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Next Year in Jerusalem:
Exile and Return
in Jewish History

Studies in Jewish Civilization
Volume 30

Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Annual
Symposium of the Klutznick Chair
in Jewish Civilization,
the Harris Center for Judaic Studies,
and the Schwalb Center
for Israel and Jewish Studies

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Next Year in Jerusalem:
Exile and Return
in Jewish History

Studies in Jewish Civilization
Volume 30

Editor:
Leonard J. Greenspoon

The Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization

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Acknowledgments

The 30th Annual Symposium on Jewish Civilization took place on Sunday, October 29, and Monday, October 30, 2017, in Omaha, Nebraska. The title of the symposium, from which this volume also takes its name, was “Next Year in Jerusalem: Exile and Return in Jewish History.” All of the essays collected here, with the exception of the ones by Jean Cahan and Shlomo Abramovich, were delivered at the symposium itself.

The academic sponsors of this symposium represent three major educational institutions in Nebraska: Creighton University (the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization, the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion and Society), the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (the Harris Center for Judaic Studies), and the University of Nebraska at Omaha (the Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies).

As it happens, the topic for the 2017 symposium was suggested by Moshe Gershovich ז”ל, then director of the Schwalb Center. His all-too-early death deprived us of the active and inspiring participation on his part from which we had benefited in previous years.

In large measure, the symposium owes its success to two groups of dedicated and talented individuals. First are my academic colleagues: Dr. Ronald Simkins (Creighton), Dr. Jean Cahan (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), and Dr. Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha). Their generosity, individually and collectively, has been exemplary.

The second group consists of administrative assistants, the individuals who really know how to get things done. In this context, I offer sincere expressions of gratitude to Colleen Hastings, who works with the Klutznick Chair and Kripke Center at Creighton, and Kasey De Goey of the Schwalb Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

As many readers of this volume know well, the road from oral presentation to written publication is filled with obstacles. Our path has been inestimably smoothed over through our relationship with the Purdue University Press. For almost a decade we have enjoyed the professional and personable staff of the press, first under the previous director, Charles Watkinson, and now under Justin Race. They have made us feel comfortable in every way, and we look forward to many more years of association with the press.

In addition to the academic and communal organizations mentioned above, this symposium is also generously supported by

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February 2019
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Editor's Introduction

For the last two decades or so, we have held our annual symposium on the last Sunday and Monday of October. At the conclusion of every year's event—and sometimes even before then—someone asks about the topic for the following year. This is not surprising, since our selection of a different topic for each year is a distinctive feature of our series of symposia—and from my perspective (and not mine alone, I think) a positive characteristic.

So it was that at the end of October 2016, with the twenty-ninth symposium still a vivid memory, I began soliciting ideas for our thirtieth installment from my academic colleagues and interested members of Omaha's Jewish community. My good friend Moshe Gershovich, director of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Schwalb Center and an active cosponsor of the symposium series, was brimming with enthusiasm as he suggested "Exile and Return."

In this context he was especially interested in the Balfour Declaration, which was promulgated one hundred years earlier in 1917. We talked about Moshe's delivering the keynote address on this topic. Alas, Moshe's death, which was a personal and professional loss to all who knew him, intervened, and he was no longer alive in the fall of 2017.

We did keep alive Moshe's idea for the symposium. Recognizing that we could not find a "substitute" Moshe, as it were, to make a keynote presentation, we went in another direction with a concert by renowned performers Maria Krupoves and Gerard Edery. This was made possible through the generosity of the director of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Harris Center, Jean Cahan.

In a sense, then, the symposium and these essays are a tribute to Moshe and his vision. In a larger sense, they also reflect the combined talents and energies of those who participated in this symposium and prepared a publishable written version of their presentations.

Wherever possible, I have arranged the chapters in this volume in chronological order, beginning with the biblical period and continuing until the very recent present. Acknowledging that this is but one way of arranging the rich material this collection contains, I nonetheless offer it as an approach that illuminates and elucidates developments, both interdependent and independent, that occurred over the past two and a half millennia.

The first five essays deal primarily with the distant past, from the sixth century BCE to the sixteenth century CE. Samuel L. Boyd, University of Colorado–Boulder, focuses our attention on "Place as Real and Imagined in Exile: Jerusalem at the Center of Ezekiel." As he shows, geography functions

in important ways for exiled communities. In the process, real places (near and far) morph into symbols, and symbolic places are reimagined as real. In his essay, Boyd explores the concept of central place in two ancient documents—the *Mappa Mundi* [Babylonian Map of the World] and the biblical book of Ezekiel—showing how Babylon and Jerusalem function as real and symbolic concepts in each.

Dereck Daschke, Truman State University, also looks at the world of the Bible in his essay “‘How Deserted Lies the City’: Politics and the Trauma of Homelessness in the Hebrew Bible.” He explains that a growing body of biblical scholarship has begun to recognize the central role of the Babylonian exile in the shaping of the Hebrew Bible. In such readings, the exile represents a quintessential occasion of individual and collective trauma. In this vein, Daschke’s essay examines the trauma of homelessness as it is expressed in the Hebrew Bible in spiritual and political terms.

Menahem Mor, University of Haifa, was the first holder of the Klutznick Chair at Creighton University. His essay “Exile and Return in the Samaritan Traditions” discusses the Samaritan traditions about their version of exile and return in the various Samaritan Chronicles. In the process, he compares these traditions with parallel Jewish sources, including the historian Josephus, to understand the role of exile and return in the Samaritans’ history and the function of Mount Gerizim in these traditions.

Jean-Philippe Delorme, University of Toronto, shows how recently discovered texts help to expand our knowledge of the Babylonian exile. In his essay, titled “The *Āl-yāhūdu* Texts (ca. 572–477 BCE): A New Window into the Life of the Judean Exilic Community of Babylonia,” he begins by reminding us that Jewish history has been punctuated by numerous exilic experiences since its beginnings. At its genesis stands the Babylonian exile. Until recently, our understanding of this crucial period has been based principally on secondary sources of debatable accuracy. The recent publication of the *Āl-Yāhūdu* texts makes up for these shortcomings. In his presentation, Delorme illustrates the daily reality of the exiles as it is seen through these archives.

Daniel J. Lasker, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, is the author of the last essay in this section, “Karaites and Jerusalem: From Anan ben David to the Karaite Heritage Center in the Old City.” He notes that Jerusalem has always played a special role in Karaite thought and practice. The golden age of Karaism (tenth–eleventh centuries CE) was centered in Jerusalem. Even after the Karaite community was destroyed by the Crusaders, there was almost

always a Karaite presence in Jerusalem. In his essay, Lasker explores Karaite history and practice, especially as it is presented at the recently opened Karaite Heritage Center in the city of Jerusalem.

The next four essays cover the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, prior to the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948. First is “Jewish Folk Songs: Exile and Return” by Paula Eisenstein Baker, adjunct instructor of violoncello and chamber music emerita, University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. In her essay, Eisenstein Baker shows how Jewish folk songs, as employed in art music, experienced multiple exiles. By the early 1920s, the Society for Jewish Folk Music in St. Petersburg and its Moscow branch had quit publishing. Their works, with new publishers, were exiled to Berlin and Vienna. Beginning in the mid-1930s, these tunes faced exile again, this time to New York City.

Haim Sperber, Western Galilee College, is next with “Is Zionism a Movement of Return?” In this essay, Sperber supports his claim that the early Zionist movement was a political union of two different movements aiming at two different objectives—re-creating the old kingdom of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and creating a new political Jewish nation. These two movements reflect two different kinds of nationalism: cultural-ethnic nationalism and cultural-political nationalism. The decision to form a united political organization initially blurred the differences between the two.

Judah M. Bernstein, New York University, turns the focus to the United States in his essay, titled “The Jew in Situ: Variations of Zionism in Early Twentieth Century America.” He observes that historians who have studied the early decades of American Zionism (1898–1948) have typically operated with the assumption that for Jews, America was viewed as home and not exile. It is no doubt true that American Zionist leaders seldom called on Jews to migrate. At the same time, as Bernstein shows, this interpretation overlooks the ambivalence felt by a number of influential American Zionist intellectuals about whether to consider America home or exile.

Jean Axelrad Cahan, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, is one of the symposium's cosponsors. In her essay “Returning to Jewish Theology: Further Reflections on Franz Rosenzweig,” she is interested in reconsidering some of Rosenzweig's ideas on a possible return to Jewish theology. In the process, she shows that historical and scientific critiques of Judaism constituted a central preoccupation of his. Indeed, Rosenzweig's account of revelation was intended to displace or overcome precisely that kind of critique.

The last five essays cover developments from the early years of the State of Israel to the twenty-first century. Joseph Hodes, Texas Tech University, is the author of the essay "Exile and Return: Indian Jews and the Politics of Homecoming." According to the traditions of the Indian Jewish community the Bene Israel, their founders left the biblical kingdom of Israel and came ashore near present-day Mumbai. They lived peacefully with their Hindu hosts for the next 1,800 years. In his essay, Hodes chronicles Jewish life in India and the multiple exiles and returns the Bene Israel made to the State of Israel in its early years.

