Ezekiel as the Voice of the Exiles and Constructor of Exilic Ideology

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As a member of the Jehoiachin Exile (597 B.C.E.), Ezekiel’s identification with the community of deportees is clearly apparent. The present paper suggests that Ezekiel’s sympathy with his brethren audience leads him to build a separatist ideology, by which he constructs the Jehoiachin Exiles’ exclusiveness over the community of Those Who Remained in the homeland prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.) and in its aftermath. I argue that Ezekiel’s position in the conflict between Exiles and Those Who Remained in Judah governs his prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem, as much as it frames his perspectives in the prophecies of consolation kept only for the Exiles. To substantiate this argument, the study tracks down the interpretative devices by which Ezekiel rephrases the pentateuchal concepts of land and exile, and transforms (temporarily) the triangular relationship between God, People and Land. These theological paths that Ezekiel had paved, indeed, constituted the Diaspora ideology from the neo-Babylonian period and on as the national-religious community of God.

As a prophet of God, Ezekiel was ordained to speak for Yahweh, and never gained any official position as speaker for the Exiles. The present paper focuses on Ezekiel’s message (not on his persona), arguing that through his ideology of exile Ezekiel established the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles as the exclusive people of God. Thus in retrospect, Ezekiel should indeed be considered both as their voice and as the constructor of a new exilic ideology.

To set the stage, two introductory comments are in order. The first concerns the phenomenon of exile, and the second suggests the method employed in this study.

THE PHENOMENON OF EXILE

As a military punishment forced upon peoples, exile designates the last step in a war. Subjugating peoples and territories led the neo-Assyrian, and later on,

2 Exile had become an international imperial policy in the neo-Assyrian period, mainly under Tiglath-Pileser III (745–27 B.C.E.) and his successors. B. Oded, Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1979) 18–32, 41–74; F. M. Fales and J. N. Postage, Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration, SAA 11
the neo-Babylonian empires to rearrange daily life at both the center and the periphery of their domains in diverse ways. In contrast to the propagandist formulae describing victory and exile, there are reasons to believe that exiles were always partial, dividing the subjugated peoples into exiles and those who remained in the homeland.

Deportations from Israel and Judah, reported in the biblical literature as occurring in the course of the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E., appear to accord with this international policy and the overall experience of peoples in the Ancient Near East (see for example 2 Kings 15:17, 24–25).

5 This was certainly the case with regard to the Babylonian deportations. 597 B.C.E. is a landmark in the history of Judah. In the month of Adar, the Babylonians led the first exile out of Jerusalem, the Jehoiachin exile (Babylonian Chronicle 5:11–13; 2 Kgs 24:8–17). According to the biblical sources, this event divided the Judean peo-


3 For the neo-Assyrian two-ways exile and the organized Assyrian bureaucracy in the periphery, see Oded, Mass Deportations, 33–40. D. S. Vanderhoof discussed the neo-Babylonian policy of exile, highlighting differences of interests and administrative organization (The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets, HSMM 59 [Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999] 81–114).

4 In contrast to the “stereotyped scribal exaggeration” (Oded, Mass Deportations, 22), the partial character of the neo-Assyrian deportations can be gathered from both literary and archaeological evidence (see for instance A. C. Piepkorn, Historical Prism Inscription of Ashurbanipal, AS 5 [1933] 70:37–38; and Oded, Mass Deportations, 21–25).


ple into two communities, the Exiles with King Jehoiachin in Babylon on the one hand, and “The People Who Remained in the Land” under King Zedekiah on the other (see Jeremiah 40:6). This division is our starting point.

These historical circumstances of the last eleven years of Jerusalem and Judah (597–586 B.C.E.) challenged major institutions and established concepts in Israel. The ongoing existence of the Temple, the royal court, and the daily life in Jerusalem stood in contrast to Priestly and the Deuteronomic concepts of exile, which do not recognize partial deportation, and follow the linear sequence of 1. iniquity, 2. destruction/death in the land, and finally 3. dispersion of all survivors from the land of Israel to suffer further calamity (Deuteronomy 4:25–28; 8:19–20; Leviticus 18:24–30; 20:22–24; and the lists of curses in Lev 26:14 ff.; Deut 28:15 ff.). For the Jehoiachin Exiles in Babylon, partial exile preceded destruction. For “the People who Remained,” the ongoing existence of Judahite Exiles as the people of God does not accord with the concept that expulsion is a final national exclusion (as in Deut 28:36; 1 Samuel 26:19). Moreover, perceived as punishment for religious and moral sins, the early and partial exile from Judah raised questions with regard to the two communities’ responsibilities for their respective fortune, and their future existence. Finally, understood as expulsion from God’s land in retribution for violating His covenant, this partial exile presented the fundamental questions of religious-national identity: Should exile actually entail the exclusion of the deportees from the people of God, and should Those Who Remained be considered the Remnant, or vice versa? Such questions had major implications for the two communities’ hopes for restoration.

The following discussion aims to illuminate the viewpoints of Ezekiel and his contemporaries on these ideological issues raised by the partial exile of 597 B.C.E.

8 Theoretically, we should see evidence of conflict between homeland and exile initially within Israel (733 B.C.E.); after 722–20 B.C.E. between Israel and Judah, etc. Remarkably, however, even the Judean exile of 701 B.C.E., reported only in Assyrian inscriptions, does not supply explicit biblical evidence for such a conflict. Compare S. Stohlmann, “The Judean Exile after 701 B.C.E.,” in W. W. Hallo, J. C. Moyer and L. G. Perdue, eds., Scripture in Context II (Winnona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 147–76. Rather, biblical sources focus on the Babylonian exiles, and hence scholars have concentrated on the different ideological reactions in that era, that is, P. R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975); R. Klein, Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).


10 Restoration to the land from a place of exile (as in Lev 26:39–45; Deut 4:29–31 and 30:1–10) is a
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research of the biblical literature reflecting the decline of Judah, the destruction and the exiles, has turned to various disciplines, in addition to philological study of the texts. Among the fairly recent and intriguing ones, are sociological, anthropological, and psychological perspectives which look at the personal and/or the national reactions to the disastrous events.

Daniel Smith-Christopher has presented the crisis of exile as motivating the Exiles’ social re-organization, and as the primary factor in the formation of their national identity as a minority facing foreign groups.11 In his recent book, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, Smith-Christopher has combined refugee studies and trauma studies to illuminate the biblical literature written in the exilic arena. In this conceptual framework, Ezekiel’s prophecies demonstrate the post-traumatic reactions of an exile, a refugee.12

As Smith-Christopher, Kenton Sparks, and Reiner Albertz (among others) have shown, social anthropology and social psychology research, within the specific fields of ethnicity, group identity, as well as inter-group relations, indeed contribute to the study of different aspects of the Judahite communities’ life during the neo-Babylonian era.13 Yet, in contrast to the emphasis on inter-group relations of the Exiles as a minority among foreigners, the present study focuses on the ideological process of self-identification within each of the two Judahite communities, and on the inner disputes raised between them in the second, exilic, level added to the pre-exilic concept of exile in both the Deuteronomic and the Priestly traditions; see commentaries.

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wake of coping with the crisis of partial exiles from Judah.14

Employing five major principles that serve in definitions of identity, I suggest that the conflict between the Exiles and the People Who Remained rests on self-definitions of identity adopted by each group, definitions which were initially divisive.15

1. The ethnic identities of peoples or of groups within a people are well-rooted in their history and heritage, but tend to change under threat or distress.16 The Babylonian waves of exile were the historical events that awakened within the separate Judahite communities the vital need for self-re-identification.17

2. Ethnic identity is built by using relative categories of distinction, in which boundaries of “otherness” are set. Jonathan Smith suggested the following definition of “otherness”:18

“Otherness” . . . is a matter of relative rather than absolute difference. Difference is not a matter of comparison between entities judged to be equivalent, rather difference most frequently entails a hierarchy of prestige and ranking. Such distinctions are found to be drawn most sharply between “near neighbors,” with respect to what has been termed the “proximate other.” This is the case because “otherness” is a relativistic category inasmuch as it is, necessarily, a term of interaction.

According to social-psychological definitions used in studies of inter-group relations, proximity resides in geographical-physical contiguity.19 With reference to the two Judahite communities, although physically detached, their

14 My study differs from that of Smith-Christopher in three major points: 1. Smith-Christopher chose not to challenge theology and ideology in his earlier study (Religion of the Landless, 53); 2. in both works he has focused on the Exiles’ points of view; 3. Smith-Christopher mentions the possibility of inner-conflict between exiles and “those left in Palestine,” but he considers such conflict to belong to the restoration period (Religion of the Landless, 65).
17 Compare Smith-Christopher, Religion of the Landless, 49–68.
18 J. Z. Smith, “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs, eds., To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1985) 3–48, citation from p. 15. Setting “ethnic boundaries” has been emphasized in social anthropology research, through the major contribution of Barth’s studies, and the collection he edited (Ethnic Groups); binary division was stressed also by Brett (Interpreting Ethnicity, 10–15).
proximity is based on their common ethnic and religious origin, and on the ongoing contacts between them (Ezekiel 33:21; Jeremiah 28, 29 etc).\(^{20}\) The urgent need to re-define their national identities sustains the relevance of the above definition of “otherness.” Hence, attention is called here to “inner-ethnic identity,” to communal distinctions arising in the relations between homeland and exile/diaspora within the people of Judah in the early sixth century B.C.E.

3. William S. Green says:\(^{21}\)

A society does not simply discover its others, it fabricates them by selecting, isolating, and emphasizing an aspect of another people’s life and making it symbolize their difference.

In addition, Green points out the caricatural nature of definition by “otherness,” which concentrates on the life of the collective, and stigmatizes (or stereotypes) the group according to one major characteristic.\(^{22}\) Defining “us” and “them” is thus founded on selection, isolation and emphasis of one major divisive difference. In the conflict between the Exiles and Those Who Remained, geographic location — residence in the Land of Yahweh versus foreign lands — has come to “symbolize the difference,” and the theological consequences of this division are examined in relation to the concept of God-People-Land.

4. “Otherness” as a relative category often involves re-identification of all parties. Indeed, this redefinition of identity was not restricted to the Exiles, whose interestedness seems vital. The discussion below shows that Those Who Remained had just as much at stake as the Exiles in building an exclusive identity.

5. “Otherness” as a term of interaction leads groups to improvise strategies in order to effect the self-affirmation and boundary building of one community vis-a-vis the other. Two major contradictory strategies govern re-definition of identity: assimilation and dissimilation.\(^{23}\) Within the framework of dissimilation we find division (A yields B + C) to be the primary strategy utilized by both communities in the early sixth century B.C.E. Division results from the physi-

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21 Green, “Otherness Within,” 50.


23 D. L. Horowitz suggested four patterns of identity changes within groups (“Ethnic Identity,” in N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975] 111–40). In choosing the Assimilation strategy the group adopts either amalgamation (A + B = C) or incorporation (A + B = A); while a group choosing the dissimilation strategy opts for division (A yields B + C) and proliferation (A yields A + B).
cal separation, which was forced on the people of Judah, and is articulated by announcements of superiority that present a hierarchy of prestige and rank. Consequently, a binary opposition between the communities develops with each of them de-legitimating the “other” group’s existence.

This study investigates Ezekiel’s prophecies together with or in comparison to other literary sources of the period (Jeremiah, 2 Kings), from the perspective of group identity, in order to concentrate on the strategies and the constructs of division. Self-legitimation, on the one hand, and de-legitimation of the opposing group, on the other constitute the main strategies of division used to argue for superiority and even exclusivity of one community over the other. This strategy is employed on the axis of time, referring to the past, the present and the future:

Past. Each community relies on past national traditions and on cherished concepts, which through inner-biblical interpretation gain new relevance. Observing the past helps, furthermore, to de-legitimate the other community.

Present. Each community identifies itself as the present people of God, and gains the support of a prophet, a mediating person who contributes theological and ideological arguments to preserve the status of his community, and to denigrate the other.

Future. Legitimation and its opposite de-legitimation, have important roles in each community’s future projections of its fate. Forecast through prophecy, either in God’s words of consolation (as well as the people’s words that refer to God’s promises) or in prophecies of judgment, clearly differentiate between the communities, and declare the priority of one community over against the other.

Hence, looking to the past, struggling with the present, and hoping for the future, motivate the rhetoric of division. These constructs of division will guide the discussion of the conflict’s specific contents in Ezekiel’s prophecies. I will

25 Since this study concentrates on Ezekiel, I will restrict myself to saying that Jeremiah is the prophet who supports the ongoing existence of Those Who Remained in Judah after Jehoiachin’s Exile. This can be gathered from Jeremiah’s biography (Jer 40:1–6); from his steady message regarding the necessity to remain in Judah under Babylonian subjugation (Jeremiah 27; 37–38; 40–42); and from his concept of exile as a calamitous punishment with no return (22:9–10, 24–30; also 29:4–7). However, the book of Jeremiah has gone through an exilic redaction which added a second line of thought similar to the exilic perspective of Ezekiel (as in Jeremiah 24). For ideological similarities between Jeremiah and Those Who Remained, and for the oppositions between Jeremiah and Ezekiel, see my paper “Exiles and Those Who Remained: Strategies of Exclusiveness in the Early Sixth Century BCE,” M. Bar-Asher, et al., eds., Shay: Studies in the Bible, Its Exegesis and Language Presented to Sara Japhet (Heb.). (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2006) 119–38
first establish Ezekiel’s position as the prophet of the Jehoiachin Exiles, that is their present support; and then, proceed to discuss his observations of the past, the present and the future with regard to both communities and to their status as the people of God.

