; 20), and even fathers a son with a foreigner (Genesis 16).

Albeit brief and not immediately transparent, Ezekiel's rejection of the appeal to Abraham corresponds with its other recommendations against interaction with outsiders and assimilation to their ways of life.<sup>83</sup> To borrow Rom-Shiloni's phrase, its treatment of Abraham reflects the "extreme exclusivity" that Ezekiel espouses.

### **Context Drives Conflict**

In his book *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26–45*, Leuchter concludes that Jeremiah 26–45 responds to and undermines a Zadokite agenda represented after 597 B.C.E. by the prophet and priest Ezekiel. That agenda seeks, he says, to reject the Davidic monarchy, to discredit the Deuteronomistic movement, to demonize its chief prophetic proponent Jeremiah, and to marginalize the Shaphanide traditions of Jeremiah's material. Ezekiel, according to Leuchter, disseminated "propaganda for restoration that attempted to draw out the nationalistic impulses of the Judean exiles and place the Zadokites in charge both during the exile and, consequently, once the exile was to come to the

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<sup>82</sup> See R. Rendtorff, "Genesis 15 im Rahmen der Theologischen Bearbeitung der Vätergeschichte," in *Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments: Festschrift für Claus Westermann zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. R. Albertz et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 74–81; D. I. Block, *Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology* (Jackson, Miss.: Evangelical Theological Society, 1988), 79–81; K. S. Winslow, "Mixed Marriage in Torah Narratives," in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period* (ed. C. Frevel; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 132–149.

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 177–227.

end.”<sup>84</sup> Ezekiel’s rhetoric constituted “a serious threat to the original message of Jeremiah,” so Jeremiah 26–45 rebutted the Zadokite argument “by taking up the same issues from the outset of his work, albeit from the opposite perspective.”

Leuchter correctly concludes that Ezekiel, by contrast to Jeremiah, presents a “nationalistic” program. Ezekiel does oppose parts of the Deuteronomistic tradition—for instance, by radically altering the monarchy’s role.<sup>85</sup> Yet as various commentators have shown, Ezekiel neither rejects the Deuteronomistic tradition outright nor unreservedly embraces the Priestly tradition seen as its antithesis.<sup>86</sup> Ezekiel mediates both traditions, rewrites Judahite history (e.g., Ezekiel 20; cf. Ezekiel 16; 23), and offers some fresh theological formulations (e.g., Ezekiel 18). The unifying thread throughout is neither opposition to the Deuteronomistic tradition nor any other ideology *per se*, but the creative deployment of elements from various Judahite traditions to craft a response to the trauma of involuntary migration into an isolated, refugee camp-like context.

Jeremiah’s indebtedness to Deuteronomistic tradition is perhaps more straightforward, but its utilization of existing traditions is no less influenced by the contours of the involuntary migration it depicts. Leuchter correctly identifies that tensions between the Deuteronomistic and Zadokite traditions in Judah prior to the first deportation of 597 B.C.E. inform Jeremiah 26–45. Still, the challenge of contextualizing their shared Judahite tradition to the radically different settings of cosmopolitan Babylon and isolated “Camp” Chebar

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<sup>84</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 160–161.

<sup>85</sup> Crouch and Strine, “YHWH’s Battle Against Chaos.”

<sup>86</sup> R. L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); P. M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007), 33–41. Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 129–169.

cements whatever pre-existing disparity there was between their views into hardened disagreement.

The critical event that places the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel on diverging paths is not, *pace* Leuchter, Jehoiachin's full submission to the King of Babylon—represented by the role he assumes in the royal court at Babylon—but rather the contrasting settings of multicultural Babylon and monocultural “Camp” Chebar.<sup>87</sup> It could hardly be otherwise, given the radically different social settings that (at least one strand of material in) Jeremiah and Ezekiel reflect. Jehoiachin's release did not catalyze the rupture—it merely provided an occasion on which two fundamentally different perspectives come into clear focus.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Need for a Taxonomy of Involuntary Migration**

At the outset of this paper, the comparison between Jeremiah and Ezekiel was framed as a case study, aimed at expanding the textual evidence for the existence of dissimilar Judahite involuntary migrant communities in Babylonia from the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. as well as highlighting the inadequacy of the homogenizing term “exile” when writing about this period. The Judahites forcibly deported in 597, 587, and even 582 B.C.E. did not have a uniform experience of involuntary migration, any more than all the Syrians involuntarily displaced from their country in the past few years have. Yes, there are shared aspects between the trauma of finding oneself in a Jordanian refugee camp and fleeing through Turkey and Greece to seek asylum in Germany. Yet no one expects those experiences to generate the same posture towards their shared tradition or unfamiliar communities. Likewise, scholars cannot continue to gloss over the disparity between the experiences of ancient Judahites forcibly

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<sup>87</sup> Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 159–161.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

deported to Babylonia, whose experiences range from settling in the city of Babylon to encampment in remote, isolated Chebar—not to mention the internal displacement of many Judahites within Judah. Failing to attend to such distinctions that exist *simultaneously* between these Judahite groups causes a lack of the specificity demanded by our understanding of experiences of involuntary migration and required by the literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Comparing Jeremiah and Ezekiel supplies just one example of how a more detailed taxonomy of involuntary migration can enable biblical scholars and ancient historians to identify, analyze, and usefully employ the different features of involuntary migrant experiences to better understand ancient texts and history. In view of advances in the social scientific study of migration and the scholarly consensus of its centrality in ancient Israelite and Judahite history, biblical studies must disarticulate the experience of “exile” along a number of axes—this includes the chronological and geographical ones already rising in profile, but also must incorporate the divergent social settings among communities. Research demonstrates how these settings shape personal experiences of and responses to involuntary migration. As this paper shows, there is substantial evidence these divergent experiences of involuntary migration fundamentally influenced the material preserved in the Hebrew Bible.

Exile, as a concept and a category, is no longer enough. Scholars of the first millennium B.C.E. will benefit tremendously as we continue to explore how the various experiences of involuntary migration relate to and illumine our available evidence.

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