Next, Philip Hollander, University of Wisconsin–Madison, looks at literature in "Against the Sabra Current: Hanokh Bartov's *Each Had Six Wings* and the Embrace of Diasporic Vitality." He reminds us that the Israeli Declaration of Independence, drawing on traditional Jewish terminology, voices the State of Israel's commitment to the ingathering of the exiles. Thus, in Israel's first years, its resources were committed to immigrant absorption. This monumental undertaking, however, found limited literary representation. In his presentation, Hollander analyzes Bartov's novel of 1954 as a significant exception to this trend.

In his essay "Shylock and the *Ghetto*, or East European Jewish Culture and Israeli Identity," Dror Abend-David, University of Florida, focuses on the theater. In 1984, Abend-David observes, author Yehushua Sobol brought to stage the play *Ghetto*, which was directed by Gedalya Besser for the Haifa Municipal Theater. In reading this work, Abend-David explores the ghetto as a psychological phenomenon that has been ingrained and perpetuated in modern Jewish culture long after the physical walls of the Jewish ghetto were dismantled. For better or worse, then, the ghetto is an essential part of modern Jewish history.

Shlomo Abramovich, visiting scholar, Beth Israel Synagogue, Omaha, begins his essay "Exile and Zionism in the Writings of Rav Shagar" by pointing out that the term "Zionism" can be understood in many ways. Many Zionist thinkers added to it a negative attitude toward the exile and diaspora. Therefore, finding a Zionist thinker with a positive approach to the exile is exceptional. In his essay, Abramovich presents Rav Shagar's ideas on such an approach and examines his unique position on Zionism.

The last essay in the volume, by Mordechai (Motti) Inbari, University of North Carolina, Pembroke, is titled "The Role of the Temple Mount Faithful Movement in Changing Messianic Religious Zionists' Attitude toward the Temple Mount." As he explains, the rebuilding of the Third Temple is viewed

in rabbinic literature as the manifestation of Jewish redemption. The establishment of the State of Israel and the Israeli victory of 1967 gave rise to the view among religious Zionists that the End Days were drawing near. In his presentation, Inbari describes the internal debate within these circles over the question of Jews entering the Temple Mount and presents the religious dynamics that permitted Jews to enter.

Leonard J. Greenspoon

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Place as Real and Imagined in Exile: Jerusalem at the Center of Ezekiel

Samuel L. Boyd

INTRODUCTION

The narrator of the book of Ecclesiastes, upon reflection of the profound depths of Qoheleth's search for meaning, claimed at the final chapter of the work that "of the making of books, there is no end [עֲשׂוֹת סִפְרִים הָרְבָה אֵין קֵץ]" (Eccl 12:12). A similar statement could be made about the making of maps. As J. Z. Smith states, "map is not territory," and the concept of a place achieves significance through intentional acts of delineating and defining meaning through the organization of space.¹ Given the ever-changing landscape of ideologies, be they imperial, religious, economic, or otherwise, the making of maps seems to have no end. Maps and their representation of the world, whether visual or encoded in rhetoric, can serve as especially important symbols for communities exiled from home. These symbols provide such communities with reference points of lost homelands and real or imagined reflections on the history and configurations of places of perceived origins.

This religious mapmaking has been incredibly important in the history and thought of Judaism, particularly the role of Jerusalem as a central place around which the related concepts of exile and return animated the hopes and imagination of diasporic Jewish life as well as Jewish existence in Israel. According to an influential article by Philip Alexander, it was not until the Hellenistic period, specifically in the book of Jubilees, in the second century BCE that Judaism practiced in earnest such mapmaking and thereby developed the notion of Jerusalem as a central place in cosmic geography generally and the city as the *omphalos* [belly button] of the world specifically.²

In this essay, I challenge this notion of the Hellenistic origins of this concept in Judaism, tracing instead the concept of city as center of the world and city as *omphalos*, to the sixth century BCE at least. I do so in order to examine the roots of this concept in ancient Israelite and rabbinic thought and, more importantly for the theme of this symposium, the roots of Jerusalem as a symbol around which to organize the concepts of exile and return. First, I analyze the role of central placement of Babylon in the religious imagination of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, reflected both in texts and in the famous Babylonian Mappa Mundi (Map of the World).

Second, I examine a similar concept of political center, used for a very different purpose than the Babylonian Map of the World, in the book of Ezekiel, a book written contemporaneous with the Babylonian Mappa Mundi. While Ezekiel, particularly chapters 40–48, has been compared with the Babylonian Map of the World in previous scholarship, scholars have focused on the use of water as mythological boundary making and not, as in this study, on the role of political capitals as centers of the world (see more below).

Understanding the cultural background of this rhetoric in Ezekiel through an analysis of the Mappa Mundi provides a foundation for the manner in which Jerusalem as center would become a vital concept (though used in drastically different ways than in Ezekiel) in Second Temple Jewish and rabbinic thought in both diasporic Jewish communities and those residing in Israel. I examine the ways in which Ezekiel's rhetorical picture of Jerusalem as center was received, adapted, and interpreted to provide a vital symbol for Judaism, offering a sense of hope for return and giving new depths to the phrase "Next Year in Jerusalem." Finally, I conclude with brief thoughts regarding the ways in which this concept of Jerusalem as center of the world and *omphalos* in Judaism also animates the religious thought of other groups attaching themselves to Jewish traditions and places in time, such as Ethiopian Christianity and Jewry.

BABYLON AS CENTER: MESOPOTAMIAN HISTORY, IDEOLOGY, AND THE IMAGE OF STATE CAPITALS

The imperial symbolism of directionality appears already in Sumerian, the first known written language. The word for "north" in Sumerian as a direction was *subartu*, but the scope of this lexeme changed along the lines of the tension between realpolitik and imperial ambition.³ As Assyriologist Piotr Michalowski states, even at this early stage "geographic terms are not neutral, objective, descriptive indexes of natural landscape, but are subjective and emotionally loaded elements of a semantic subsystem. . . . They were reinvented again and again, played with and reformulated as part of larger semantic schemes. As the mental structure of the world changed some terms encompassed larger or smaller domains or changed reference."⁴

With the founding of Akkade around 2350 BCE, the seat of the Akkadian Empire (often described as the first true empire in world history) established by Sargon the Great, imperial centers would also take on great symbolic significance. The feats of this king lived on in literary and political memory to the point that subsequent kings in the ancient Near East (even non-Mesopotamian

rulers such as the Hittites) compared their feats to the magnitude of Sargon's imperial achievements.⁵ The historical memory of the third millennium BCE Akkadian Empire appeared in the first-millennium BCE reign of the Sargonid kings in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. These Assyrian rulers enacted the creation of new capitals with particular enthusiasm. With the historical seat and the traditional capital of the empire at Assur, in the ninth century Ashurnasirpal II moved the capital to Kalḫu, also called Nimrud. Sargon II, taking his name in some manner to reflect historical memory and ambition in the wake of Sargon the Great, established a new capital located close to Nineveh called Dur-Šarrukin ("City of Sargon"). Finally, Harran became a sort of capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the final gasp of this kingdom when the last Neo-Assyrian king, Assur-uballit II, abandoned Nineveh to make Harran his stronghold. Harran did not remain capital for long, as forces from Babylon and Media overtook the city in 609 BCE and again, finally, in 605 BCE.

In each case, the newly constructed Assyrian capitals were both pragmatic and symbolic. Changing boundaries of the empire necessitated new, strategic positioning, a reality that many expanding empires have had to face. In the third century CE, when Rome's extent was so great that the traditional seat of the empire was no longer beneficial or central for ruling such a large domain with enemies encroaching in imperial territory, Diocletian changed the imperial geography to reflect this need.⁶ Later, Constantine began major construction in Constantinople; while Rome still benefited from imperial building, the new face of Roman interests and religion in Christianity became the motivation for investing in a new capital. The situation was no different in Assyrian times. While Ashurnasirpal gives no motivation for moving the capital to Kalḫu in his inscriptions, Joan and David Oates note that the traditional capital "Assur lay at the southern boundary of rain-fed agricultural land and a more central location would have been both strategically and economically desirable."⁷ Kalḫu was just such a central location, which Ashurnasirpal inaugurated as the new capital with much feasting and ceremony. Political factors also contributed, as the elites in Assur had developed enough prestige and wealth to challenge the king and become more independent of the Crown, necessitating a new political center removed from an unreliable aristocracy.

The founding of Dur-Šarrukin as a capital in Sargon II's reign was also highly symbolic and necessary politically. Sargon II was likely a usurper to the throne, and he needed to establish both a sense of connection to the past and a statement of his own unique royal place in the empire. Yet the elites in Kalḫu, despite historically being a home to royal supporters from the days

of Ashurnasirpal, had proven hostile to Assur-Nerari V in the eighth century BCE, resulting in the overthrow of Assur-Nerari's rule and the rise of Tiglath-Pileser III. As Karen Radner observes, Tiglath-Pileser III and his successor, Shalmaneser V, had no reason to fear this elite base in Kalḫu, as the aristocracy were the reason for installing Tiglath-Pileser on the throne. The usurper Sargon, however, encountered rebellions in both the peripheries and heartland of his empire upon his ascent to power and therefore had motivation to move the capital away from a city whose elites had already developed a proven track record of deposing kings and installing new ones.⁸ The move to Harran, then, entailed another political necessity as a forced move by Assur-uballit II, given the advance of Babylonians and Medes into the Assyrian heartland.