**Ezekiel as the Prophet of the “Jehoiachin Exiles”**

Although the book of Ezekiel includes only scanty biographical details, the outstanding fact is that Ezekiel was a member of the Jehoiachin Exiles. The priest Ezekiel son of Buzi was called to his mission while “in the community of exiles” (אֲבֹדֵךְ לָא חֲלוֹלָה אֲלֵיכֶם, Ezek 3:11; as also 11:24, 25); and Ezekiel’s concept of time is directed by that event, as he counts the years “to our exile” (לִגְדוּלָתֵנוּ, 33:21; 40:1). The first plural pronoun clarifies that he is part and parcel of that community.26

The prophet’s ideological orientation clearly favors his community. I will demonstrate this observation throughout the study, but first let me illustrate it by two examples.

1. Among the primary sources for studying ideological debates in the biblical literature of the sixth century B.C.E. are disputation-speeches.27 In their two-part pattern, citation of the opponents’ position and the prophet’s counter-speech, this prophetic genre reflects some of the internal controversies between prophets and their contemporaries.28

Throughout the nine disputations in Ezekiel, the prophet differentiates be-


tween quotations of “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (יִשְׂרָאֵל, 11:15), or pronouncements made “upon the soil of Israel” (פָּרְדֵּס יִשְׂרָאֵל, 12:21; 18:2),29 and the assertions of his fellow Exiles, “your fellow countrymen” (יִשְׂרָאֵל, 33:30), or “the House of Israel” (לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 33:10; 37:11).30 Categorized according to the speakers of the quotations, the nine disputation speeches in Ezekiel fall into two groups: Refutations of Jerusalemite quotations (11:1–13; 11:14–21; 12:21–25; 18:1–20; 33:23–29); and Refutations of Exiles’ pronouncements (12:26–28; 20:1–38; 33:10–20; 37:1–14).31 Ezekiel presents the quotations said larwi tmda le either as sinful speeches (11:3; 11:15; 12:22; 33:24), or as bitter protest (18:2), whereas he quotes the Exiles using terms of embarrassment and desperation (12:27; 18:19; 18:25; 29; 20:32; 33:10; 33:17; 20; 37:11).32 The paramount importance of this difference in treatment is further shown in the prophetic refutations. Ezekiel answers sinful pronouncements with prophecies of judgment, which fall mainly upon the people remaining in Judah (as for instance, Ezek 11:1–13); but he speaks with consolation to the Exiles who are in a desperate mood (as in 37:1–11, and also in 11:14–21).

This distinction reveals, firstly, Ezekiel’s inclination towards the Exiles and against the People Who Remained. Secondly, in observing Ezekiel’s general tendencies, we can establish the existence of a lively and vital conflict between the Judahite communities in Jerusalem and in Babylon already by the early years of the sixth century B.C.E.33 Finally, these disputation speeches cast Ezekiel in

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29 For discussion of larwi tmda le, see Graffy, A Prophet, 53.
31 This socio-geographic categorization differentiates Ezekiel from the other prophets who use the disputation speech to refute their audiences. Graffy pointed out Ezekiel’s exilic orientation (A Prophet, 123–24 etc.), but did not distinguish Ezekiel as making special ideological use of this genre.
32 The status of the quotation in 12:26–28 attributed to “the House of Israel” is uncertain. Graffy suggests that, in contrast to the previous passage, which referred to words spoken “in the land of Israel” (12:21–25), the quotation in 12:26 was said in “a less aggressive tone,” and thus refuted in an encouraging way (Graffy, A Prophet, 57–58). Following Zimmerli (Ezekiel 1, 414), I understand Ezek 20:32 as a desperate saying and not as a rebuke; see D. Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction and Exile: Inner-Biblical Exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel” ZAW 117 / 2 (2005) 189–205. In addition, Ezekiel refutes other sinful quotations pronounced in Jerusalem, such as 8:12; 9–9, but they are not cast in the disputation pattern. Sinful sayings attributed to the Exiles are rare in Ezekiel, and appear as the words of false prophets (13:6, 7).
33 The chronological headings of some of the prophecies specify the time period as extending from the sixth year after Jehoiachin’s exile (8:1; 592 B.C.E.) to the fall of Jerusalem (33:21, 23–29; 586 B.C.E.), and probably to the following years as well (33:10–20; 37:1–14). Compare Ch. R. Seitz, “The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile,” VT 35 /1 (1985) 78–97; Seitz, Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah, BZAW 176 (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1989) 201–2.
an important role as he supplies present ideological support to the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles.

2. Reference to the present leadership provide another angle through which Ezekiel's pro-exilic orientation is apparent. The allegory of the two eagles, the (lofty) top of the cedar, and the vine (Ezekiel 17) denotes a clear difference between Jehoiachin, the exiled king, who is symbolized by the cedar, and thus has royal legitimacy and respect (vv. 3b–4, 12–13), and Zedekiah, who is symbolized as the low vine. Although the latter could have achieved great political success, he failed because of his rebellion against the Babylonian king and against God (vv. 5–8, 9–10; 15–21). In contrast to the total judgment projected upon Zedekiah and the Jerusalemites (vv. 16–21), hope rests with “the lofty top of the cedar,” who it is promised will be brought back to the land of Israel, and be replanted and prosper as “a noble cedar” (vv. 22–24).34

This allegory, and the allegory of the lioness and her two cubs, referring to Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (Ezek 19:1–14), as well as other straightforward prophecies against Zedekiah (12:8–16; 21:23–32), show Ezekiel's clear support for Jehoiachin in Exile, and his blunt condemnation of Zedekiah of Jerusalem.35 Ezekiel's membership in the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles is, then, not just a biographical datum reflecting his geographical setting. The prophet's empathy with the Exiles has brought him to more than a mere interest in their “mental and spiritual transformation.”36 In what follows, I want to illustrate the proposition that as a member of the Jehoiachin Exiles, the prophet was motivated to evaluate the status of both communities as the people of God and to supply the divisive ideological arguments for the one and against the other.37

34 M. Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983) 317–24. The "topmost bough" of the cedar refers clearly to Jehoiachin in 17:3–4 as the object taken away and replanted afar (יהיה הר), but the future leader's identity remains vague in the phrase שָׁם בַּעַלְפֵּי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עִנִּיאוֹן חֵק יִרְבָּא הָאָרֶץ (Ezek 17:4). Hence, the phrase might refer to other, later scions of the Davidic line (so Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 317).

35 In any case, and in contrast to Jeremiah (22:24–30), the future belongs to an exilic leader, a descendent of Jehoiachin.

36 So Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 15–17, 222.

37 With these methodological framework and goals set, the present study differs greatly from K. F. Pohlmann's approach to Ezekiel and to the discussed polemic (Ezechielstudien: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches und zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten, BZAW 202 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992]; Pohlmann, Das Buch des Propheten Hesekiel: Kapitel 1–19, DAT 22/1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996]). From a redactional-criticism point of view, Pohlmann has argued for multi-layers in Ezekiel; none of them has he connected to the prophet or to the early period of the sixth century B.C.E. (see Hesekiel, 40–41). In fact Pohlmann suggested that the "golaorien-
Ezekiel as Constructor of Exilic Ideology

Proceeding from the explicit to the implicit cases, the discussion below is built in three steps. First, I will present the two opposing ideologies and the dividing arguments, which are explicitly established in two disputation-speeches, Ezek 11:14–21 and 33:23–29. Then I will argue that in 16:1–43 and 20:1–38 Ezekiel implicitly supplies different retrospective histories for each of the two communities, thus differentiating their futures, contrasting calamity with continuity. Third, I will illustrate how Ezekiel’s attitude towards the homeland community throughout chapters 1–24 consistently expresses his denigration of Jerusalem, and implicitly strengthens the binary distinction he makes between these communities. In these prophecies of judgment, the prophet (and at times his disciples) struggles with the linear sequence of iniquity-destruction-exile-restoration, adapting it to the reality of the two separate Judahite communities.

**Explicit Disputations Between Exiles and Those Who Remained**

Two of the nine disputation speeches in Ezekiel, Ezek 11:14–21 and 33:23–29, are critical for our discussion because they present the two sides of the argument. Ezekiel quotes the position of Those Who Remained in order to refute it from an Exile’s point of view. Both parties use the above-mentioned strategies of division. The disputation in 11:14–21 is in fact the second disputation speech in chapter 11. The chapter closes an amalgamation of prophecies in chapters 8–11 given to the prophet “in visions of God” (בפים الشركة אלוהים, 8:3).38

Led through the Temple

tierte Redaktion’ is a second layer in the book which reworks original pro-royal/Judahite lament passages over the 587 destruction (Ezek 19:1–9, 10–14; 23:31). By announcing the exclusivity of the first exile, the 597 Exiles, this redaction denigrates the population that remained in Jerusalem as doomed to annihilation (Ezek 14:21–23; 15:4b–8; 17:19–21, 22–23; 24:2, 21b, 25b–26; 33:21–29). A third layer in the literary evolution of the book gives presidence to several diasporic voices, which do not present antagonistic perspectives against the population which remained in Judah after 597 (Ezekiel 20; 36:15–28; 38–39). Pohlmann thus understands this whole contention as late exilic and mainly postexilic reflections on early Jerusalemite laments. In contrast, the present study follows Greenberg’s historical point of view and largely accepts his holistic approach to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1–20, 12–27). I argue that the book of Ezekiel maintains an early sixth century dichotomy brought also in Jeremiah 24, which reflects the social division as of 597 B.C.E. and on. Furthermore, I henceforth claim that pro-597 exilic perspectives govern Ezekiel’s general attitude against Jerusalem and for the Jehoiachin Exiles throughout, not only in the few passages suggested by Pohlmann. For further criticism on Pohlmann, see Alberts, *Israel in Exile*, 349–50, especially in reference to Ezek 11:14–21 and 33:21–33, which will be discussed below.

courts, the prophet sees Jerusalem’s abominations (chapter 8). In retaliation for the idolatry and lawlessness (וֹסָמָם, v. 17; and 9:9), Ezekiel describes Jerusalem’s punishment (chapter 9), which brings him to fling himself on his face and cry aloud, “Ah, Lord God! Are you going to annihilate all that is left of Israel, Pouring out Your fury upon Jerusalem?” (אתה אבי ה’ ומשהתו אתה ואת כל שארית, יִשָּׂרָאֵל, וְשֵׁשֶׁךָ אתה אוֹמְךָ על יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, 9:8). God answers in the affirmative. Indeed, the iniquity in Jerusalem brings Him to act with no pity or compassion (vv. 9–10), and so it is executed (v. 11). The two disputations of chapter 11 continue this line of thought. The first refutes words of officials in Jerusalem (11:3), and prophesies total calamity to its inhabitants (11:1–13). This prophecy gains additional strength with the sudden death of the official Pelatiah son of Benaiah (תירואהל תאת התא־חי, v. 13). In a dramatic reaction, the prophet again throws himself upon his face and cries out for the second time, “Ah, Lord God! You are wiping out the remnant of Israel!” (אתה אבי אלהים כל אתהрешאית, יִשָּׂרָאֵל, v. 13). The juxtaposition of the two disputations one after the other places the second, vv. 14–21, as a reply to the prophet’s repetitive cry. Prior to the destruction, Ezekiel identifies the (new) “remnant of Israel” as the Exiles (תירואהל תאת התא־חי, יִשָּׂרָאֵל, v. 24). Both disputations reflect an acute interest in the question of who continues to be the people of God, and their generic characteristics enable us to trace the ideological conflict.

THE PEOPLE WHO REMAINED

The two quotations that Ezekiel refutes in these disputations share the same final clause:

11:15 רְחֵק מִצְלָה ה’ לֹא יֵצֵא נַחֲמוֹת הָאָרֶץ לְמַרְדּוּשָׁה

33:24 את היי אבְרָם וירָשׁא את הארץ ונתן רבע, לֹא נַחֲמוֹת הָאָרֶץ לְמַרְדּוּשָׁה

39 The name of the official אֵלְעָה יָהְוי הָדֵל is in itself significant, as the name means “Yahweh has delivered,” see Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 338.

40 So Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 193. The proximity of the two passages does not exclude the initial independence of each passage (11:1–13, and 14–21). Yet, this proximity should also not preclude Ezekiel from joining those units in keeping with the suggested theme. Both disputations serve as integral components in the whole prophetic unit of 8–11, and thus are prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. So Zimmerli who related the editorial work to either Ezekiel or his disciples (Ezekiel 1, 256, 260, 264); and Joyce, “Dislocation and Adaptation,” 46–50. W. Eichrodt, on the other hand, based on Ezek 33:23–29 and on the consolation words in 11:16–21, has argued that the conflict in 11:14–21 is post-587 (Ezekiel, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970] 142–43). D. I. Block took a kind of a middle way, suggesting a pre-586 prophecy which was placed by a pro-exilic re- dactor, though he does not exclude the possibility that the prophet himself was responsible for the juxtaposition (Ezekiel 1–24, 342–46).
“The land has been given as a heritage to us” states the exclusive rights of those left in Jerusalem and Judah to possess the land, in contrast to those exiled from it. Tracing the traditional background of this argument brings us to Pentateuchal concepts of the land.