The ideology behind Babylon as a capital was in many ways different from the ideology that formed the underpinning of Assyrian imperial centers. With Assyrian capitals, considerations of the king were foremost. As with the king, so with the capitals. For this reason, the city layouts contained the traditional temples in or near the center, but the royal palaces were near the gates. The king was the first symbol people encountered, and the city thrived or fell depending on royalty.⁹ Even from its beginnings, Babylon had a strikingly different ideology as its foundation.¹⁰ Hammurabi, the great Amorite king of the eighteenth century BCE, turned Babylon, previously a humble backwater, into the seat of a major empire. As a religious justification of this upstart political center, Marduk, the patron deity of the city, became the high god of the pantheon, dethroning both Enlil, the high god of the Sumerian pantheon, and Ninurta, the god who held chaos in check, providing world order, duties now ascribed to Marduk.

In order to reinforce Babylon as a capital, the Sumerian and Babylonian model of kingship was emphasized: Marduk was king of the cosmos ruling from Babylon and the earthly king “as representative of secular power, ruled in the shadow of Marduk.”¹¹ The presence or absence of Marduk in the city was such a key idea that the removal of the statue of Marduk by the Elamites and its return perhaps became the basis of mythological reflection encoded in the *Enuma Elish*, though debates about the dating of this epic remain.¹² Even into the time of Cyrus, the idea of Marduk in Babylon—and the importance of the idea of divine dwelling therein—became the basis for the rhetoric of Achaemenid expansion into southern Mesopotamia in the sixth century BCE, as attested in the Cyrus Cylinder.

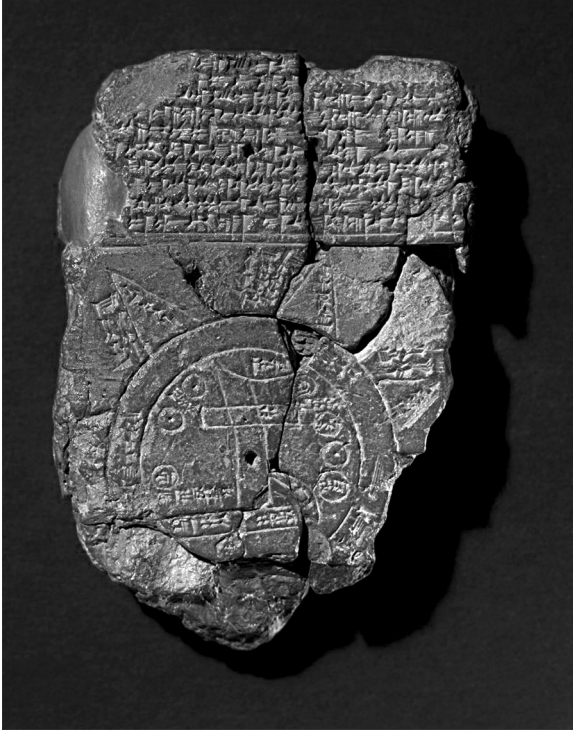
The focus on Marduk as king of the cosmos explains a number of features of Babylonian thought. For example, the phrase “king of kings”

was used in Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions for both kings and gods. In Neo-Babylonian, however, the phrase was applied exclusively to Marduk and never to Neo-Babylonian kings.¹³ This focus on Marduk as king also explains the ideology behind Marduk's temple, Esagil, and ziggurat. Power resided so firmly with Marduk in Babylon that his ziggurat Etemenanki was seen as the "counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary Ešarra," the latter term referring to a vault in the sky that housed a divine sanctuary.¹⁴ This cosmic centering was enshrined in the epic of creation, the *Enuma Elish*, where "the gods built the Esagil temple as terrestrial image of the Apsu," which was the underground abode where Ea, Marduk's father, lived.¹⁵ As Paul-Alain Beaulieu points out, even seventh-century Assyrian kings such as Esarhaddon expressed conviction of this cosmic centrality of Babylon. Esarhaddon, who along with Ashurbanipal rebuilt much of the city after Sennacherib destroyed it in 689 BCE, "proclaims the Esagil temple as 'the palace of the gods, the mirror image of the Apsu, the counterpart of Ešarra, and the replica of the constellation of the Field.'"¹⁶ As Beaulieu argues, this later phrase was the expression of a conviction that this constellation formed an approximate square, providing a celestial apologetic for claiming that the Esagil, also an approximate square, was indeed the center of the cosmos.¹⁷

Though the North and South Palaces in Babylon were located near the entrance to the city at the Ishtar gate, reflecting an Assyrian (and non-southern Mesopotamian) layout, Nebuchadnezzar interpreted the placement of these royal abodes in distinctly Babylonian terms. Their locations were about not royal ideology but rather self-effacement and not competing with the center of imperial and mythological imagination, namely the cult complexes of Marduk. In other words, Esagila, the temple of Marduk, was the focus on the meeting of Heaven and Earth in Babylon ideologically as the center of the cosmos. Indeed, "later speculation viewed the ziggurat Etemenanki as counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary Ešarra, confirming the role of Babylon as nodal center of the axis joining the underground world to the firmament."¹⁸

In remarkably visual fashion, the Mappa Mundi combines the rhetoric of empire and symbolic significance of directionality with the ideology of Babylon as cosmic center, though the map itself came from Borsippa.¹⁹

While other maps existed in the ancient Near East, none combine the world scope, ideology of directionality, and rhetoric of center as does the Babylonian Map of the World. The dates of the map range from the ninth century BCE as the earliest possible point of creation of the document to the sixth century BCE at the height of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The best argument



Mappa Mundi: Obverse only, with Finkel's join of the northeast nagû. Courtesy of British Museum.

for dating is in the seventh and sixth centuries, particularly given that prior to this period Babylon was a backwater memory of a once great capital and was particularly in no position to claim world-capital status during the reign of Sennacherib, who destroyed much of Babylon.²⁰ Only during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal did the city begin to emerge again as an important cultural and religious center.²¹ Yet in neither of these cases did Babylon function as a center in the ways in which the Babylonian Map of the World reflects a global reordering (or as Wayne Horowitz calls it, a “Mesopotamian cosmic geography”) around the city.

What allowed such a radical reorientation of the world around this ascendant city? The text surrounding the map presents historical memory and new imperial ambitions. This text uses script on the obverse reminiscent of second-millennium Babylonian, a period in time—until the Hittites sacked Babylon in 1595 BCE—when this southern Mesopotamian empire loomed large in the political and cultural spheres of the ancient Near East. While the expansive empire of the Babylonians in the second millennium was confined mostly to Hammurabi's reign (much of the territory was lost during the reign

of Šamsu-Iluna, Hammurabi's son), Babylon remained a powerful political base and symbol. Moreover, the prestige of the Babylonian sphere transferred into literature and the ideology of writing inasmuch as the Standard Babylonian dialect became the means of literary production, so much so that Neo-Assyrian kings adopted it in their royal inscriptions (with the recognizable Assyrianisms present as well). The writing on the reverse of the Mappa Mundi orthographically matches first-millennium conventions. Add other linguistic clues, such as the semantics of *nagû* as a far-off region (a semantic range that appears only in Neo-Babylonian texts, whereas Neo-Assyrian texts refer to administrative regions such as Judah as a *nagû*), and it becomes clear that the final version of the map is from the late seventh or sixth centuries BCE. The combination of second- and first-millennium orthography and language, then, functions as a way to recast memory of the second-millennium glory days but for a Neo-Babylonian audience.²²

The ideology of Babylon as cosmic center, so different than Assyrian capitals, is what allowed Babylon as an idea to survive its destruction (whereas the destruction of Assyrian capitals meant the “abandonment of its cities and the end of [their] cuneiform documentation”).²³ This ideology allowed Babylon to live on as an idea, becoming the planned capital of Alexander's empire and where Alexander died. Traces of the intellectual life of southern Mesopotamia, centered on Babylonian learning, thrived in the Hellenistic period, and the population of the region remained consistent until the Seleucids, when at last the attention toward the maintenance of the city architecturally, culturally, and financially shifted away from Babylon and toward the new capital, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.²⁴ The symbol and ideology behind Babylon persisted, however, as evidenced in the application of the name “Babylon” and all it entailed as far as memory of politics, culture, and religious perception to Rome in Jewish literature after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.²⁵

This examination of Babylon as a world and cosmic center as represented in the ideology apparent in the Mappa Mundi has significance for understanding the role of Jerusalem in Ezekiel, a document roughly contemporaneous with the Babylonian Map of the World. In comparison with other ancient Near Eastern cultures, Babylon and Jerusalem shared similar ideologies of the symbolic value of the respective cities. The connection between ideology behind these cities and the concept of the city as cosmic *center* would allow both Babylon and Jerusalem to thrive as symbols even after their destructions and the displacement of local native rulers and dynasties. These elements examined above regarding the symbolic and central values of Babylon will be

analyzed in the next section in relation to Jerusalem as a foundation for how these categories were then transformed in the rabbinic imagination.²⁶

JERUSALEM AS CENTER: EZEKIEL AND PROPHETIC RHETORIC

The reception of Babylonian culture and ideas in Ezekiel has become a particularly active area in research as of late. The publication of the al-Yahudu tablets, which for the first time offer a window into the everyday lives of the Judean exiles in Babylon, includes mention of the place-name “River Chebar,” known also from the book of Ezekiel as the place where the prophet received his visions in Babylon.²⁷ These tablets, along with the book of Ezekiel, give glimpses into how Judeans engaged in Babylonian society in a manner that few other sources, including other biblical texts, offer. Whereas the al-Yahudu tablets reveal the ways in which Judeans engaged in economic and legal affairs, aspects of the book of Ezekiel show deeper interactions with Babylonian culture. Beyond borrowings from Akkadian that display some knowledge of economic affairs as well as facility with Akkadian scribal education, parts of the book also contain references to literary and scribal traditions reserved normally for the highest levels of scribal education.²⁸

Many of these traces of Babylonian knowledge become more apparent as the various translations, or versions, of the book have been explored or, in other cases, as difficult phrases become emended based on solid text-critical principles, after which the relationship to Mesopotamian intellectual culture becomes clearer. Regarding the second, Avi Winitzer has shown that the difficult phrasing in Ezekiel 28:13 תפִּיךָ וְנִקְבֵיךָ, when considering many of the other elements of the chapter in Ezekiel that function as intertexts with the Epic of Gilgamesh, may provide evidence of explicit citation of the Mesopotamian epic.²⁹ When understood in light of Akkadian text citation, the phrase in Hebrew would mean “your tablets; your Depths” or, slightly emended, “the tablets of your Depths.”³⁰ The Neo-Assyrian title by which this epic was known was *ša naqba imuru*, or “he who saw the depths.” In this manner, Ezekiel 28:13 provides a specific sort of citation peculiar to traditions in cuneiform scholarship, displaying Ezekiel’s participation in that sector of society.³¹

In similar fashion, Jonathan Stökl has discovered traces of the Maqlû incantation ritual in phrasing in Ezekiel 13.³² Should Stökl’s proposal be accepted, it is a significant step toward understanding the manner in which Ezekiel was versed in Mesopotamian literary traditions directly as a trained scribe in Babylon. Petra Gesche’s study of cuneiform curriculum indicates that

incantation texts such as the Maqlû series were taught only at the highest levels of scribal training.³³ Ezekiel's reference to this text series would then demonstrate, like the citation of the Epic of Gilgamesh, that Ezekiel was trained at a high level, if not the highest, within Babylonian scholarship.

Regarding the value of the versions of this text, as Winitzer has argued, the scene in Ezekiel 4 in which the prophet lies on his left- and right-hand side for a number of days to enact in ritual the years of judgment proclaimed on Israel and Judah respectively is best understood in the Greek translation, or Septuagint.³⁴ In this version of the text, the prophet does not lie on his left side for 390 days (or, with Winitzer, the left side is not indicated explicitly, the 390 days being the total days converted to years for both sides) but instead does so for 190 days for both nations (as also indicated in the Septuagint for Ezekiel 4:9). Here, the Septuagint reads the Hebrew אָנִי נֹתֵתִי לָךְ אֶת־שְׁנֵי עֹנֹם as a reference to the guilt of the two nations (with the understanding that Hebrew שְׁנֵי is, instead of "years," a form of the number two). So the Greek reads καὶ ἐγὼ δέδωκά σοι τὰς δύο ἀδικίας, "and I have appointed for you their two iniquities." If the number of days converted to years for Judah is 40, as stated in both the Hebrew and Greek of Ezekiel 4:6, then by subtraction the number of days converted into years for Israel is 150. The use of the two numbers, 150 and 40, has significance in biblical mythology and the numerological importance of total destruction of the world in the flood narratives in Genesis 6–9. Additionally, both numbers have symbolic significance and relevance within the world of cuneiform scholarship of ancient Mesopotamia, used here, if the Greek numbers represent the original reading in Ezekiel 4, to communicate the destruction of Israel and Judah.³⁵

The role of Jerusalem as a central place and the Babylonian background of this concept also lend to the prophetic rhetoric of destruction in Ezekiel 5. Given the examples above in which Ezekiel participates in Babylonian intellectual culture, the probability that other shared concepts reflect contact with Babylonian thought increases, even if the detection of contact with specific texts necessarily remains elusive. In Ezekiel 5:1–4, the prophet enacts a ritual analogy involving shaving his beard, performing different acts to the hair in correlation to different acts of devastation that Jerusalem will face. As an anchor to the likelihood that this passage has a connection to Mesopotamian thought, the word for "razor," גַּלְב, is possibly a loan from Akkadian.³⁶ That the prophet, then, in Ezekiel 5:5 describes a geographical landscape in which Jerusalem is placed in center perhaps offers further evidence of a thematic, ideological connection to the idea of a central place as explored above concerning

Babylon, though Ezekiel uses the concept in this verse for a different effect. Ezekiel 5:5 states: *כה אמר אדני יהוה זאת ירושלם בתוך הגוים שמתיה וסביבותיה: ארצות:* “Thus says the Lord GOD: this is Jerusalem, in the midst of nations I have placed her, and the countries are around her.”

Here the prophet recalls a geographic mythology of the capital city as the center of the world, in a very similar manner as Babylon functions in rhetoric and visual fashion in the Babylonian Mappa Mundi. Both cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, served as real and symbolic centers, around which real and mythic historical narratives emerged. In the case of Babylon, these symbols and myths converged to justify the resurgence of an empire that had a glorious past, most notably in the second-millennium Amorite dynasty that preexisted but came into full effect under Hammurabi. By the eighth and especially seventh centuries BCE, Babylon had become a backwater. The reemergence of southern Mesopotamia as a powerhouse in the late seventh and sixth centuries witnessed ways to harness memories of the power of Babylon for the current political moment, such as the central placement of capital in the Mappa Mundi. In converse fashion, the placement of Jerusalem in the center of the world had a different effect. Here, the capital of Judah was positioned in the middle of Earth to display divine wrath, bringing about the downfall that Babylon’s central placement reversed.

Yet the ideology behind Babylon as a capital was more than central placement. It also involved, as shown above, a cosmological alignment whereby the divine realm was positioned directly above the earthly templates. In a manner, then, Babylon functioned as a meeting place between Heaven and Earth, even if such a meeting place did not function exactly as some historians of religion have posited. Likewise, in Ezekiel Jerusalem not only sits in the midst of nations but also exists as a navel of Earth in similar manner as Babylonian mythology. For example, Ezekiel 38:12 states that *לשלל שלל ולבז בז להשיב ידך על-חרבות נושבת ואל-עם מאסף מגוים עשה מקנה וקנין ישבי על-טבור הארץ:* “To seize spoil and to carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are being inhabited, and to the people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the navel of the earth.” The phrasing *טבור הארץ* has occasioned much debate. It appears only once more in the Hebrew Bible, in Judges 9:37: *ויסף עוד געל לדבר ויאמר הנה-עם יורדים מעם: טבור הארץ וראש-אחד בא מדרך אלון מעוננים:* “Gaal spoke again, saying ‘Look, people are coming down from the center/navel of the land, and one company is coming from the direction of the Diviner’s Oak.’”

In both passages, Shemaryahu Talmon found nonmythological meaning behind the expression ³⁷טבור הארץ. In each case, the terms refer to topographical, not cosmological, parts of the passages. In Judges, Gaal spies riders coming from high parts of the mountains to lower parts, referred to as טבור הארץ and מעוננים, respectively.³⁸ Likewise, in explicating his method to seek first internal clues within a passage and then within biblical rhetoric, only later seeking external material for comparison, Talmon claims that no mythology lies behind Ezekiel 38:12. After providing intricate form-critical analysis, isolating Ezekiel 38:10–14 as a unit, Talmon argues that the phrase in Ezekiel 38:12 functions as a place of secure dwelling. This interpretation is supported by the importance of ישב as a leitmotif, highlighting the deliverance and security. For Talmon, the fact that such deliverance includes life with “those who have acquired livestock” [עשה מקנה in Ezek 38:12] means that the further description of where this dwelling occurs [על־טבור הארץ] must be able to accommodate such livestock. After examining other biblical passages where such activity occurs in relative safety (Ezek 28:25–26; Jer 49:31–32; 1 Chr 4:40), Talmon concludes that the phrase in Ezekiel 38:12, as in Judges, must refer to a topographical, not mythological, feature and certainly a feature not connected with the top of a mountain as mythic *omphaloi* often are.