The concept that God gave the land to His people to inherit/to possess, הָרְשָׁעָה (דַּעְשָׁה) [for whom הָרְשָׁעָה (רְשָׁעָה) is the exclusive rights of those left in Jerusalem and Judah to possess the land, in contrast to those exiled from it. Tracing the traditional background of this argument brings us to Pentateuchal concepts of the land.

The concept that God gave the land to His people to inherit/to possess, הָרְשָׁעָה (דַּעְשָׁה) is a major theme in Deuteronomy. Yet this phrase הָרְשָׁעָה (רְשָׁעָה) in Ezek 11:15 and 33:24 most closely resembles Exodus 6:8. Exodus 6:2–8 builds the bridge between the patriarchs and the Exodus generation; the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (vv. 3–4) will now be given to the Sons of Jacob, who were saved from servitude in Egypt. This priestly unit emphasizes the pattern of promise and fulfillment.

Alluding to this tradition in the two quotations, the Jerusalemites give a new interpretation to the theme of promise and fulfillment. They claim to hold a divine certificate over the land, announcing (implicit in the passive נַעֲבָה that God has given them the rights to the land. It is the inhabitants of Jerusalem (and only they) who continue to fulfill that ancient promise to Abraham; they are the true descendents of those Sons of Jacob, the true people of God. Thus, the inhabitants of Jerusalem rely on past traditions concerning the promise of the Land (whether embedded in the patriarch stories and the Exodus traditions or in its amalgamated form in Exod 6:2–8). Based on this interpretation, they present a theological argument of divine legitimation for their continuing existence.

The two opening clauses of the quotations each suggest a different construct of division. The saying in Ezek 33:4 adds a positive argument based on past traditions in favor of Those Who Remained; while Ezek 11:15, in using the theological concept of exile, de-legitimizes the existence of the Exiles.

Ezekiel 33:4: “Abraham was but one man, yet he was granted possession of

41 Compare Deut 4:5; 14; 5:28; 6:11; 7:11; 11:31; 12:1; 23:21; 25:19; 28:21, 63; 30:16, 18; 32:47. Yet, several priestly passages use הָרְשָׁעָה as well, such as Gen 28:4; Lev 20:24; 25:46; Num 33:53.
42 The noun הָרְשָׁעָה appears nine times in the Bible, once in both Exod 6:8 and Deut 33:4, and seven times in Ezekiel. In addition to the two citations under discussion, the term occurs in prophecies to the nations (25:4, 10), and in the prophecy of consolation to the mountains of Israel (36:2, 3, 5).
the land. We are many (אנו רבים) [surely, the land has been given as a possession to us]. To find Abraham mentioned in the words of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is in itself quite a surprise, since outside the book of Genesis, Abraham is mentioned only rarely, and this is the only occurrence of his name in Ezekiel. What is of even more interest is to trace the exact features taken by the Jerusalemites from the Abraham stories. In this argument “from the minor to the major” (מברון מברון – קול חומרים) — the promise of the land is only implicitly hinted at. Weight is given to Abraham’s actual inheritance of the land (Crah ta wriio – רוחים את הארץ). The reference to Abraham’s possession of the land recalls Exod 6:4 and Genesis 17:8, but even more so Gen 15:7. After the destruction of Jerusalem, God’s covenant with Abraham had gained new relevance. By analogy, Those Who Remained counted themselves direct descendents of Abraham, and being many, they undoubtedly have been permitted to remain in order to continue to inhabit/inherit the land.

This line of reasoning accords with the religious-national argument of “the merit of the forefathers” (תובה אבות), which characterizes the closing clause of this quotation as well. It commemorates the past constitutive connection between God and the patriarch Abraham. Emphasizing the ongoing genealogical bond between Abraham and the present community in Jerusalem, Those Who Remained claim the continuity of their own residence in and thus their rightful possession of the land. This, then, constitutes a central argument of divine legitimation presented by Those Who Remained.

The call “Keep far from the Lord” (התרחקו מעל אותו, Ezek 11:15), which according to MT is an imperative, commands the Exiles to distance/.separate themselves from God. The use of the imperative to a community that had already

45 Other occurrences outside of Genesis: in the repeated patriarchal formula, together with Isaac and Jacob (as in Exod 3:6, 15; 1 Kgs 18:36); Pss 47:10; 105:6, 42; and only seven times in all the prophetic literature (Jer 33:26 as part of the triple patriarchal formula; Micah 7:20; three [to four] times in Deutero [and Trito]-Isaiah, Isa 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; and once in Isa 29:22).

46 Compare to Isa 51:1–2, where Abraham appears to be central to the Exilic community of the second half of the sixth century B.C.E. In both passages (Ezek 33:24 and Isa 51:1–2) emphasis is given to the change in number from the individual patriarch to the multitudes of his descendents. But in opposition to the emphasis on the inheritance of the land of Those Who Remained, Deutero-Isaiah alludes to the call, the blessing, and the progeny, the three central elements of the promises to Abraham (Gen 12:2–3) as a reaffirmation to be fulfilled in the future restoration of the Exiles. On the allusion to Gen 12:1–4, see J. L. McKenzie, Second Isaiah, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1968) 123, 125; and M. Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 375.

47 Interpreting the imperative, Greenberg suggests the close connections between the cult and the concept of the land as God’s land, as clearly appearing in Josh 22:24–27 (Ezekiel 1–20, 189). Compare to the BHS suggestion to read the verb in the Perfect: אוחסנ קדוש, and so Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 229; Brownlee, Ezekiel, 163; Joyce, “Dislocation and Adaptation,” 51; Block, Ezekiel 1–25, 341, 347–48. Although the perfect form suits the causative perfect קדושה הרקול in the reply (v. 16), it presents a weaker, less polemical, statement. Commentators (such as Block, Ezekiel 1–25, 348–49) followed
been physically distanced suggests the demand that the exiles “let go” of God
theologically and emotionally. The inhabitants of Jerusalem use the traditional
custom of exile to establish their argument. There is an analogical connection
between residence in God’s land and worship of God that contrasts with resi-
dence in foreign lands and the worship of other gods (as in Deut 4:25–28; 28:36,
64; 1 Sam 26:19; and on this basis Jer 5:19; 16:10–13). Being away from God’s land
means that the Deportees are out of God’s domain. This implies practical ef-
effects in worship – the Exiles should in consequence worship other gods; fur-
more, according to Those Who Remained, the Exiles have been deprived of
their religious-national identity as the people of God. This argument demon-
strates the use of a well-known concept of exile, in order to de-legitimate the
existence of the community of Exiles.\textsuperscript{48}

To conclude, the anonymous quotations in Ezekiel suggest that Those Who
Remained constituted their national re-identification using ideological strate-
gies of division. They applied past traditions and established concepts to their
community and thus built their present legitimate status as the people of God;\textsuperscript{49}
and they designated their exclusive status through de-legitimation of their sis-
ter community of the Jehoiachin Exiles. Although not exiled abroad, even if
temporarily estranged from its lands (Jer 42:12), the community of Those Who
Remained had an interest similar to that of the Exiles in re-building an exclu-
sive identity.\textsuperscript{50} They were, furthermore, anxious to bar those who had left the
land of Judah from belonging to the people of God.

THE EXILES

Ezekiel’s empathy to the Exiles is clearly marked by the three terms present-
ing his fellow community, the Jehoiachin Exiles: “your brothers, your brothers,
men of your kindred, all of that very house of Israel” (אוחרי אחיך אישיך נחלתם
ברא, Ezek 11:14).\textsuperscript{51}

The refutation in Ezek 11:16–21 is structured according to the two statements

\textsuperscript{48} D. Rom-Shiloni, “Deuteronomic Concepts of Exile Interpreted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” in Prof.
Shalom M. Paul Jubilee Volume (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{49} The position of Those who Remained is further elaborated by Jeremiah (as in Jer 32:6–15; 42:9–
17), but this will have to await a separate discussion.

\textsuperscript{50} O. Lipschits, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.,”
in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp, eds., Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period (Win-

\textsuperscript{51} For the MT and the Septuagint version: οἱ ἀνδρεῖς τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας σου (Ἀνσρ Ἐξλῆ Ἐκλῆ), see Block,
Ezekiel 1–24, 341, 346. See also Ἡλατίαν ἐξαίχτησε (in Ezek 3:11 and 33:30.)
of the quotation. First, Ezekiel answers the imperative “Keep far from the Lord” (רָאַ֖ק מחוּל מִעַ֣֔צְךָ, v. 15), admitting that God Himself had distanced the exiles “I have indeed removed them far” (נָ֣לַ֜נְי אֵ֥ת הָאָ֔רֶץ לִמְרַדְּשֵּֽׁה, v. 16). Then, in reply to the Jerusalemites’ claim “the land has been given as a heritage to us” (גְּהָנָ֣ה לָכֶ֑ם אֵ֖את אֲרֻמָּתֵֽי, v. 15), Ezekiel promises that God will give the land to the Exiles “and I will give you the Land of Israel” (נַהֲלָ֣ה לָכֶ֖ם אֵֽאֲרֻמָּתֵ֑י, v. 17). In its general content, the refutation contradicts the implicit message of doom in the quotation with a prophecy of consolation that defines the Exiles as the Remnant and hopes for their restoration (vv. 17–21).

In v. 16 God declares “Indeed it was I who distanced them and dispersed them” (כִּי הָוִדֵ֥ד בָּנֵ֖י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל). In accordance with the Deuteronomic concept of exile, Ezekiel ascribes the deportation to God (compare Deut 28:36: “The Lord will drive you, and the king you have set over you, to a nation,” נָֽלַ֖ל הָֽיָֽה עַמּוֹנִ֑י). However, in contrast to Deut 4:25–28; 28:36, 64, Ezekiel redefines the relationship between God and His people in exile, and thus focuses his refutation on the divine legitimation of the Exiles’ community. Although they were exiled to foreign lands, the Exiles were not destined to serve foreign gods, they were not expelled from the presence of God. On the contrary, those expelled are themselves the objects of restoration. They will be gathered from among the peoples to be given the land (v. 17). Upon return they will purify the land from its detestable things and abominations (v. 18), and God will transform their hearts (v. 19) in order to renew the covenant relationship exclusively with this community of His people (v. 20). In contrast, annihilation is going to be the fortune of those holding to abominations (v. 21).

Verse 21 poses a difficulty with regard to its implicit subject “But as for them whose heart is set upon their detestable things and their abominations” (אֲנָ֖יו לָלֶ֣ל שָׁמָ֑רָתָם וְעֻתְבַּרְתָּם לְבָנָ֖ל). Designating the “others” as “those holding to” and “those holding to” sets v. 21 in opposition to v. 18. Since upon return, the Repatriates are expected to “do away” with those illegitimate cults in the land, it seems likely that “those holding to them” (v. 21) are Those Who Remained. If so, this prophecy marks a cultic differentiation between the Exiles (the future Repatriates) and Those Who Remained. This distinction is among the first signs to

52 This relationship was suggested already by Eliezer of Beaugency, Kommentar zu Ezechiel und den XII kleinen Propheten von Eliezer aus Beaugency, hrsg. S. Poznanski (Warschau: Mekize Nirda-mim, 1909) on Ezek 11:17. Such literal, structural, and thematic accordance between quotation and counter-speech often appear in the disputation speeches; see Graffy, A Prophet, 105–19.
53 So Eliezer of Beaugency, Kommentar zu Ezechiel, on Ezek 11:16.
54 Greenberg (Ezechiel 1–20, 191) identifies the oppositional community in Ezek 11:14–21 according to the contradictory phrases (v. 20) and (v. 19); and see Eliezer of Beaugency on Ezek 11:18.
55 A similar dichotomy is implicitly suggested also in Jer 29:16–20 in the contrast between the disobedient king and people in Jerusalem: (וְהַתַּחְתַּמְּאֵל אֵ֓ל שְׁמ֣וּר, v. 16–19), and the demand presented to
a hierarchal differentiation between Exiles and Those Who Remained, in which
the latter are accused of worshipping other gods in God's land.56
Ezekiel's innovative perception gains further strength in the words
לָמוּר הַקָּט (v. 16) which has garnered many interpretations. Two major paths have been taken in interpreting
According to the first, מֹר serves in its usual meaning, "a sanctuary," and
already by the early translations (and continuously by traditional commentators), was interpreted as an adjective that signifies diminution.57 According to a second path of interpretation, which most of the critical commentators suggest, מֹר is taken as a metonymy for the presence of God, and מֹר is interpreted as an adverb that minimizes His presence with the Exiles.58 Although מֹר in this metonymical sense is a hapax, Ezekiel coins this phrase to proclaim that exile does not bring separation from God.59 God continues to be present in the life of the Exiles, though in reduced fashion compared to His previous presence in His temple. Ezekiel advocates here that in exilic circumstances God has a dynamic presence, adjusting His appearances to His people's different dwelling places.60
In his refutation Ezekiel crafts a new concept of exile. In contrast to the exilic layer of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:29–31; 30:1–10) and the Holiness Code (Lev 26:39–45), Ezekiel's innovation establishes God as the initiator of the restored relationship with the Exiles (Ezek 11:16–21; 36:22–32). In this polemical context, the accent on the divine initiative illustrates further Ezekiel's inclination towards the community in exile. This ideology constituted the new exclusive status of the Exiles as away from the land of Israel, but not distanced from God, and in separation from Those Who Remained in Judah. Hence, Ezekiel's consolation prophecy exemplifies the prophet’s vital contribution to the evolution of an exilic ideology during the first years of exile.

In Ezek 33:23–29 the prophet confronts the declaration of rights of Those Who Remained in ruined Jerusalem: “the land has been given as a possession to us” (וְהָרָד הַמָּרָכִי לַמְרַכִי, v. 24). In contrast to the disputation in Ezek 11:14–21, in these verses the prophet does not explicitly set his prophecy of doom against a consoling fate of the Exiles. This silence about the Exiles is spurred by the quotation itself, which does not mention them (contra 11:15). This could, therefore, be simply explained as another sign of the formal and thematic accord main-
tained between the quotation and the refutation. Yet, the lack of reply or comment on the central argument of Those Who Remained, relying on the Abraham tradition, seems significant. To confront Jerusalemite reasoning, Ezekiel chooses a different ideological argument altogether, based on the law. In two rhetorical questions (vv. 25–26), Ezekiel mentions cultic, social and sexual sins committed in the land of Judah, as an introduction to the rhetorical cry: “yet you expect to possess the land?” (דִּאָרְא תַּדְרִישָׁהוּ?!).
The three capital crimes of which Ezekiel accuses Those Who Remained and the question ḥlah (Ezek 33:25, 26) allude to the Holiness Code’s concept of land and exile. According to Leviticus 18 and 20 idolatry, bloodshed and sexual offenses defile the land to the point that it vomits its inhabitants (Lev 18:24–30; 20:22), and brings God to drive out its inhabitants and to total abhorrence (Lev 20:23). Ezekiel’s cry (Ezek 33:5, 6) echoes the promise of the land: “You shall possess their land,” Lev 20:24. Yet, by posing it as a rhetorical question directed against those in Jerusalem, the prophet abolishes the promise for “those who live in these ruins in the land of Israel” (Ezek 33:24).

Moreover, Ezekiel applies to the community left in Judah the threats of removal from the land in Lev 18:24–30. This passage from the Holiness Code catalogues the fates of “the people who were in the land” (eenth hlah), v. 27, or the Canaanite peoples (20:23, MT יִרְמָם, but pl. in the versions), in order to deter Israel from the calamitous results of following in their ways. The Canaanite peoples of the land were expelled because of their “abhorrent practices” (תִּכְרָא, v. 30), which were mainly of a sexual nature (Lev 18:6–23). But the prohibitive speech of 18:24–30 does not settle for the threat of expulsion of Israel from the land; it warns of further calamity: “All who do any of those abhorrent things – such persons shall be cut off from their people” (ךָּלָּל שֶׁאֵר יָשֶׁב מִכָּל, v. 29). Accordingly, in contrast to the argument for continuity in the possession of the land, Ezekiel does not even prophesy exile, but rather total annihilation of Those Who Remained, by sword, beast and pestilence (Ezek 33:27), and he further widens the prospect of his prophecy to include desolation of the land (vv. 28–29). In drawing


Schwartz suggested a clear distinction between expulsion and calamity (The Holiness Legislation, 228–37). Yet, on the analogy of the fate of Israel (18:29), it seems rather that in three passages (Lev 18:24–30; 20:20–24 and in Num 33:50–59) expulsion does mean annihilation, even if there is no reference to the vehicle of execution. Thus, these passages differ from Leviticus 26’s perspective on exile.

Total calamity and empty land characterize other judgment prophecies against Jerusalem, see p. 41 below. Milgrom argued that in the Holiness Code the land “automatically regurgitates its inhabitants in the process of cleansing itself,” and thus in contrast to the Priestly perception, the land is not irrevocably impure (Leviticus 17–22, 1573–74). Ezekiel then takes the Priestly position prophesying that the sins require desolation of the land itself (as in Ezek 6:11–14).
these analogies to Lev 18:24–30, Ezekiel rejects the possibility that Those Who Remained might join the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles in Babylon.

Ezekiel, then, not only supplies divine de-legitimation for the continuous existence of Those Who Remained in Judah, he emphatically reflects the superior-exclusive tendency of the Jehoiachin Exiles that had developed from the very start, from 597 B.C.E. and on.⁷¹

To summarize, Ezekiel as an advocate of the Exiles formulates a concept of exile that enables continuity of Judahite existence outside the Land of Israel. He clearly knows and deviates from both the Deuteronomic and the Holiness Code’s concepts of land and exile. Furthermore, in his prophecy of restoration (11:16–21), Ezekiel supplies divine legitimation to this community of Exiles seen as the Remnant of the people of God. In opposition, the prophet de-legitimates the community in Jerusalem, accusing them with various cultic sins (11:21; 33:25–26), that estrange them from the land.⁷² These strategies of division create explicit differences of prestige between the groups.

IMPLICIT DISPUTATION
SEPARATE HISTORIES & FUTURES FOR THE TWO JUDEAN COMMUNITIES

In his social-anthropological studies, Fredrick Barth mentioned the importance given to questions of origin in the evolution of the group’s present identity.⁷³ Having outlined the rival arguments in this conflict, we can now proceed to Ezekiel’s observations on the history of the God-people relationship, and thus on the two communities’ possibilities for present and future existence.

In two passages, Ezek 16:1–43 and 20:1–38, which were not connected through the editorial process of the book, I suggest that Ezekiel expresses his perspective on each of the two Judahite communities.

The two prophecies have several characteristics in common. First, they open with the call to the prophet to proclaim abominations, “O mortal, proclaim Jerusalem’s abominations to her” (24:1; 20:1), “Arraign, arraign them, O mortal! — Declare to them the abhorrent deeds of

⁷¹ This separation is explicitly suggested in Jer 24:1–10; and appears implicitly also in the diverse descriptions of the Jehoiachin Exile in 2 Kgs 24:8–17, in comparison to the general reference to the 586 destruction and exile in 2 Kings 25. For the exilic perspective of 2 Kings 24–25 see Seitz, Theology in Conflict, 215–21.

⁷² Religious behavior as a de-legitimating device to determine hierarchal differentiation between groups is also implemented in the historiography; see the various denigrations of the Northern Kingdom accused for following “the ways of Jeroboam son of Nevat and the sins he caused Israel to commit” down to its destruction and exile (1 Kgs 12:25–33; 13:33–34; 1 Kgs 15:26, 34 and constantly through the Book of Kings; finally, 2 Kgs 17:21–22 which suggests a somewhat different yet still denigrating perspective).

⁷³ Barth, Ethnic Groups, 29.
their fathers” (Ezek 20:4). The former aims at Jerusalem, while the latter is directed to the Exiles. A second common denominator is structural; both passages start with a retrospective which goes back to the initial constitution of the relationship between God and His people (16:1–14; 20:5–26), proceed to the present generation in a chronological contraction (16:15–34; 20:30–33), and look to the future (16:35–43; 20:34–38). The third is thematic, in both prophecies the prophet lays out his agenda concerning the question “who is the people of God,” recognizing that it could only be one of the two communities, the Jehoiachin Exiles or Those Who Remained in Judah. However, in other features the two passages differ.

The literary genre. Ezekiel 16:1–43, the metaphoric story of the abandoned baby, the beautiful bride, and the harlot-wife stands in the structural framework of a judgment prophecy. The first part presents a long description of the sinful wife’s guilt and ingratitude (vv. 1–34), followed by a passage suggesting her punishment (vv. 35–43). In contrast, Ezek 20:1–38 is construed as a disputation speech, though with special structure. As is typical of the genre, the core of the disputation is the refutation of the Elders’ words of despair quoted in v. 3: “We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, worshipping wood and stone” (Ezek 20:3). The Elders of Israel approach the prophet with a reflection in which they seek correlation between the traditional concept of

74 An even closer opening to Ezek 20:4 appears in Ezek 22:1: הדריס המושפת חפץ נדיהorporyx התובאלהה יוהו (Further, O mortal, arraign arraign the city of bloodshed; declare to her all her abhorrent deeds!). Yet, the passages differ, first, in the grammatical person of the address; second, in content, Ezek 22:1–12 deals with Jerusalem’s present iniquities and does not present a retrospective history of the God-people relationship; third, in style, explicit apodictic charges influence Ezekiel 22 in contrast to Ezekiel 20’s reliance on historical traditions of the covenant (compare Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 454–55).

75 Ezek 20:27–29 (as also vv. 39–44) are secondary, see n. 85 below.

76 Ezek 16:1–43 is one of five different passages in Ezekiel 16 and 23 which use the family metaphors of adoption and marriage in diverse ways. For their self-contained initial character and their literary nature as metaphoric stories (not allegory), see J. Galambush, Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife, SBLS 130 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992) 10–11.

77 In a previous paper I have suggested a different division to chapter 20 than is commonly adduced (Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction,” 194–204). I hereby bring only the necessary points for the present argument. Most commentators have divided chapter 20 into two initially independent units: the historical speech (vv. 1–31), expanded by the disputation speech (vv. 32–44). So Eichrodt, Ezekiel, 276–84; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 404, 413–14; L. C. Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, WBC 29 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1990) 5; and also Graffy, A Prophet, 65–66. In contrast, Greenberg and Hoffman argued for the unity of the chapter (Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 376–81; Y. Hoffman, “Ezekiel 20—Its Structure and Meaning,” Beit Miqra 20 [1975] 480–86).

78 So Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 414; further discussion of the saying and its traditional background, see Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction,” 194–98.
exile and their present existence in Babylon. The Deuteronomic concept, which they cite, indeed threatens that exile will be the place for worshipping wood and stone (“There you will serve man-made gods of wood and stone,” Deut 4:28; and 28:36, 64). This analogy threatens the Exiles’ continued existence as the people of God.

The furious rejection of the Elder’s inquiry is accentuated in an *inclusio* repetition, which frames the whole retrospective speech as the disputation’s introductory section.79


verse 3

הדורשים אתת אתות numeros, והאני אמש א들도plenities לא ממ amd אנד טיתיה, 

Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live, I will not respond to your inquiry — declares the Lord God.

verse 31

והאני א들도plenities עלת ישראתוס, והאני אמש אנד טיתיה, והאני א들도plenities אמש אנד טיתיה, 

shall I respond to your inquiry, O house of Israel? As I live — declares the Lord God — I will not respond to you.

Within his speech the prophet proclaims first the abhorrent deeds of “their fathers” (vv. 4–26). Returning to his contemporaries (vv. 30–32a), Ezekiel then quotes their words (v. 32b), and disproves them with a unique prophecy of deliverance, describing God as reigning over the people “with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with overflowing fury” (היה יד חAffected by השקת נוורית, vv. 33–38). Ezekiel’s special perspective on the relationship between God and His people is thus the focus of this disputation presented in both his *retrospective* account and in his *prospective* articulation of the ongoing relationship during the exile.80

*Future prospect.* The generic difference emphasizes the distinct opposing content of the two prophecies. Ezek 16:1–43 prophesies judgment and calamity to Jerusalem, while Ezek 20:1–38 forecasts consolation and hope for the Exiles.

*Metaphors serving in the God-people covenant relationship.* The contrast in content and particularly in the future prediction to Jerusalem versus that to the Exiles has brought Ezekiel to use different metaphors to designate contrasting perspectives on the God-people covenant relationship.

79 In addition, all the literary features of the introductory section of the disputation-speech are present: 1. The prophetic formula (v. 2; as in Ezek 11:14). 2. The essential features preceding the quotation: the verb עשה, and the identification of its subject, חטא, v. 32; 3. Rejection of the quotation, which appears twice in Ezekiel 20, first, in the *inclusio* pattern, and second, in the immediate context of v. 32 and on. Compare Graffy, *A Prophet*, 105–29.

The metaphor in Ezekiel 20 is the well known theological-political metaphor which designates God as king and the people as His vassals.\(^{81}\) The retrospective speech (vv. 4–31) depicts four periods (covering three generations) in a graduated pattern of three and four: 1. The servitude in Egypt — the first generation of the fathers (vv. 5–10); 2. The Exodus through the desert of this first generation (vv. 11–17); 3. The second generation in the desert (vv. 18–26); 4. Ezekiel’s contemporary generation in Babylon (vv. 30–31), where the historical retrospective reaches its climax.\(^{82}\) In order to repeat God’s rejection of the inquiry, the prophet straightforwardly reproves his contemporaries in exile: “Do you defile yourselves in the manner of your fathers” (v. 31).\(^{83}\)

In order to characterize the God-People relationship, Ezekiel builds the first three periods with repetitive components. 1. God has benefited His people by choosing them and constituting a covenant relationship with them by oath (20:5–6), and has further committed them to his covenant through specific commands (vv. 7, 11–12, 18–20, 25–26).\(^{84}\) Yet, 2. they have sinned against him in their disobedience (vv. 8, 13, 21, 24). 3. God should have punished them with a calamitous judgment “Then I resolved to pour out My fury upon them, to vent all My anger upon them there” (v. 8b, 13b, 21b, and “that I might render them desolate,” v. 26). However, 4. “for the sake of His name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations” He repeatedly refrained from that (v. 9, 14, 22), and 5. instead God reduced the judgment against them (vv. 10, 15–17, 22–26). Thus, following the political metaphor, covenant as initiated by God-the king, includes specific commitments and stipulations, and the vassals’ disobedience brings the sovereign time and again to punish the rebels.

Ezekiel selected these four eras from the people’s history to emphasize two...
main points to his fellow Exiles. First, the geographical horizon: The common denominator of the depicted eras (with the exception of the secondary verses 27–29) is the existence outside the Land of Israel. This special geographical point of view in Ezek 20:1–32 has been overlooked by scholars. In contradistinction to the traditional perception of the exile as a period of distance and separation from God, Ezekiel points out the fact that God had initially established the relationship with His people outside the land of Israel, in an exilic environment.