Some of Talmon’s methodological principles, especially to seek information elsewhere in the Bible first before resorting to comparative evidence from outside Israel, flatten the diversity and complexities inherent in biblical studies. The Bible does not speak with one voice, nor was it written from one perspective and one locale. For example, is it self-evident that Ezekiel 5:5 and 38:12, after rightly examining the units on their own terms, should be compared first with other biblical passages, when the book, at least a large core, was written in Babylon? What context counts, and is genre part of context and a determining (or at least informing) factor for deciding which texts count as a basis for comparison? Ezekiel is prophetic (in which case rare words are intentionally employed) and contains elements of apocalyptic, or at least protoapocalyptic (in which case mythic terms abound). Indeed, Ezekiel 38–39 and the battle with Gog and Magog are such prophetic and nascently apocalyptic literature.³⁹ To treat them as nonmythological and nonsymbolic, then, may be as undisciplined methodologically, if not more so, as resorting too soon to external evidence.⁴⁰ Talmon appeals to phrases of open and secure settlement in Judges and 1 Chronicles 4:40 for understanding Ezekiel, yet the Mappa Mundi is closer in time and place in terms of composition to Ezekiel.⁴¹

If Ezekiel 5:5 and 38:12 represent imaginings of Jerusalem for prophetic rhetoric of punishment, the moving boundaries of Ezekiel's vision of restoration in chapters 40–48 provide a view toward a different conception of Jerusalem as center. Much as Babylon could live on as an idea after its destruction, so too could Jerusalem survive prophetic condemnation and destruction by the Babylonians in the prophetic visions of restoration. Scholars have long noted the manner in which the tribal allotments in Ezekiel 40–48 differ greatly from those elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. For starters, there are no Transjordanian tribes in Ezekiel's vision. Instead, all the tribes of Israel have territory on the same western side of the Jordan, showing the manner in which, as Rachael Havrelock has argued, the Jordan functioned as a watery boundary.⁴² The effect of such a rearrangement is to place Judah and Jerusalem in it in a more central place in terms of the north-to-south arrangement. In the book of Joshua, Judah and Simeon are the farthest tribes in the south. In Ezekiel's vision, Gad, Zebulun, Isaachar, Simeon, and Benjamin occupy the southernmost territories. In the middle of the allotment are the holy district and Judah, with Reuben, Ephraim, Manasseh, Naphtali, Asher, and Dan lying to the north.⁴³

Yet Walther Zimmerli and Talmon have argued against this conception, claiming, rightly, that Jerusalem is not precisely placed centrally in Ezekiel's new vision.⁴⁴ Given the additional allotment of a holy district to the twelve tribes, a total of thirteen spaces, in equal portion, comprise the land in Ezekiel 48. By definition, the seventh space occupies the center. Five tribes live in the southern portion, and Jerusalem, residing in the sixth, is therefore one allotment away from the central portion, which belongs to Judah. Yet this scheme may still reveal an impulse toward the centralization of Jerusalem not only by comparison with the book of Joshua (in which case Judah and Jerusalem are relatively positioned much more toward the south) but also by nature of prophetic rhetoric.

Prophetic denunciation often has a geographic aspect relative to the prophetic audience. For example, scholars have long recognized the manner in which Amos crafts his oracles against the nations geographically in a swirling effect, addressing nations at first farther away, only to circle in tighter and tighter on the central target of prophetic rage, namely Israel.⁴⁵ Israel therefore forms the center of these oracles geographically in Amos 1–2. In similar fashion, though somewhat reverse in movement, Ezekiel 25:1 begins Ezekiel's oracles against the nations, starting with the nations closest to the prophet's intended audience, and then moves farther away until arriving at Egypt in Ezekiel 29–32. Rhetorically, geography becomes relative to the prophetic

audience, which is Judah in the book of Ezekiel.⁴⁶ It makes sense, given the target audience and given their interest in Ezekiel's vision of restoration, that Judah would occupy the central allotment. In light of a special portion for a holy district that contains the temple, Jerusalem by definition has to be in the holy district. Since Jerusalem was historically in Judah, these two allotments—Judah and the holy district—necessarily have to be conjoined in the new map. With Ezekiel's audience as center, the holy district will inevitably be one spot away, but it too partakes of this ideology.

Even the vision for the new temple reflects this centralizing impulse. Scholars have long observed the differences between Ezekiel's temple and the sacrifices that happen there and the precepts mentioned in Leviticus. The story of Hananiah ben Hezekiah is instructive. According to *b. Shabbat* 13b, Hananiah used three hundred barrels of oil to keep his lamp light while he attempted to reconcile the legal contradictions between Ezekiel and the Torah. Yet some of the unique features of Ezekiel's temple become intelligible when set in a Babylonian context. As Shalom Holtz and Tova Ganzel have argued, the manner in which space functions in Babylonian temples and Ezekiel's temple displays a shared concern for preserving sanctity and holiness. As Holtz and Ganzel claim, in this respect Ezekiel may not be borrowing from a specific text or tradition, much like Ezekiel very likely does not have the *Mappa Mundi* specifically in mind when constructing Jerusalem as center.

Nonetheless, the Babylonian context can provide a shared priority of perception, from which useful comparison arises. In both Ezekiel's complex and Babylonian temples, a shared perception exists for keeping the consecrated and unconsecrated distinct.⁴⁷ According to Ganzel and Holtz, this concern explains Ezekiel's focus on "walls, gates, and courtyards." In the middle of the temple space was the inner courtyard, where only the Zadokites, the holiest of the priests according to Ezekiel 44, could enter. Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple occupied central place in Ezekiel's configuration, and the inner sanctum occupied the central place of the latter. Ezekiel's configuration of space, Jerusalem, and the temple, then, prefigures, or perhaps draws the map for, the later interpretation found in the *Tanhuma Leviticus*, discussed more below.

In this section, I have argued that Ezekiel's concept of Jerusalem as center participates in Babylonian ideology, the context in which the prophet claims to exist. The shared concepts between Babylon as center and *omphalos* and Jerusalem as center and *omphalos* both give expression to reflection about the cosmic nature of cities as capitals but in different directions. For Babylon the city was ascendant, recalling former glory to be relived. The concept of

Jerusalem as center in Ezekiel functioned as a rhetorical device to evoke punishment and restoration. The image as reflected in this prophetic book survived and took on new forms, particularly in the image in rabbinic circles of Jerusalem as center, where the concept became a central point in the identity of exile and return.

THE MAKING OF MAPS AND LEGACIES OF IDENTITY: SECOND TEMPLE AND RABBINIC RECEPTIONS OF JERUSALEM AS CENTER

The concept of Jerusalem as center as expressed in Ezekiel had a vibrant after-life in Second Temple Jewish and rabbinic thought. It was during this time, according to Alexander, that the concept of Jerusalem as *omphalos* and cosmic center began in Judaism, though I hope to have shown that Ezekiel, steeped in Babylonian thought, gave expression to the idea already in the sixth century BCE.⁴⁸ Here the difference of perception regarding intellectual lineage is also apparent, as Alexander argues that the T-O maps of medieval times were based on Hellenistic models as apparent in Jubilees, whereas Assyriologists such as Irving Finkel lay the intellectual foundations for such medieval maps further back in time in the Babylonian *Mappa Mundi*.⁴⁹

After Ezekiel, the next attested belief in the concept of Jerusalem as center and *omphalos* appears in the books of 1 Enoch and Jubilees. In many places, 1 Enoch functioned as the source for parts of Jubilees, though the language of Jerusalem as center is not as explicit in 1 Enoch 26:1–2 as it would be later in Jubilees, and a direct connection is difficult to establish.⁵⁰ 1 Enoch 26:1–2 reads as follows: “And from here, I went to the midst of the earth, and I saw a blessed and well-watered place, which had trees which had branches that would remain and that blossom from a tree that had been cut. And from here I saw a holy mountain, and under the mountain water from the direction of the east, and it flowed toward the south.” While Zion, Eden, and Sinai are not mentioned by name, each in some manner finds evocation in the description of the middle of Earth, an area latter contrasted with a cursed valley (1 Enoch 27:1).⁵¹

If Ezekiel provides an example of imagining Jerusalem in certain mythic and ideological ways in exile, then Jubilees, which reflects on the concept of Jerusalem as center in more explicit and more sustained terms than 1 Enoch, provides evidence of continued reflection on Jerusalem’s cosmic place, though Jubilees does so in return. Most scholars accept that the author wrote Jubilees in or around Jerusalem, though the date of authorship is a much more debated

issue.⁵² The concept of Zion as cosmic center takes a few forms in this book, and related issues such as the role of sanctification and sacrifice lend to the validity of Jerusalem as real and imagined from this vantage point of return. For example, Jubilees 4:26 states that “Because there are four places on the earth that belong to the Lord: the garden of Eden; the mountain of the east,⁵³ this mountain, the one you are on today, namely Sinai, and mount Zion [that] will be sanctified in the new creation for the sanctification of the earth. On account of this, the earth will be sanctified from all sin and from all uncleanness into the generation of eternity.”

The context of this passage pertains to Enoch’s removal from humanity, a story told laconically in Genesis 5:23–24 that spun off a myriad of apocalyptic Second Temple Jewish retellings of the life of Enoch. That Jubilees connects Enoch and Eden with the flood and that Enoch’s fate is connected specifically with the deluge have fascinating resonance both with biblical rhetoric and with a theory that some scholars connect to an even more ancient flood story than those that exist in Genesis 6–9. The only two biblical characters who are said to have walked with God [using the *hitpael* of הלך, the preposition את, and the word—including the definite article—האלהים] are Enoch and Noah. That these two figures, then, would be the focus of speculation in Jubilees regarding the survival of the flood makes complete sense. In fact, because flood mythologies in the ancient Near East often entailed not simply the survival of the flood hero but also the hero’s subsequent divinization, habitation with the divine, or at least immortality, some scholars see in the Enoch story a character who may originally have been connected to a flood narrative. Such a connection would make sense of Enoch’s assumption into the divine realm as well as of the uncannily similar phrasing of both Noah and Enoch “walking with God.”⁵⁴

More significant for the issue of place, pilgrimage, and the symbol of Zion as a destination of return is the language of sanctification. In this manner, even before the flood (and certainly before entrance in the land, as the narrative fiction of Jubilees has the angel speaking these words to Moses) Zion becomes the object of reflection for sanctification. As the concept of place becomes flexible, though, the originally four distinct places belonging to God in Jubilees become conflated as two locations are identified in Jewish mythological geography. This conflation appears in *Genesis Rabbah*, a fifth or sixth century CE rabbinic commentary on Genesis [בראשית]. According to Jubilees 4:25, Enoch burns incense in a sanctuary in Eden, in similar manner as Zion occupies the place of sanctification, offering, and incense sacrifice in the First Temple complex.