Second, the commitment of God to the covenant: Within Ezekiel’s accent on the fact that God initiated the covenant relationship with His people in Egypt (v. 5), the prophet suggests the exceptional claim that disobedience to God and to His ritual demands started at this very first stage (vv. 7–8), and has persisted ever since (vv. 13, 21, 30).87 Time and again the people have deserved to be punished with total calamity (vv. 8b, 3b, 5b), but God decided unilaterally not to destroy them, for the sake of His prestige in the face of the foreign peoples (vv. 9, 14, 22).88 Although the divine oath had changed as a consequence of the people’s sins (vv. 6, 15, 23), God did not retract it, and the people’s behavior did not abrogate the everlasting existence of His commitments.

In Ezekiel’s prophecy of consolation (vv. 33–38) those two central lessons of the retrospective speech connect the present generation of the Exiles in Babylon to the first generations in Egypt and in the desert.89 Hence, the prophet vigilantly bypasses the inherited concept of exile with a different analogy based on Priestly (especially Exod 6:2–8) and Deuteronomic

85 For the secondary nature of vv. 27–29 (as also vv. 39–44), see Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 405, 412; and recently Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction,” 200–201; compare to Greenberg (Ezekiel 1–20, 378); Hoffman (Ezekiel 20, 482); Block (Ezekiel 1–24, 641–45); and Kasher (Ezekiel 1–24, 385–86), all still consider vv. 27–29 part of the original words.
86 Ezekiel 20 joins other covenant traditions which are set outside the Land of Israel (exceptional is only Joshua 24). See D. Sperling, ”Joshua 24 Re-examined,” HUCA 58 (1987) 119–36, esp. 133–36.
87 Idolatry practiced prior to the Settlement connects Ezekiel 20 to Psalm 106 (and to Josh 24:14).
88 Alluding to Exod 32:9–14, see Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 366.
89 Various allusions to the Exodus in vv. 33–38 prove this intention: יבר אל תפארת העמים (v. 34), יבר אל תפארת הפטרים (v. 35), חק דקי ורד הזולע (v. 37), and the even more explicit allusion אב כמין במברת (v. 36). For allusions in vv. 33–38 (as also vv. 5–6 and others) to the Priestly tradition in Exod 6:2–8, see M. A. Fishbane, Text and Texture: Close Reading of Selected Biblical Texts (New York: Schocken, 1979) 131–32; Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 366–67. Nevertheless, Ezekiel’s words differ considerably from that tradition: 1. He does not mention the fathers as the recipients of the promise to the land (Exod 6:2; and see Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 364). 2. Unparalleled in Exodus 6, Ezekiel suggests an immediate requirement to obey God’s demands (Ezek 20:7). 3. Ezekiel describes the salvation using idioms of wrath aimed at the people. Compare ב. Роֵפִּי Haש 32b, and Greenberg’s discussion of הַשָּׁפֹךְ in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1–20, 371–72).
Exodus traditions. Accordingly, he perceives the Exiles as a direct continuation of the first generation in Egypt. Ezekiel illustrates an opposing picture — the Exiles do have hope. Although in exile, they are still God's people, and He is their King.

Ezekiel 16:1–43 integrates two metaphors from the family sphere, the adoption and the marital metaphors, in which God is father and then husband, and the city is first His daughter and then His wife. This passage in Ezekiel has attracted vast scholarly attention; I will restrict myself to the covenant concept that it presents in three main points: initiation of the covenant relationship, its violation, and finally the wife's / the city's judgment.

1. Initiation of the covenant relationship in 16:1–14 appears as a two-stage process, designated by the repetition on “When I passed by you and saw you” (אנהתי אזורא, vv. 6, 8). First, Jerusalem a baby-born in the land of Canaan (עם בננעה, v. 3) to an Amorite father and a Hittite mother, who was abandoned at birth, is adopted by God (vv. 4–7). Second, when the young girl reaches maturity, God establishes the covenant relationship with her through marriage: “and I entered into a covenant with you by oath—declares the Lord God; thus you became Mine” (ואשת עלサラ בכרת אוֹת אָמָה אֵשָּׁת אֱרָו, vv. 8). As in marital commitments, the hierarchy between the two parties in this covenant relationship is clear. God-the husband initiates the relationship, and the result is that He owns the bride-Jerusalem (והיה לי, v. 8). Through-out vv. 8–14 הוהי לי is the only phrase which hints at the bride's obligations of loyalty towards her husband. In contrast, the story focuses on an impressive list of the benefits God as husband has given her (vv. 9–13). The description reaches the point where the bride is prepared for the position she ought to

90 Compare Levitt Kohn, A New Heart, 98–103. For different evaluations of the wilderness traditions in Ezekiel's speech, see Eichrodt, Ezekiel, 279–80; and Coats, Rebellion, 240–41.
91 The marriage metaphor with the people or the city as God's wife, were thoroughly discussed by Galambush, Jerusalem. For the adoption metaphor in the God-people relationship, and the comparative use of adoption terminology in the diplomatic relationships, see S. M. Paul, "Adoption Formulæ: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses," Maarav 2/2 (1979–80) 173–85. The two family metaphors are integrated in Jer 3:14 as well, and the common terminology was presented by Weinfeld, Deuteronomistic School, 80–81; Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 254.
93 An oath does not appear as a component in the marital ceremony (but see Ruth 3:13; and the appearance of "covenant" to designate marriage in Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17). Thus Greenberg considers והיה לי to be of the tenor (Ezekiel 1–20, 278). Yet, God taking an oath is also uncommon (Deut 4:31; 28:9), and thus Zimmerli designated this as a unique feature in Ezekiel's use of the metaphor (Ezekiel 1, 349).
94 The phrase נְזֵר designates the subject change of status in relation to the object (BDB, 226).
undertake, being God’s wife: “and you became fit for royalty” (וֹתֵלָה, v. 13). Likewise her beauty results from her patron: “for it was perfected through the splendor which I set upon you” (כָּלַל הָא דָּוִד אֲשֶׁר שָׂמַת עַלךָ, v. 14). This description clarifies that the metaphors of the family sphere are sub-metaphors to that of God as King. Nevertheless, the family metaphors function independently in Ezekiel, and together with the political metaphor, the two even serve the prophet to present his counter-positions regarding the two Judahite communities.95

2. Violation of the covenant, 16:15–34: In complete opposition to the constitution of the marriage / the covenant, the wife / Jerusalem in total ingratitude has given to other gods what she had gotten as bride-price from God (vv. 15–22), and further betrayed Him with human “foreigners,” “lovers” (vv. 23–34). The figurative sexual description reaches its apex as the adulteress is parodied for behavior unheard of even among prostitutes, “You were the opposite of other women: you solicited instead of being solicited; you paid fees instead of being paid fees. Thus you were just the opposite!” (וּרְחַב בָּךְ חַפְּקָת מְנַשְׂשָׂ הָבָה נוּחִית חֲרוֹרֵי, v. 34).96

The adulterous nymphomaniacal behavior is construed in constant transitions between the vehicle of the metaphor and its implicit tenor.97 The wife / Jerusalem is accused of adultery, formally separated into two paragraphs (vv. 16–22, 23–34), which stand for sins taken from two spheres. In the religious sphere, worshipping other gods include building cultic sites (vv. 16, 24–25), producing figurines (v. 17), serving them various offerings (vv. 18–19), and the most severe of all, sacrificing God’s sons and daughters to them (vv. 20–21; as also 23:37).98 In the political sphere, adultery means counting on foreigners from among the Egyptians (16:26), the Assyrians (v. 28), and the Babylonians (v. 29).99 Both spheres add up to the general accusation of the wife / city for not remembering her youth, “you did not remember the days of your youth” (אָרְמַת הָעַרְיָת [כָּרָה] [כָּרָה], vv. 22, 43).100

95 The two metaphorical systems operate interchangeably in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, yet they function independently according to the particular messages of these prophets. This polemical usage is specific to Ezekiel. For a fuller discussion, see D. Rom-Shiloni, “God in Times of Destruction and Exiles: Theology and Ideology in the Prophetic Literature and in the Poetry of the First Half of the Sixth Century B.C.E.” (Ph.D. Diss.; Jerusalem: Hebrew Univ., 2001) 237–83.

96 Galambush, Jerusalem, 98.


98 as also לְכִתְבָּה נְכָר (v. 16), as also כְּרָה and כָּלַת (v. 24, 31) are all designators of cultic sites, see Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 280–82, and his discussion of the unique language and style, 296–97.

99 The political sphere is the focus of attention in Ezek 23:1–35, 36–49; whereas the religious sphere in the first prophecy holds only minor position (vv. 7, 30 and 14). This is then one major difference between the metaphorical passages in Ezekiel. See Galambush, Jerusalem, 110.

100 רָקָר is an important component in the biblical political-covenant terminology throughout the bib-
Although the tenor appears explicit at times, the story remains faithful to the marital metaphor in perceiving the sins. Varied forms of the roots הָזָה and הָזָא dominate the terminology of sin.\(^{101}\) Even the general term "abominations" (16:22, 36), which in Deuteronomic sources refers to cultic, moral and sexual offenses, appears as if through the lens of the Holiness Code’s writer to concentrate on sexual misconduct.\(^{102}\) The adulterous behavior illustrated so vividly through the marital metaphor demonstrates Jerusalem’s sins of disloyalty as profound betrayal of the old covenant with God. Yet, in contrast to Ezekiel 20, and to the general usage of the political metaphor, there is no mention of disobedience to God’s laws and rules (compare Ezek 20:11, 13).\(^{103}\)

3. The judgment upon the wife / the city, 16:35–43, continues this line of metaphor. In contrast to her initial salvation from disgrace and helplessness, salvation which had brought her to prestigious status among the peoples (v. 14), and in retaliation to her sins (vv. 15–34), the wife is now accused of adultery and murder. Hence, she is doomed to return to shame and helplessness, to total destruction (vv. 39–41).\(^{104}\)

Jerusalem is accused of two capital crimes and sentenced accordingly: “I will inflict upon you the punishment of women who commit adultery and murder” (16:38; 23:45; see also 34:37). The juxtaposition of the two crimes, adultery and sacrificial murder, alludes to Leviticus 20.

This Holiness Code passage is the second (in addition to Leviticus 18) to

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\(^{101}\) For הָזָה and הָזָא (an Ezekelian hapax, which appears twenty times in Ezekiel 16 and 23), as other unique features of language and style of Ezekiel 16, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 296.

\(^{102}\) For the phrase הָזָה in Lev 18:24–30 according to B. Schwartz bear a general and abstract meaning in order to present the implications of this impurity and abominations for the national fate (Holiness Legislation, 222–23). For the difference between the use of הָזָא in Deuteronomic versus Priestly sources, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1581.

\(^{103}\) This is, then, another unique feature of Ezek 16:1–43, by comparison with the other occurrences of the marital metaphor stories in Ezekiel. Compare to the Ezekiel 16:59–63, which opens with a phrase resembling the vassal oath (אשֶר בִּתָּהּ אֶלְּהָלָה בִּרְיָה, v. 59); and the implicit tenor that appears in 23:38–39.

\(^{104}\) Block presented this “ironical twist” in Jerusalem’s fortune (*Ezekiel 1–24*, 500–503). I accept Day’s observation (“The Bitch,” 237–54), that the lovers’ participation in the harlot’s execution is another example of the implicit tenor in this section as well (compare to the adultery laws, in Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22–24). Nevertheless, this intrusion of the tenor does not exclude the basic line of thought in this passage, which rests on the different judgments directed at sexual offenses in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 20).
connect the contrasting commands of God with the abominable laws of the foreign Canaanite peoples (20:22–23; and 18:1–5, 26). The (detestable) laws מִלְּאֵל הַחֵרֶב הָאֵל הָאָמְרֶה (Lev 20:23) or מִלְּאֵל הַחֵרֶב הָאֵל הָאָמְרֶה (18:3), and מִלְּאֵל הַחֵרֶב הָאָמְרֶה (vv. 26, 27) are specified in the cultic sphere by the sacrifice of sons to the Molech (20:2–6), and in the moral sphere by sexual offenses (20:9–21). Leviticus 20 names two sets of punishments one after the other. The first, in the third person singular (or plural) activated against individual sinners (20:1–21). The second, in the second person plural, extended to the whole people (vv. 22–24), presents clear conditional threat stating that disobedience to God's commands results in the land vomiting its inhabitants (v. 22). Since the people of Israel inherited the land of those who had lost it because of their sins (v. 24), a constant threat hangs above the heads of those who live in God's land.

The allusive connections to the Holiness Code's concepts of land and exile are the keys to understanding Ezekiel's selection of this specific marital metaphor with regard to God-Jerusalem's relationship. Leviticus 20 supplies the legal basis to completely de-legitimate Jerusalem as the people of God, and even to illustrate the prediction of that community's eventual physical calamity.