The connection in rabbinic interpretation and imagination becomes further solidified when the substance from which mankind was created and the substance from which altars were made are lexically related. For example, in the commentary on Genesis 2:7, which states that וייצר יהוה אלהים את־האדם מן האדמה, עפר מן האדמה, the rabbis claim in *Genesis Rabbah* 14:8 ‘ר’ ברכיה ור’ חלבו בשם ר’ שמואל הזקן ממקום כפרתו נברא היך מה דאת אמר מזבח אדמה תעשה לי (שמות כ כד) אמר הקב”ה הריני בורא ממקום כפרתו והלווי יעמוד: “From the ground Rabbi Berekiah and Rabbi Helbo, in the name of Rabbi Samuel the elder (say): From the place of his atonement he was created. As you have read, ‘An earthen altar you shall make for me’ (Exod 20:24). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said ‘Behold, I will create him from the place of his atonement, and may it be that he endures!’”

Many fascinating issues come to the fore when considering this rabbinic connection between the place of mankind’s creation and the place of atonement. Indeed, from the perspective of the critical study of the Hebrew Bible, Exodus 20:24 constituted one of the first cruxes of interpretation in Julius Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* as a justification for his construction of the religious history of ancient Israel.⁵⁵ In particular, the phrase quoted in *Genesis Rabbah* 14:8 from Exodus is part of a larger description of where God permits the building of altars, a description that includes both earthen altars and altars of unhewn stone. Exodus 20:24, then, in classical critical scholarship of the Hebrew Bible, acknowledges the existence of multiple sites of worship, an allowance at odds with Leviticus 17 and, most importantly for Exodus 20:24, Deuteronomy 12. Deuteronomy 12 plays with the lexemes of the altar law in Exodus 20:22–24, displaying ancient modes of citation.⁵⁶ This lexical overlap, while in Deuteronomy 12 perhaps originally meant to correct, supplement, or dislodge the religious vision of Exodus 20:24, also functioned as the basis for reading the passages together. In this reading strategy, then, the place of atonement in Exodus 20:24, constructed from the ground, is identified with יהוה אשר יבחר יהוה, in Deuteronomy 12:14, the place that God will choose, understood to be Jerusalem.

According to Jubilees 4:26, there are four places that belong to the divine. Likewise, according to Jubilees 8:12, the land belonging to God’s chosen people reflected, in some manner, the divine possession as well. Jubilees 8:12 reads as follows: “And the lot of Shem emerged from the book (to be) in the midst of the earth, which he would possess for his inheritance and for his sons to eternal generations.” The divine ownership of place, and particularly the places Eden, Sinai, and Zion/Jerusalem, meant that in some manner they

reciprocated each other. This reciprocal relationship was in some sense temporal, as Eden was the dwelling place with humanity before the expulsion from the garden (and with Enoch through the flood), Sinai was then the dwelling place of God with Moses and Israel for the revelation of the law, and Jerusalem was then the place that God would dwell, with Israel formed as a state.

Such holy characteristics meant that each occupied the center of a chosen realm (such as Sinai at the center of the desert and Jerusalem the center of the world), but such forces drawing them together conceptually also required them to face one another, to be related and placed in circular fashion as if looking toward another central area. For example, Jubilees 8:19 states that “And he [Noah] knew that the Garden of Eden (is) the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the Lord, and (that) mount Sinai (is) in the midst of the desert, and (that) mount Zion (is) in the midst of the navel/middle/center of the earth. The three of them—each facing the other [lit. this one the opposite of this one]—were created as holy places.”

The converging ideological maps of Ezekiel, created in the context of Babylonian ideology, and Jubilees come to the fore in the *Tanhuma Leviticus*. In this passage, the idea of Jerusalem as center of the world receives its most explicit expression: “As this navel/highest part in the center of a man, so Eretz Israel is the navel of the world, as it is written, ‘those who dwell at the navel of the earth’ (Ezek 38:12). Eretz Israel dwells at the center of the world, and Jerusalem at the center of Eretz Israel, and the temple at the center of Jerusalem, and the *heikhal* at the center of the temple, and the ark at the center of the *heikhal*, and the *even shətiyyah*, before the *heikhal*, from which the world was founded.”⁵⁷ Alexander notes that here, as in other rabbinic texts, Jerusalem “has vertical as well as horizontal centrality: it is the focal point of different, superimposed planes.”

Above Jerusalem is the heavenly temple, and below it is Gehenna. The *even shətiyyah* represents either the founding stone or the weaving stone (in the sense of weaving as an act of creation); in either case it was thought to hold back the waters of the underworld that could undo creation. As Alexander claims, these traditions of the centrality of Jerusalem in rabbinic sources are found in Babylonian texts, but many if not all of the traditions can also be traced back to Palestinian authorities. Alexander argues that the reasons for this tradition of Jerusalem as center and *omphalos* may have been the result of anti-Roman polemic or may have been the attempt of Palestinian sages to “highlight the primacy of Jerusalem” in the face of the rise of the Babylonian academies.⁵⁸

In either case, the superimposed plane of Jerusalem was not an innovation or a *novum*, as Babylon in the sixth century BCE shared a similar ideology

of place, argued above in the first section of this essay.⁵⁹ This rabbinic conception of space, then, could be argued to have ancient roots, much older than Alexander recognized. As for the reasons behind the interest in this ideology of Jerusalem in rabbinic sources, Alexander is correct not to opt for an either/or solution; indeed, both anti-Roman polemic and inner-Jewish debates could be involved. Yet it is notable that even though Babylonian legal tradition gained higher authority in the Talmud Bavli, the notion of Jerusalem as center and *omphalos*, as promoted by Palestinian authorities, remained a vital part of Jewish identity both in Israel and in exile. Perhaps one reason for this enduring legacy of Jerusalem in rabbinic sources is the rhetoric of the Palestinian sages. What gave this rhetoric persuasive power, as in the *Tanhuma Leviticus*, was its ability to be grounded in the biblical text itself, not as an entirely foreign imposition on a biblical passage but rather as a fuller expression of the ideology already apparent in Ezekiel for new historical periods.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION: JERUSALEM AS CENTER AND *OMPHALOS* AND THE ROLE OF PILGRIMAGE IN EXILE AND RETURN

In this essay, I have argued that Ezekiel developed a sense of place with respect to Jerusalem. His concept of Jerusalem as center had a Babylonian context, and from that context the prophet imagined a real place but one that was cosmically centered in order to present a vision of judgment as well as redemption. The malleable nature of Jerusalem as the center of the world took on new significance in the return to the land, as evidenced in the book of Jubilees and perhaps bolstered by Hasmonean political ambition, though the relationship between Jubilees and the ideology behind the Maccabean rule is a debated topic.⁶¹

The nature of Jerusalem imagined as a central place thus served communities in exile in imagining home as well as communities that experienced the return.⁶² Jerusalem as destination, forming a geographically cosmic pull toward the city as a center as if by centripetal force, would have importance for a variety of Jewish and Christian communities alike, perhaps most emphatically for Ethiopian Jews and Christians.⁶³ These Jews and Christians made regular pilgrimages, three times a year, to Jerusalem until the conflict in the Crusades cut off their pilgrimage route.⁶⁴ As a response, King Lalibella of the Zagwe dynasty built his own version of Jerusalem in Ethiopia, marking each of the most holy sites in Israel with a church constructed into the ground and connected by a waterway called “the Jordan River.” This example in Ethiopia

shows yet again the enduring value of making maps and the ways that place, especially Jerusalem, functions as real and imagined in both exile and return. As if further proof for the elasticity of place is needed, you can see these rock-cut churches for yourself by checking into a room at Hotel Jerusalem in Lalibela, Ethiopia, where rooms go for \$45 a night.

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NOTES

1. J. Z. Smith, "Map Is Not Territory," in *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 289–309. Note especially the terms "locative map" and "imperial figure" in Smith's discussion as relates to the following discussion of mapmaking and its central place in Jewish thought.
2. Philip S. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the 'Omphalos' of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," *Judaism* 46 (1997): 147, 152–53. See also the other articles in this edition of the journal, which explore similar concepts of centrality and city as *omphalos* related to Mecca. On the issue of the center of the world generally in antiquity, see more recently the excellent survey and analyses in Jennifer Finn, "The Center of the Earth in Ancient Thought," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 4 (2018): 177–209.
3. In this sense, the lexeme came to refer both to Subarians and became the general term of "slave," a case in which the semantic domain of a word in the earliest attested language in writing already contains elements of contact, directionality, ideology, and conquest. See William W. Hallo, "Slaves and Strangers," in *He Has Opened Nisaba's House of Learning: Studies in Honor of Åke Waldemar Sjöberg on the Occasion of his 89th Birthday on August 1st 2013* (Cuneiform Monographs 46; ed. Leonhard Sassmannshausen; Boston: Brill, 2014), 57–58.
4. Piotr Michalowski, "Sumer Dreams of Subartu: Politics and Geographical Imagination," in *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm: Proceedings of the 42nd RAI* (Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta 96), ed. K. van Lerberghe and G. Voet (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 305. See also Piotr Michalowski, "Mental Maps and Ideology: Observations on Subartu," in *The Origins of Cities in Dry-Farming Syria and Mesopotamia in the Third Millennium B.C.*, ed. H. Weiss (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters), 129–56.
5. See, for example, Hattusili's boasts about crossing the Euphrates and making great conquests, just like Sargon, except that Hattusili inflicted more damage. Trevor Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78, 83.