Just as Ezekiel refutes the words of the Jerusalemites in Ezek 33:24–29 with allusions to Leviticus 18 and 20, so does the prophet adapt those central themes in his metaphoric judgment prophecy in Ezek 16:1–43. The analogy serves the prophet's views concerning the origin of Jerusalem, its sins, and its punishment. As for Jerusalem's origin, Ezekiel goes even further than what he expresses in 33:24–29, when he not only identifies Jerusalem and her conduct with the denigrated “practices of the nation that I am driving out before you” (הַקֹּדֶשׁ הָרֹג אָשֶׁר אֶנְכָּנוּ מִשָּׁתַמְנָם, Lev 20:23); but furthermore, argues in 16:1–43 that Jerusalem is actually Canaanite in origin, the daughter of an Amorite and a Hittite from the land of Canaan (vv. 2–3). Her adoption and the tremendous benefits poured on her by God could not have erased this initial “biography.” With regard to her sins, they resemble further the parallel between the city and the Canaanite peoples. In analogy to Leviticus 20, Jeru-

105 מִלְּאֵל הַחֵרֶב (Lev 20:23) appears in the plural form in the versions, cohering with the plural forms at the end of the verse, and in accordance with 18:24 (however, 18:28 uses the singular). See Milgrom, Leviticus 17–22, 1759.

106 Schwartz presented the independent position of the two chapters (Holiness Legislation, 135–44); and see Milgrom, Leviticus 17–22, 1577, 1765–68.

107 Compare to Galambush's suggestion that the key theme to this metaphoric passage, is Jerusalem's impurity and specifically the sanctuary's defilement, which prepares the ground for God's abandonment of His city (Jerusalem, 103–5).

108 See the discussion on pp. 18–20 above.

109 Block saw the polemical nature of Jerusalem's genealogy (Ezekiel 1–24, 475), but he did not complete Ezekiel's interests as an opponent.
salem follows the very same abominations. Judged as harlot and as “cultic murderer,” Jerusalem’s sins are unforgivable and her punishment irrevocable. Finally, as to Jerusalem’s judgment, Ezekiel deviates his message from Leviticus 20. According to the latter, God expelled the Canaanites from the land, an expulsion which ended in their extinction (Lev 20:23, and 18:28). In his words to Jerusalem Ezekiel does not foresee displacement from the land as part of Jerusalem’s punishment. The prophet rather combines Leviticus 20’s two sets of punishment. The individual death penalty of the murderer and the adulteress becomes the only retaliation to Jerusalem’s offenses, foreseeing total calamity within the land, no exile.

Using the two metaphors to describe the God-people relationship, Ezekiel differentiates sociologically between the past and the future fates of the two communities in exile and in the land of Israel, as can be seen in the table on the following pages.

The political metaphor in Ezek 20:1–38, on the one hand, enables Ezekiel to emphasize the constitution of the covenant outside the land of Israel, in Egypt, with God as initiator and the preserver of the covenant despite the people’s repeated disobedience. As proven before, God is committed to His people, and thus the continuous covenant relationship is guaranteed for the future as well: God is the Exiles’ King.

The family metaphors in Ezek 16:1–43, on the other hand, enable Ezekiel to keep Jerusalem in an inland vicinity, in Canaan. From origin, through constant misconducts, to her punishment, Jerusalem resembles the Canaanite peoples, the previous peoples of the land, whom God had expelled. But, in Ezekiel’s extreme position, Jerusalem is not even doomed to exile, only to death, to total calamity.

Through these lines of argumentation and the ideological strategies of division which Ezekiel uses in the two passages, the prophet recalls different

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110 Condemnation of the Canaanite peoples with sexual misconduct has its roots in several stories in the book of Genesis, that is, the story of Ham, Canaan’s forefather (Gen 9:22–27); Dinah’s rape (Genesis 34); as also the story of Sodom and Gomorra (Genesis 19); and see Schwartz, Holiness Legislation, 157–62.

111 Milgrom considers verses 22–23 a separate unit appended to the list of chapter 20 under the influence of chapter 18 (Leviticus 17–22, 1759).

112 The similarities between Leviticus 20 and Ezek 16:35–43 with regard to the penalties are scant and doubtful, mainly because verses 39–43 present rapid changes from the metaphoric vehicle to its realistic tenor. Nevertheless, two of the death penalties appear in both: pelt in stone for the sacrifice of sons to the Molech (ופר משא, Lev 20:2, as in Ezek 16:40), and flaming in fire for sexual offenses (עיירתא בזא, Lev 20:14, as in Ezek 16:41). See Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 287; Block mentions only Deut 22:23–24 as alluded in Ezek 16:40 (Ezekiel 1–24, 503); and P. L. Day, “Adulterous Jerusalem’s Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI,” VT 50/3 (2000) 285–309.
historical and legal traditions from the Pentateuch, with which he establishes two distinctive histories of the God-people relationship. Relying on the Exodus traditions, Ezekiel legitimates the Exiles' ongoing existence as the people of God, with whom the covenant is expected to be restored in “the desert of peoples,” and who will be led back to the land of Israel. In contrast, the prophet de-legitimizes the homeland community by referring back to the legal and historic traditions related to the Settlement, which demand clear separation from the Canaanite peoples. Construing a similarity between Those Who Remained and the Canaanite peoples is a strategy Ezra and Nehemiah will later use during the
Legitimation — Ezekiel as the Jehoiachin Exiles’ Advocator

De-legitimation — Those Who Remained in Jerusalem

Retaliation

Although God intended to annihilate His people time and again (vv. 8, 13, 21), He refrained from doing so for the sake of His prestige among the nations (vv. 9, 14, 22); and though judgment aggravated, it repeatedly lessened the calamitous verdict (vv. 10, 15–17, 23–26).

In this context, God had destined the people to exile (v. 23). But in contrast to the Deuteronomic pre-exilic concept of exile (such as Deut 4:25–28; 28:36), which the Exiles paraphrase (v. 32), Ezekiel proclaims that the covenant relationship between God and the Jehoiachin Exiles continues. God is still their King, and they are His people (v. 33).

Jerusalem is judged according to her sins. Being of Canaanite origin, and following Canaanite practices, she is sentenced as adulteress and cultic-murderer:

מְשַׁפְּרָים נָאִם וְשֵׁפָה לְדָם

“the punishment of women who commit adultery and murder” (v. 38)

Echoing Leviticus 18 and 20, Jerusalem is doomed to total death within the land (vv. 35–43).

Restoration

The covenant relationship will be reaffirmed in the wilderness of the peoples, the wilderness of the land of Egypt, before leading the entitled people of Exiles to the land of Israel (vv. 34–38).

No exile, No restoration.

Persian period (as in Ezra 9:1–2, 10–14; Nehemiah 10:29–31; 13:23–27). Ezekiel can thus be considered as the founding father of that ideological denigration.

EZEKIEL AGAINST JERUSALEM

On the basis of the de-legitimating arguments against Jerusalem already ad-duced, I can now widen the perspective on the whole first part of the book of Ezekiel, chapters 1–24; the spotlight is trained on the prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem with their two components: accusation and punishment. Since
according to the historical circumstances the 597 B.C.E. partial exile preceded Jerusalem’s destruction, what is and what should be the role of exile in determining the subsistence of the two separate Judahite communities by the first decades of the sixth century B.C.E.? The answer to this question can be found in Ezekiel’s re-conception of the linear concept of exile, which essentially follows the three-step sequence of iniquity — death / destruction — exile, but adds selective prospects for restoration.

In Ezekiel’s prophecies of judgment one often recognizes the prophet’s distinction between the object of the prophecy and the audience to which his prophecy is addressed. This distinction is of paramount importance with regard to the evaluation of the prophecies against Jerusalem.

Indeed, the commissioning prophecy (1:1–3:15) names Ezekiel’s audience, his fellow-Exiles, “a rebellious breed” (יהוה יבשע כי נגוע ויהוה, 2:5, 6, 8). The Exiles are descendants of generations of rebels against God, “They as well as their fathers have defied Me to this very day” (יהוה יבשע כי נגוע ויהוה, 2:3), and the circumstances of exile have not yet and are not expected to, change their “brazen of face and stubborn of heart” (יהוה יבשע כי נגוע ויהוה, 2:4). Traces of condemnation of the Exiles’ ongoing disobedience are also found in Ezek 14:1–11; 20:1–32; 33:30–33. Nevertheless, throughout this first part of the book, judgment is not aimed against the Exiles. Judgment in Ezekiel’s prophecies focuses on Jerusalem, and to a lesser extent on the land of Israel (7:1–27), the mountains of Israel (6:1–10), and several peripheral areas in southern Judah (21:1–5, 6–10). The few prophecies of consolation which appear in the first section of the book (and throughout) focus on the community in exile (as in 17:22–24; 20:1–38, 39–44).

This distinction complicates Ezekiel’s message. Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s prophecies is the distant object of judgment, the fortunes of which the immediate

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113 Another judgment prophecy outside chapters 1–24 is Ezek 33:23–29.
114 Commentators have of course discussed Ezekiel’s harsh judgment over Jerusalem, but did not ascribe it to the prophet’s pro-exilic polemical tendencies; see, for instance, Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 15–7; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 56–9.
115 Exceptions are the prophecies against the peace prophets (13:1–16); and the rebuke of the Elders of Israel in 14:1–11, which nonetheless calls them to repent (v. 6), and sets the future goal to be restoration of the covenant relationship with them (v. 11; see also 18:21–32).
116 Ezek 16:44–58 and 59–63, however, prophesy hope and restoration to Jerusalem. Though drawing on the language and literary style of vv. 1–43 (as Greenberg has shown, Ezekiel 1–20, 295–97), the two passages differ from the first in themes (Jerusalem’s disgrace and shame in vv. 44–58; and restoration of the covenant in 59–63), in the use of metaphors for the God-people covenant (adding phraseology typical of the political-covenant metaphor to the family metaphors of 1–43, bridged over by the implicit tenor of בְּרֶשֶׁת in vv. 22, 43), and even moreso in the hope expressed for Jerusalem, which contradicts vv. 1–43 and all other prophecies against Jerusalem. Therefore, chapter 16 indeed illustrates what Zimmerli called “the development of tradition in the book of Ezekiel” (Ezekiel 1, 334), and it further illustrates a difference between Ezekiel and later tradent generations with regards to attitudes towards Jerusalem.
117 The usual scholarly treatment of the main genres in Ezekiel has construed these distinctions
audience in exile is anxious to learn about (for instance see Ezekiel 8–11, with the inclusio of 8:1–3 and 11:22–24; 14:21–23; 33:21–22, 30–33). While it is reasonable to assume that during the first years in exile and certainly prior to Jerusalem’s destruction, the Exiles still identify with the Jerusalemite community in the homeland, it seems that Ezekiel draws clear ideological lines to differentiate between the communities with respect to their misdeeds and thus to their fate.\(^\text{118}\)

### Jerusalem’s Guilt

Ezekiel rebukes Jerusalem with both metaphoric and straightforward lists of sins. Disobedience to God, with idolatry as its major expression, occupies most of the prophet’s attention (5:5–9; and chapter 8; as also 16, 23). Highly accentuated are moral misdeeds generalized as “lawlessness” (תועדו, 7:11; 8:17), “crime” (המשית, 9:9) and “bloodshed” (枭, 9:9). Both spheres, the moral and the cultic, are joined in the lists of Ezek 18:1–20 and 22:1–16, and in the general term “abominations” (הכוסות, 5:9; 7:3, 4, 8, 9; 9:4; 12:16; 16:2, 47, 50; 18:13, 24; 20:4; 22:2; 23:36; 33:26, 29; 36:31), which at times stands for particular transgressions committed in Jerusalem: sins of idolatry (5:11; 6:9, 11; 8:6[2x], 9, 13, 15, 17; 11:18, 21; 14:6; 16:36; 18:12; 43:8; or other cultic misconducts in 44:6–7, 13) and sexual offenses (16:22, 51, 58; 22:11). In addition, beyond the metaphor stories of chapters 16 and 23, the emphasis on religious and moral misdeeds performed in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah/Israel is phrased with “an implied or latent personification” of the city (5:7–17; 22:1–6; 24:1–14).\(^\text{119}\)

This tendency governs the terminology of sin, which is taken from the sexual/cultic spheres. Abominations are labeled with a term that designates sexual intention, “depravity” (הכוסות, 22:9, 11; 24:13)\(^\text{120}\) and detested like menstrual blood, “unclean thing” (הדם, 7:19, 20; and נאהת הדם “the impurity of a menstruous woman,” 22:10; 36:17).\(^\text{121}\) Blood occupies a major place in Jerusalem’s transgressions and in the description of her state of defilement. In Ezek 16:1–43 the blood of birth appears first, then the menstrual blood, and at last the bloodshed of cultic murders in

\(^{118}\) With this I disagree with Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 16.


\(^{120}\) Out of its twenty-nine occurrences in the whole Bible, והמז appears thirteen times in Ezekiel, in chapters 16 and 23 and once in 22:9. Although והמז has the general meaning of “wicked plan, intention” (as in Isa 32:7; Job 31:11), its three occurrences in Leviticus refer to sexual offenses (18:17; 20:14). This legal usage is adopted by Ezekiel, and is also reflected in Jer 13:27 in parallel to עָלָם, in a prophecy which uses the marital metaphor as well. S. Steingrimsson recognized Ezekiel’s use of והמז to particularize Jerusalem and Judah’s sins (*TDOT* iv:89–90).

the sacrifice of sons. In Ezek 22:1-16, Jerusalem is even called “city of bloodshed” (Jer, 17:16), in reference to both cultic and social capital crimes, as well as sexual offenses (22:9-12). These diverse misdeeds provide the metaphor for the city’s impurity, “defilement” (אֵדְקָם, 5:11; 22:15; 24:11, 13 [2x]; 36:25, 29), and all add up to her shame and disgrace (5:14, 15; 22:16). Jerusalem is, then, constantly identified with the adulteress wife and the murderer of the metaphoric story of Ezek 16:1-43.

By way of comparison, neither the marital metaphor nor nearly any of these terms function in the restricted references to the Exiles’ guilt or misconduct. As also the verb אֵדְקָם, 4:11, and only general disobedience and materialistic profits (בְּצֵל) are specified as the offenses of Ezekiel’s audience (33:31-32). Exceptions are the rhetorical questions in Ezekiel 20, which Ezekiel addresses to his generation of Exiles: “Do you defile yourselves as your fathers did and go astray after their detestable things” (תֵּאַדוּת, v. 30-31). It seems that Ezekiel purposely uses these extreme terms, which usually designate sinful Jerusalem, in order to shock his audience in exile and accentuate the absurdity of their thought (v. 32). Nevertheless, the prophet sets a chronological distinction between the Exiles (אתם) and all earlier generations (אֲבֹדַיה ל). Ezekiel’s generation has the opportunity and will be led by God to a change (vv. 33-38).

JERUSALEM’S PUNISHMENT

Jerusalem’s capital crimes set the ground for her talio punishments, which together give the prophecies of judgment their primary importance in service of Theodicy. In addition, in his projections for retaliation against Jerusalem, Ezekiel presents different perspectives on the conceptual sequence of the concept of exile: iniquity-destruction-exile and restoration.

Iniquity-Destruction. In addition to the passages already discussed (16:1-43; 33:23-29), most of the prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem and Judah foresee total calamity within the land, or on its boarders (6:1-7, 11-14; 7:1-27; 11:1-13; 12:17-20; 21:1-5, 6-12, 13-22, 23-32; 22:17-22, 23-32; 23; 24:1-14). Hence, the three part sequence is fragmented, and includes only the first two. No men-


123 In opposition to honor and prestige, shame and disgrace result from the woman’s exposure and nakedness and thus are part of the harlot’s punishment (16:37-41). This is further elaborated in the two appended passages which directly present this message using the noun הַלֵּאָד (16:52, 54, 63) and the verb שָׁוָה (16:63). Curiously, the variety of nouns and verbs from the roots שָׁוָה and אֵדְקָם, which dominate the language of Ezekiel 16 and 23, do not appear in other prophecies against Jerusalem. אֵדְקָם, however, is addressed to the Exiles in 20:30 (see above); and 6:9.
tion is made of deportation or of the possibility of the Jerusalemites joining the Jehoiachin Exiles in Babylon. These prophecies exemplify Ezekiel’s interpretation and adaptation of the Deuteronomic pre-exilic concept of exile, which understands dislocation as annihilation and does not perceive the possibility of existence outside the land of Israel (as in Deut 6:10–15; 8:19–20; 11:13–17).124

Iniquity-Destruction-Exile, and Death. The sign-acts in Ezek 4:1–5:4 present another variant to this concept of exile. The prophetic unit in chapters 4–5 brings together commands to symbolize the siege over Jerusalem (4:1–3, 4–8, 9–11, 16–17) and her destruction (5:1–4), intertwined with references to the existence in exile (4:12–15).125 Struggling with what seems “heterogeneous” and thus secondary (even) to Greenberg,126 or “a redactional conflation” of separate sign-acts according to Friebel and Block,127 scholars have sought their ways tracking down the linear order of siege-destruction-exile in this passage, and accordingly have re-differentiated the sign-acts and their verbal interpretations from secondary expansions.128

Three basic sign-acts demonstrate different stages in the siege over Jerusalem: the first two commands, to incise a model of the besieged city and to set an iron griddle, resemble setting the siege and its prolongation (4:1–3); the order to eat rationed food illustrates the misery of famine in town (9–11, 16–17); and finally, shaving the hair and destroying it in three parts elucidate the city’s fall and the total death of its inhabitants (5:1–4).

In Ezekiel’s schematic style, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are to be divided in three groups (5:1–2). One third is to be burnt in fire within the city, the second

125 This division is based on the repetition of the imperative clauses הָעָצָה (םְתַחְתָּא) הָעַבֶּד (4:1, 3, 9; 5:1). Accordingly, Ezek 4:4–8 as a whole is considered a secondary addition (or even amalgamation of interpretations), which according to Zimmerli may have been appended even in the prophet’s life time (Ezekiel 1, 155, 163–65, 168). Greenberg argues for intertwining references to exile in 4:6, 12–15 (Ezekiel 1–20, 118; and Friebel, among others, add 5:2–4). Indeed, 4:4–8 raise tremendous interpretive difficulties which have not yet been solved (compare Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 104–6; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 163–64). To add another difficulty, these verses draw back to the iniquity, in contrast to the other sign-acts which all refer to the punishment. K.G. Friebel’s discussion of Israel and Judah in this passage convincingly argues against Greenberg’s differentiation between 390 years of iniquity, and 40 years of punishment-exile (Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts, JOTS Sup 283 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999] 209–24, esp. 218–19). Unfortunately, I do not find traces of exilic circumstances in either 5:2–4 or 4:6, and thus will concentrate below only on 4:12–15 as addressed to Ezekiel’s immediate audience in Babylon (contra Friebel, Sign-Acts, 247).
126 Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 118; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 154–55.
128 Zimmerli (Ezekiel 1, 168) has argued that even the expansions could have been added by the prophet himself, and in any case the additions are not later than 547 B.C.E. (understanding the 40 days to designate 40 years of exile from 586 B.C.E. on).
will be stricken by sword all around it; the third will be scattered to the wind (השלישית לולא רוח ואחד; השלישית והלה נ נדר; v. 2, vv. 2, 12) and God will unsheathe a sword after them (חרב, v. 2). Similarly, in the interpretative prophecy, 5:5–17, one third will die within the city from pestilence and famine, another shall fall by the sword around it, and the third will be scattered in every direction, and God will unsheathe the sword after them (v. 12). In both descriptions, the division into three illustrates the totality of this annihilation.

The intriguing phrase is the one concerning the third part: “and scatter a third to the wind and I will unsheathe the sword after them” (השלישית והלה נחרב, v. 2, 10, 12; as also 12:14). פִּקְבֶּל, הרוח, which at face value describes dislocation, differs from the common agricultural imagery behind the phrase וּנְצֹר אֵלֶּה (as in Ezek 6:8, 36:19). The latter, which Ezekiel uses regularly in the phraseology of exile, evokes the image of the scattering of seeds as part of sowing, and thus promises resettlement and continuity.

Moreover, the scattered people are further doomed to be pursued by death by God, who will unsheathe the sword against them (חרב, v. 33). The change into the first person with God as the agent is commonly interpreted as an intrusion of the tenor, which illustrates the clear influence on Ezekiel of Lev 26:33: “And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword against you” (אתמש אתארה בְּנֵיסי החריט אתארית חרב).

Leviticus 26:27–39 describes the consequences of destruction, and includes famine (vv. 27–29, and already in v. 26), destruction of cultic places and cities (vv. 30–31), desolated land (vv. 30–32), and dispersion (v. 33). Verses 36–39 adds that even this dislocation does not bring peace to the deportees, but further fear and death:

129 Compare to Ezek 14:12–23 which divides the judgment into four terrible punishments (חרבות)word, famine, wild beast, and pestilence.

130 Although does not occur in Isa 28:24–25, and verbs in the semantic field of sowing, appear in the detailed description: “Does he not rather broadcast black cumin, and scatter cumin, or set wheat in a row, barley in a strip, and emmer in a patch?” ומִכְמָן כַּפַּח, וּכְמָן, וּנְצֹר אֵלֶּה, התשְׁוַע שְׁרָדִים נְצֹר בְּכֵן שְׁרָדִים נְצֹר בְּכֵן.

131 This agricultural imagery elucidates the calamity of Israel in Jer 15:7, or the fate of Israel’s enemies (Isa 41:14–16; and see the realistic description in Ruth 3:2). See also Jer 13:24.

132 This agricultural imagery with God as agent appears also in Ezek 12:14; 28:7, 10, 12; as also Exod 15:9. Compare קריס, KBL, 1228. The sword as additional means to annihilate the deportees appears also in Jer 9:15 and Amos 9:4.

133 This negative prospect of suffering in exile occurs in Ezek 4:17; 24:23 (Leviticus 24–27, 2326–27).
You shall not be able to stand your ground before your enemies, (38) but shall perish among the nations; and the land of your enemies shall consume you. (39) Those of you who survive shall rot over their iniquity in the land of your enemies.

The allusions to Leviticus 26 have led scholars to point further similarities between Ezek 5:3–4 and the remnant concept in Lev 26:40–45. According to the Holiness Code’s concept, a remnant of the deportees from their places in exile will repent and restore the relationship with God. Corresponding to this concept, Ezek 5:3–4 is said to foresee hope in the few who will survive the exile. Yet, this interpretation cannot be accepted. The sign-act in Ezek 5:3 presents the preservation of a small amount of hair to be treasured in the prophet’s skirt, and thus raises the expectation of salvation. But although hope was given to that remnant at first, v. 4 excludes every optimistic prospect. The prophet is commanded to throw some of them (the hair) to the fire, which will inflame the whole House of Israel. Hence, those few scattered survivors from Jerusalem will become dangerous to the whole House of Israel, that is, the already resettled Judean community in exile. This calamitous perspective gains further strength from its place in the context. First, in the sign-act itself, the three thirds constitute a whole and the consuming fire does not leave room for survivors. Second, the verbal interpretation in 5:5–17 follows the division into three and repeats the scattering to the wind and the unsheathed sword (v. 12), but never mentions any remnant of survivors from Jerusalem (vv. 13–17). Hence, 5:3–4 do not suggest an optimistic viewpoint on a Jerusalemite remnant in exile. On the contrary, these verses close the sign-acts with additional intensification of the forecast of Jerusalem’s total annihilation.

These dramatic sign-acts describing Jerusalem from siege to fall, were expanded with a salient comment concerning the Exiles. Passage 4:9–17 presents a sign-act focused on rationed food and drink under siege in Jerusalem (vv. 9–11), which is verbally interpreted in vv. 16–17. In between the sign-act and its interpretation intrudes a passage which focuses on eating defiled bread among the nations (vv. 12–15). This expansion (vv. 12–15) does not accord the surrounding sign-acts. First,

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134 For the clear allusions of Ezekiel 4–5 to Leviticus 26, see Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 109; Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 194; and Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27, 2348–52.
135 So Friebel. Sign-Acts, 241–42; Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 194–95; and Greenberg, while accepting that the verses prophesy calamity, based on הַלָּא still talks about preservation of a remnant which will continue to suffer persecution in Exiles (Ezekiel 1–20, 108–9 and 126).
136 See note 125 above.
137 4:9–11 continues the situation of siege, as they apply to circumstances where the prophet still lies on his side for three hundred and ninety days (v. 9b and see v. 5). Compare Friebel, Sign-Acts, 224–26.
it does not continue the line of rationed food supplies during siege, but rather introduces a different issue altogether. Second, it clearly has no relevance to Jerusalem, and does not contribute to the logical development in the sign-acts referring to its siege and calamity. Rather, the dialogue starts with a command to eat a “barley cake” (בָּאֵלָל הַצָּאן הַשְּׂעַרְשָׁה, v. 12). This is explained as a symbol to the unclean (טמא) bread the Exiles will eat among the peoples (v. 13). The prophet arises to protest, claiming he has never been defiled (v. 14). Since Ezekiel has already been at least five years in exile, this comment is of particular interest. In addition, Ezekiel does not restrict himself to bread, and talks of eating meat. In reply God changes the human excrement to cow’s dung (רָובָה יִתְיָכָר), over which the prophet is then allowed to prepare his bread (טֹבֶה הַחֲרֹף עַלְיוֹן, v. 15). The dialogue which starts with clear denigration of exilic circumstances, reaches through Ezekiel’s protest a point of compromise. This divine concession is of paramount importance for the ongoing daily life of the Exiles as the people of God, since it contrasts the accepted concept of exile known, for instance, from Hos 9:3, and replaces it with a divine approval. Yet, in its present context, this message is almost implicit, as vv. 16–17 change the geographic setting again, and return to Jerusalem. The city is doomed to suffer famine — lack of bread and water, to continue to be reduced until the inhabitants suffer its total absence, and starve death, “they shall stare at each other, heartsick over their iniquity” (וָעַדְמֵהוּ אַשְׁרֵיהוּ וּמוֹקֵם בְּעֵתוֹן, v. 17).

To conclude, in a fairly pessimistic perspective, chapters 4–5 perceive both the siege over Jerusalem and the exile as long term punishments justified by the people’s sins. Jerusalem’s misery is beyond encouragement, the siege will end in famine and in total death of its inhabitants in the city or on its surroundings. In the sequence iniquity-destruction-exile and restoration, Jerusalem

139 Friebel explains the jump from eating a barley cake baked on human excrement to eating unclean meat of as an analogical expansion of “derived uncleanness” and not as inherent (Sign-Acts, 249).

140 Zimmerli raises the question whether v. 15 should be understood as part of the general declarations of the sign-acts or only as a personal concession, and indeed takes the former option (Ezekiel 1, 171). Amazingly, the positive compromise and the general comforting message it holds for the Exiles was overlooked by scholars, who in interpreting this sign-act did not refer to the significant point that Ezekiel, while being in exile, confesses for not ever eating defiled food. It seems that 4:12–15 should add to other examples of adaptation to living in exile (diaspora) which Joyce has pointed out (“Dislocation and Adaptation,” 56–58).