6. On the religious reflex of this imperial restructuring in Judaism, see Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 11, 16, 33–34, and 206–7.
7. Joan and David Oates, *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed* (London: British Schools of Archaeology in Iraq, 2001), 15–16.
8. Karen Radner, “The Assur-Nineveh-Arbela Triangle: Central Assyria in the Neo-Assyrian Period,” in *Between the Cultures: The Central Tigris Region from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC*, Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient 14, ed. Peter A. Miglus and Simone Mühl (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 2011), 325–27.
9. For the ideology behind the architecture of Late Assyrian palaces, see David Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 102–3.
10. Even in view of these differences, similar underpinnings and ideologies connect Assyrian thought and the seventh- or sixth-century BCE Babylonian Mappa Mundi. The Mappa Mundi is discussed more below. For more on the Assyrian ideology connected to this map, see Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 6 (Boston: DeGruyter, 2015), 191–97.
11. Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon as World Capital,” *Journal for the Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies* 3 (2008): 10.
12. The date of the epic of creation has been a debated topic in Assyriology for some time, and the literature is vast. Some scholars date the Enūma Eliš as early as Hammurabi of Babylon’s reign, though most opt for a later date. For the dating of the epic as stemming from the return of the statue of Marduk, see W. G. Lambert, “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of T. J. Meek*, ed. W. S. McCullough (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 6. For the role of divine presence and absence in religious and political thought in the ancient Near East and the Bible, see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).
13. See Samuel L. Boyd, “A Brief History of the Title ‘King of Kings.’” in *‘Like ’Ilu Are You Wise’: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Dennis G. Pardee*, ed. H. H. Hardy II, Joseph Lam, and Eric D. Raymond (Chicago: Oriental Institute Press, forthcoming).
14. Beaulieu, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon as World Capital,” 10.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, citing Andrew George, “E-sangil and E-temen-anki, the Archetypal Cult-Centre,” in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne*, ed. J. Renger (Berlin: Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft, 1999), 67.
17. J. Z. Smith is correct to question the *Weltberg* hypothesis of the Pan-Babylonian school and Eliade’s construction of the “center” as a religious concept, a hypothesis that

connected the notion of cosmic mountain and temple as *axis mundi*. See in particular Smith's analysis in the first chapter of *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). In Eliade's system, a critique of the *Weltberg* means a corresponding critique of the related notion of temple as center, and as Smith argues, such a pattern cannot be applied universally to the comparative study of religions. Yet despite this critique, and viewed outside of the Pan-Babylonian and *Weltberg* hypothesis, it is clear that the temple in Babylon had a function as a cosmic center, even as Babylon itself topographically was (and still is) very much at sea level and on the alluvial plains between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Indeed, the seeds of this ideology appear even in Neo-Assyrian times. As Smith claims, "the language of 'center' is preeminently political and only secondarily cosmological. It is a vocabulary that stems, primarily, from archaic ideologies of kingship and the royal function. In any particular tradition, it may or may not be tied to cosmological and cosmogonic myths" (Smith, *To Take Place*, 17). In the case of Assyria and Babylon, both politics and cosmology play a part, and in each case it is difficult if not impossible to separate the two factors. For the relatedness of these concepts in Mesopotamia, see Mario Liverani, *Assyria: The Imperial Mission*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 20 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017). See more below on the Babylonian Mappa Mundi.

18. Beaulieu, "Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon as World Capital," 10. In this sense, Shemaryahu Talmon's hesitance in finding the notion of a "navel" in ancient Near Eastern thought is appropriate insofar as it critiques Eliade's flawed categories for studying the history of religions, but his caution seems centered on the observation that the texts in which the "link between the heavens and the earth" do not contain the word *abbunatu*. Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Navel of the Earth' and the Comparative Method," in *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content, Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 54. Here it is worth observing that the lexeme may not appear, but the concept can still be present.

19. That a map with Babylonian ideology would be discovered in Borsippa makes sense. Borsippa was considered a lesser sibling city to Babylon. Nabu, Marduk's son, was the patron deity of Borsippa, and in a variety of ways Borsippa supported Babylonian imperial ambitions.

20. John Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–626 B.C.*, Occasional Publications of the Babylonian Fund 7 (Philadelphia: University Museum Press, 1984).

21. The fact that Neo-Assyrian kings were responsible for rebuilding much of Babylon accounts for two innovations of Babylonian city layout as compared to other cities in the south in the Sumerian and Babylon spheres: the rectilinear layout of the city and royal palaces at the gate and not at the center of the city. These features are consistent with Assyrian city planning and royal ideology, but other than Borsippa (the sibling city of Babylon), they are idiosyncratic in the Sumerian and Babylonian contexts. In Ur, for example, the temple and ziggurat of the moon god Nanna-Su'en occupied the center of the city, and the palace of the kings of the third dynasty of Ur "stands very much in the shadow of the

temple complex” (Beaulieu, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon as World Capital,” 8). The placement of the North Palace in Babylon (where the famed and perhaps mythological Hanging Gardens of Babylon once stood according to Greek sources) in the city-gate complex reflected Assyrian conventions but received a uniquely Babylonian interpretation of the king, in self-effacing style, preventing his royal complex from competing in any way with that of Marduk’s in the city center. See the quotations of the court documents of Nebuchadnezzar in Beaulieu, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon as World Capital,” 7–8.

22. Irving Finkel claims that the ideographic character of orthography in the first twelve lines fits well with the preference of the first millennium BCE generally and the sixth century BCE specifically. That the spelling conventions of the rest of the document differ from the first twelve lines and that these spellings are syllabic (“a style abhorred in first millennium manuscripts”), among other things, indicates to Finkel that the descriptions of the world after the first twelve lines derive from the second millennium BCE generally and most likely from the Old Babylonian period. The first twelve lines (Horowitz counts eleven), in which many mythic elements appear, are also distinct from the following description by a dividing line that the scribe inserted. In any event, the scribe clearly indicates that his version was itself copied from an older text [*ki-ma la-bi-ri-i-šu ša-ṭi-ir-ma ba-r(i)*, “copied according to its old exemplar and collated”]. See Finkel, *The Ark before Noah* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014), 267–69. For a text edition and translation, see Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 20–42.

23. Beaulieu, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon as World Capital,” 11.

24. *Ibid.*, 10–11. See also Amelie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, “Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 112 (1991): 71–86; Goldstein, “Late Babylonian Letters on Collecting Tablets and the Hellenistic Background—A Suggestion,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69 (2010): 199–207.

25. See, e.g., 1 Peter 5:13 and the application of “Babylon” to Rome (also showing that Peter could not have written 1 Peter, or at least this portion of the epistles, since Peter probably died around 65 CE during the reign of Nero when Rome destroyed Jerusalem, thereby meriting the connection to Babylon in 70 CE).

26. As discussed below, whether or not Ezekiel displays elements of myth around the issue of Jerusalem as a central place is a debated topic. It is clear, whatever the case with Ezekiel, that the rabbinic inheritance of biblical myth involved at times further myth making. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

27. See Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylon in the Collection of David Sofer*, Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 28 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014). See also many of the publications of Laurie Pearce examining scribalism, West Semites, and texts in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. While the Murašu archive provided evidence of Jewish life, such

evidence is indirect, as these documents are about the lives of Jewish merchants but do not contain firsthand accounts.

28. For possible though by no means certain pathways between Babylonian thought and Judean scribes focusing on avenues of social contact between Judeans and Babylonians, see Caroline Waerzeggers, “Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, Texts und Studien zum antiken Judentum 160, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 131–46.

29. Abraham Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian *Literati*,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, 199–200.

30. *Ibid.*, 199.

31. See Winitzer’s discussion of the manner in which the Epic of Gilgamesh cites an older text and myth called the Cuthean Legend of Narām-Sîn through the use of the phrase *tupšenna petē-ma* [open the tablet], which would match Ezekiel’s putative citation of Gilgamesh perfectly. *Ibid.*, 200–204.

32. See Jonathan Stökl, “The מַתְנַבְאוֹת in Ezekiel 13 Reconsidered,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013): 61–76; Jonathan Stökl, “‘A Youth without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in all Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent’: Ezekiel’s Access to Babylonian Culture,” in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 478 (Boston: DeGruyter, 2015), 249.

33. Petra D. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 275 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000). See Stökl’s discussion of her work in connection to Ezekiel’s access to Mesopotamian scribal education, “‘A Youth without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in all Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent,’” 230–32.

34. Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 170–71.

35. For much more and convincing discussion on the Mesopotamian math involved, see Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 170–74.

36. David Vanderhooff, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” *Transeuphratène* 46 (2014): 112.

37. Shemaryahu Talmon, “The ‘Navel of the Earth’ and the Comparative Method,” in *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content, Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 58–73.

38. As Bodi points out, if the Diviner’s Oak reference is to a specific, perhaps cultic and mythic, point of origin for the attack, by parallel, against Talmon, the reference to the navel of Earth could have in view a specific, cultically significant, and possibly mythically oriented place-name. The areas of attack here are around Shechem and Mount Gerizim, and the latter would, in Samaritan tradition, become known as the cosmic “navel of the

- world.” See Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, *Orbis biblicus et Orientalis* 104 (Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 219–20.
39. See Frederick Murphy, who identifies protoapocalyptic elements in Ezekiel, specifically Ezekiel 38–39, in *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 48–49). See also his discussion of Gog and Magog in the War Rule at Qumran (*Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 217–18).
40. Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 223–24. Bodi also analyzes the poem of Erra, an eighth- or seventh-century BCE document that precedes the composition of Ezekiel by a generation or so. See, however, the mixed reviews of Bodi’s work in J. N. Postgate, “Review: The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra,” *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1993): 137; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 181n83.
41. Talmon, in this article, rightly argues against the *Weltberg* hypothesis in the history of religions, and he is right that *abbunatu* in Akkadian does not have mythic power like *omphalos* in Greek. The concept, however, existed in Babylonian thought, as argued above. Perhaps the differing Babylonian topography (at sea level, part of the alluvial plains) from Jerusalem (settled in the Judean hill country) could easily have given different expressions to the same concept. Hence, טבור in Hebrew as navel is the operative metaphor, where Sumerian DUR gives a similar expression, but the word for “belly button” in Akkadian that would connote a rising, hilly place does not have such mythic overtones and usages.
42. See Rachel Havrelock, “The Two Maps of Israel’s Land,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* (2007): 649–67; Rachel Havrelock, *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
43. For a map of this layout, see Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48*, Anchor Bible 22B (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 266.
44. Talmon, “The ‘Navel of the Earth’ and the Comparative Method,” 59. See also Talmon’s citation of Zimmerli in this discussion.
45. See John H. Hayes, “Amos’s Oracles against the Nations (1:2–2:16),” *Review and Expositor* 92 (1995): 163.
46. Ezekiel 4:6, 8:1, 8:17, 9:9, 21:20, 25:3, 25:8, 25:12, 27:17, 37:16, 37:19.
47. See Ezekiel 42:20. See also Shalom Holtz and Tova Ganzel, “Ezekiel’s Temple in Babylonian Context,” *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 225. For their citation of Waerzeggers, who claims that the Ezida temple in Borsippa had a courtyard that “established an invisible line of division in the organization of space . . . as this was the area where the distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated crystallized. Only those who were deemed qualified were allowed to enter the courtyard to participate in its busy ritual program,” see Shalom Holtz and Tova Ganzel, *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, *Achaemenid History* 15 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 11.
48. Seeligmann previously argued for the Hellenistic period as the origin of this concept in Jewish thought. I. L. “Jerusalem in Jewish-Hellenistic Thought,” in *Judea and Jerusalem*

(Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society), 192–208. In addition to some of the texts cited in the body of this paper, Talmon cites the following: 1 Enoch 90:26, where, like Gehinnom in Rabbinic literature and, for different effect, the Apsu in Mesopotamian literature, Gehinnom is an abyss in the midst of Earth; Philo mentions the belief that Jerusalem was the center of the world (in his *Embassy to Gaius* 37.294); Hecataeus of Abdera mentions the centrality of the temple within the land of Judea (as cited in Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.197); in *Jewish Wars*, Josephus claims that Jerusalem is the *omphalos* of the country, though as Talmon indicates it is difficult to discern whether or not country [αρχή] refers to Judea or the world; in *b. Meg.* 6a, Tiberias and טבור are paired as puns; in *b. Sanh.* 37a the rabbis use Song 7:3 [שִׁרְרָךְ אֵגֶן הַסְּהָר] “your navel is a round bowl” to refer to the Sanhedrin who sit at the center of the world. For these citations, see Talmon, “The ‘Navel of the Earth’ and the Comparative Method,” 55–57.

49. Finkel, *The Ark before Noah*, 295–96.

50. For an excellent study on the manner in which Jubilees borrowed from Enoch, see Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology*, Supplements for the Study of Judaism 117 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 109–37. For the relationship between 1 Enoch and Jubilees in the flood narratives, see also Samuel Boyd, “The Flood and the Problem of Being an Omnivore,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (forthcoming). See also Hans Debel, “The Flood from Ancient Mesopotamia to Qumran: Transformations in a Literary Chain of Tradition,” in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 84, ed. Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala (Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2017), 139–43.

51. See Alexander, “Jerusalem as ‘Omphalos’ of the World,” 152.

52. James L. Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of Its Creation*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 156 (Boston: Brill, 2012), 4.

53. James VanderKam has a very informative commentary on this section. He observes that “The Syriac has «mountain of the Garden of Eden [= Paradise] which may well be original.” For more of his commentary on this passage, see VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 511 (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1989), 29.

54. See John Day, “The Flood and the Ten Antediluvian Figures in Berossus and in the Priestly Source in Genesis,” in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 420 (Boston: DeGruyter, 2011), 218.

55. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 39–75.

56. See Bernard Levinson’s use of Seidel’s Law and his use of it with respect to Deuteronomy 12 in *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18, esp. note 51, 35, and elsewhere.

57. Ecclesiastes 2:5. See Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 67–68.

58. Alexander, “Jerusalem as the ‘Omphalos’ of the World,” 156–57.

59. The lines of transmission between ancient Near Eastern and specifically ancient Babylonian thought on the one hand and rabbinic thought on the other have been fertile areas of research. The separation in time between the two bodies of literature amounts to a few hundred years. As Yohanan Muffs claims, rabbinic and biblical covenant grants differ so much that the latter could not have been the source for the former. The similarity between rabbinic and Akkadian sources then suggests that it was borrowed (a) “from an Aramaic reworking of Akkadian material, (b) from an independent Greek source, or (c) from a Greek source that derived the institution from an Akkadian source found in some Aramaic form.” Yohanan Muffs, *Love & Joy: Law, Language, and Religion in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 162. As Muffs has also shown, Akkadian loanwords entered into the Aramaic lexicon and influenced much later Aramaic texts, such as Akkadian *etir* [(payment) received], which appears in Aramaic papyri from Elephantine in the fifth century and then also in the Talmudic אִיטְרָא (or עִיטְרָא). This Talmudic word was a mystery before Muffs noticed the connections, and the fact that the lexeme appeared in passages dealing with exchanges bolstered his case. See also Michael Sokoloff, “New Akkadian Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic,” in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*, ed. Yitschak Sefati et al. (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 575–86. For the connection between ancient Babylonian cuneiform law and rabbinic law (without corresponding laws from the Bible), see Samuel Greengus, *Laws in the Bible and in Early Rabbinic Collections: The Legal Legacy of the Ancient Near East* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011). See also Irving Finkel, “Remarks on Cuneiform Scholarship and the Babylonian Talmud,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, 307–16.

60. For more rabbinic references to the idea of Jerusalem as the center of the world, see also the *Midrash Tehillim* 91:7; *Midrash Aggadah* to Leviticus 19:23; *Lekach Tov* to Song of Songs 7:3; *Bereshit Rabbati* 28:22; *Sekhel Tov* to Genesis 30:13. For these references, see Miryam T. Brand, “1 Enoch,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 1449n84.

61. For a Hasmonean context of Jubilees, see Alexander, “Jerusalem as the ‘Omphalos’ of the World,” 149–51. For a dating of Jubilees prior to the Hasmonean revolt, prior to 175 BCE, see Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees*, 348–49.

62. Note, for example, the description of Jerusalem in the *Letter of Aristeas*, line 83, in which Aristeas, joined by Demetrius the librarian of Alexandria, journeyed from Egypt to Jerusalem to meet Eleazar, the high priest. In describing the journey, a pilgrimage-type of narrative ensues in the letter, including a general description of the land. Aristeas recounts that νῆληψὺς ζυροῶ ‘πέ νοιάδου’Ι ζηλῶ ζητ νηνέμικ νησέμ νιλόπ νῆτ νεμῶροωεῶ

νισαπάνά νήτ ζοτνοχῆ [We beheld the city, lying in the midst of the whole of Judea upon a mountain having high extension (or, having great height)].

63. Ethiopian Christians have been called the most “Jewish” version of Christianity. “It must be appreciated that those forms of Judaism and Christianity which were found in south-west Arabia at that time were not only imbued with a markedly oriental ceremonial, but their general Semitic character, the circumstances of their development as well as their entire religious, historical, and emotional atmosphere, rendered them much closer and more akin to each other than is the case with their westernized counterparts.” Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, Schweich Lectures (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 22). See Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, generally for the ways in which Ethiopic Christianity contains similarities with Jewish rituals and beliefs. For his own experiences and reminiscences in Jerusalem and Eritrea and for how these experiences unpack the ways in which Ethiopic Christians and Jews understand their relation to Jerusalem, see also Edwaard Ullendorff, *The Two Zions: Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia* (New York: Oxford University Press).

64. For more on imagined geography in Late Antiquity, see Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, *Literary Territories: Cartographical Thinking in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). See especially this work for a brief but illuminating discussion regarding the manner in which the sixth-century CE Madaba Map provided a visual correspondence to Eusebius’s topographical work called the *Onomasticon* (*Literary Territories*, 33).