141 The concept that the exilic arena includes eating defiled food is reflected also in Dan 1:8; in addition to general references to foreign lands as defiled in Josh 22:19; Amos 7:17.

142 Translation by Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 99.

143 This general statement is not to cover over the interpretive difficulties in the phrase נֶפֶך וּלְשׁוֹנֵי and the years 390 and 40 for the House of Israel and that of Judah respectively. For נֶפֶך וּלְשׁוֹנֵי, see Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 164; and for differentiating the meaning of iniquity and punishment between Israel and Judah, see Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, 105; Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 176–79.
according to Ezekiel 4–5 is to suffer immensely through its destruction, and the minor survivors that will be dispersed to the wind will suffer further calamity. Exile, thus, still means annihilation to this community. In contrast, 4:12–15 establishes the prophet as mediator between God and the Exiles’ community to which Ezekiel belongs, that is, the Jehoiachin Exiles, to find a solution that will normalize life for them away from God’s land.

This differentiation of fates, shown through the juxtaposed and implicitly reversed sign-acts, suggests that Ezekiel (or his tradents) further interprets Leviticus 26. The prophet (or his tradents) seems to be aware of the juxtaposition of Lev 26:33–39 and vv. 40–45.\(^{144}\) Despite the contextual proximity of the two different fortunes foreseen to the expelled, Ezekiel distinguishes them sociologically, and thus differentiates between two modes of existence in exile. The first declines to annihilation (vv. 33–39), which in the prophet’s view concerns Those Who Remained in Jerusalem till its destruction in 586 B.C.E. The second promises resettlement and restoration of life in exile (vv. 40–45), accompanied by the necessary practical and ideological changes that the prophet helps to phrase. Hence, the traditional sequence iniquity-destruction-exile and finally restoration is not automatically applied. Just as exile can mean annihilation for Those Who Remained, it can signify continuation and restoration to the Jehoiachin Exiles.\(^ {145}\)

Looking at these chapters from the perspective of the internal conflict between the communities illuminates yet a further rhetorical technique that Ezekiel uses time and again in chapters 1–4 of intertwining and juxtaposing prophecies against Jerusalem with comments or complete passages of hope to the Exiles.\(^ {146}\)

*Iniquity-Destruction-Exile, yet Exclusion.* In contrast to Ezekiel’s tendency to negate the existence, beyond 586 B.C.E., of Those Who Remained in Jerusalem,

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144 Milgrom has shown that in parallel to the five units of blessings in 26:3–13, vv. 27–39 close a five unit pattern of curses ordered in increasing severity (*Leviticus* 23–27, 2287–90, 2304); This literary argument leads up to the thematic change in vv. 40–45, with the Exiles’ confession of sins, and God’s response in promises of restoration. Hence, form and content establish the secondary appendix nature of these verses of consolation (*Leviticus* 23–27, 2329–30). Furthermore, Milgrom has convincingly argued that Ezekiel knew MT Lev 26:3–39.

145 Ezek 22:13–16, which prophesies exile for the Jerusalemites, is considered a secondary addition by the prophet or his school (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 455, 459). Another argument for its secondary character is the prospect of exile to Jerusalem, and not annihilation within, as in Ezek 5:1–17; 16: 1–43. Yet, it still accords Ezekiel’s perspective, which sees further calamity in exile, and certainly does not accept the 586 Exiles to the previous community.

146 Other examples are the editing of chapters 8–11, and specifically the two disputations in 11:1–13 versus 14–21; and also 6:1–7, 11–14 and the intertwining of vv. 8–10 referring to hope in a remnant in exile.
the prophet does present several prophecies in which survivors from Jerusalem reach the community in Babylon. Ezek 12:15–16 and 14:21–23 give a didactic mission to those survivors from Jerusalem, which are designated as a minor number of people (אנו ושלי, 12:6) or survivors of sons and daughters (המשנים בתים והבתים, 14:22). In the first passage they are to tell their abominations in the nations (12:16). The second configures the refugees as object-lessons for the Exiles, such that the account of the survivors’ ways and deeds will console them, showing them that the survivors have been properly and justifiably punished (14:22–23).  

Although in opposition to Ezekiel’s prophecies for Jerusalem’s total annihilation, these two prophecies uphold the Jehoiachin Exiles’ superiority. Even after 586 B.C.E. and in the setting of exile, the Jerusalemite survivors are clearly marked and denigrated as the continuous reminder of Jerusalem’s iniquities. These passages indicate the enduring hostility and certainly the patronistic view of the Exiles, accentuating the distinctions in prestige and rank between the Judean communities (as presented above in Ezek 11:14–21; 33:23–29 etc.).

Contemplating this perspective to the sequence iniquity-destruction-exile and restoration, this line of thought recognizes the existence of survivors from Jerusalem in Babylon after 586, but does not legitimate their integration into the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles. This remarkable sectarian attitude exemplifies the severity of the conflict between the two Judean communities. In Ezekiel’s evaluation of exile, the linear sequence applies only to Jerusalem. Being in exile prior to Jerusalem’s destruction, the 597 B.C.E. Exiles are not counted among the community that will suffer destruction, expulsion and further death. Thus Ezekiel transfers the focus of his audience of fellow-Exiles from Jerusalem to their own community in exile. Restoration is confined to the Jehoiachin Exiles (as explicit in Ezek 11:14–21; 20:1–38).

### The Desolated Land of Judah

One repeated component in Ezekiel’s prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem is the portrait of the damage executed on the ecological substance of the land, which adds to the fatal blows aimed at the population of Judah. Ezekiel prophecies that the land will become empty of man and beast (הכרחתי מבתי אדוםׇם, 14:13, 17, 19). The destruction of the urban and the agricultural life will bring wild beasts to occupy the ruins and thus hasten its desolation (והנה שמה מבתי יבשא "and it became a desolation with none passing through it because of the beasts," v. 15). Desertion and desolation in both rural and peripheral areas is the projection with which Ezekiel concludes several of his prophecies against Jerusalem and the land of Israel (Ezek 6:14; 12:19–20; 15:8; 21:1–5; 33:28–29; as also 38:8).

147 So Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 312–13; Block, Ezekiel 1–24, 451.
This description further influences Ezekiel in illustrating restoration in the land. The empty desolate mountains of Israel will revive in preparation for accepting the gathered Exiles, who are called “My people Israel” (מִדְבָּר, 36:5–12). No mention at all is made to an existence of Those Who Remained in the land throughout the exile. The annihilation of man, beast and the land itself designates a definite and total end to one era, and prepares the ground for the restoration of the Exiles in the days to come. These prophecies exemplify the extreme degree of Ezekiel’s transfer of exclusive significance to the community in exile. The prophet not only excludes the Jerusalemite community, but further intensifies this exclusion through the emphasis on the uninhabited desolation of that land.

The theme of the empty land, which has its origin in descriptions of total destruction brought by God/the gods in biblical and Mesopotamian sources alike, is utilized in Ezekiel’s message as a rhetorical argument in the disputation between the communities. Without further delving into the scholarly debate over the theme of the empty land in the exilic and post-exilic literatures, suffice it to say that Ezekiel can be identified as one of the first advocates of this ideology, already by the very early years of the sixth century.

JUXTAPOSITION OF THE CONTRASTING FATES

The socio-ideological transfer from Jerusalem to Babylon is implicitly illustrated also by using the literary technique of juxtaposition in several prophecies in chapters 1–24. As presented above, Ezekiel 11 (or even 8–11 as a whole) with its two disputations is one example, another is Ezekiel 24 which ends the first part of the book. After the horrific judgment on “the city of blood” in 24:1–14, the

148 Transformation in the ecological state of the land from destruction to restoration appears also in Jer 32:42–44; 33:10–11, 12–13.
149 Desolation of the landscape functions as a common motif in biblical descriptions of destructions. See for instance Ezekiel’s prophecies against the nations (Ezek 25:5, 13; 35:3–4, 7–9), and regularly in Jeremiah’s prophecies of judgment against Israel and the nations (as in Jer 9:9–11; 51:26, 62); as well as in Lamentations (Lam 1:7; 2:15, 16; 5:18). This motif is well attested in the lists of curses in neo-Assyrian political treaties (compare Hillers, Treaty Curses), and in the Mesopotamian lament literature over the destruction of cities and temples, compare F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible, BibOr 44 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993) 66–72; P. Michalowski, The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989) lines 300–330.
151 Juxtapositions or intertwining of passages with the same intention occur further in 6:1–7, 11–14 and the intertwining of vv. 8–10 referring to hope in a remnant in exile; 4:12–15 in the sign-acts
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prophet’s clear differentiation between the communities reaches its apex, in the most painful sign-act the prophet is commanded to take, Ezek 24:15–27.\(^{152}\) The prohibition to mourn his wife, the delight of his eyes, and Ezekiel’s exact implementation of that command, establish Ezekiel as a portent for the Exiles (הנהו וה=tops ותמה, vv. 24 and 27). The delight of their eyes and the desire of their hearts is God’s Temple in Jerusalem, their pride and glory (אלא ענב, v. 21). The Exiles are not to mourn its physical destruction, nor the death of sons and daughters in Jerusalem (v. 25; compare 14:21–23). The prohibition against mourning the homeland community designates the Exiles’ final separation of the Jerusalem community, as Margaret Odell says in characterizing mourning:\(^{153}\)

\[... \text{the act of mourning appears to have little to do with the expression of grief; rather, it is concerned with establishing and severing ties between the living and the dead. Prohibitions against mourning reflect an attempt to dissociate from the deceased.} \]

Indeed, this passage completes the prophecies of judgment in Ezekiel with the clearest message regarding Jerusalem’s death versus the ongoing life of the Exiles. They, the Jehoiachin Exiles, are the living remnant of the people of God, and none other.

Ezekiel’s negative attitude towards Jerusalem is further accentuated by the disappearance of Jerusalem from the prophets’ future message of consolation. Jerusalem is not mentioned in the second unit of the book, chapters 25 and on\(^ {154}\) and restoration is restricted on the one hand to the scattered people (chapters 34; 36–37) and on the other to the desolated mountains of Israel which will revitalize with the return of the people of God (36:1–15).

**Summary and Conclusion**

To close this discussion, reference should be made to the factors that may have motivated Ezekiel to establish this binary relationship between the two

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\(^{152}\) D. Block emphasized the anti-Jerusalemite perspective of 24:1–14, suggesting it is an “unannounced disputation address” in which Ezekiel refutes the Jerusalemites’ sense of superiority based on the fact that they remained in the inviolable city (“Ezekiel’s Boiling Cauldron: A Form-Critical Solution to Ezekiel XXI 1–14,” VT 41 (1991) 12–37; as also in his commentary: Ezekiel 1–24, 769–83, followed by a discussion of 24:15–27, there pp. 785–94).


\(^{154}\) One exception is Ezek 36:38 where the memory of Jerusalem’s past is mentioned.
Judahite sister-communities, which were forcibly separated by the Babylonian policy of exile in 597 B.C.E.

Ezekiel’s intensive reference to Jerusalem and its fate is, first of all, a response to his immediate audience in exile. During the first years of dislocation before the city’s destruction, the Exiles express interest and concern regarding their homeland, the city of God, the Temple, and the fortunes of their fellow Judahites (as can be gathered for instance from Ezek 24:15–27; and see also Psalm 137). The prophet in reply builds the ideological separation between the communities.

In addition, the severe prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem hold a central position in Ezekiel’s theology. The prophet justifies God in His measures against Jerusalem, declaring that the city’s punishments accord her sins. Thus, theodical arguments motivate Jerusalem’s condemnation.

Beyond all that, I believe, Ezekiel understands the ideological demand to redefine the religious-national identity of the Exiles. The prophet had to reconcile well-known and cherished Pentateuchal conceptions of land and exile with the partial exile which took place eleven years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. If Deuteronomic and Priestly traditional concepts had remained unaltered, the historical circumstances would have endangered the existence of the Jehoiachin Exiles. As the inhabitants of Jerusalem had claimed, the Exiles could have been doomed to annihilation (Ezek 11:15; 33:24 as also Jer 22:24–30).

From the disadvantageous situation of expulsion, Ezekiel arises with a competing agenda, through which he builds a distinct identity for the Jehoiachin Exiles as the exclusive community of the people of God. By establishing legitimating arguments in support of his fellow Exiles and de-legitimating arguments against Those Who Remained in Jerusalem, Ezekiel constitutes an exilic ideology which enables continuity of national existence in exile and promises restoration to the Exiles.

Ezekiel’s main strategy of division is his reliance on past historical and legal traditions from the Pentateuch, which are presumably known to his fellow Exiles. Ezekiel sets his arguments on solid ground, as he presents innovative perspectives which are all rooted in Israel’s past. This explains his immediate influence on his contemporaries, and his ongoing impact on the exilic community, as this may be seen in the prophecy and historiographic literature of the late sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E.

To summarize Ezekiel’s major contribution for generations that followed, I will highlight the arguments that comprise Ezekiel’s concept of exile and his observations on the exclusive status of the exilic community.

Past Traditions. Legitimation of the Exiles rests on the Exodus traditions concerning God’s constitution of covenant relationship with His people in Egypt, away from the land of Israel. The exilic arena is in fact an advantageous
context for future restoration of the covenant (Ezek 20:1–38). This in turn accounts for the centrality of the Exodus traditions in the exilic literature, for instance in Deutero-Isaiah.

De-legitimation of Those Who Remained is based upon equating them with the “People of the Land” alluded to in the Settlement traditions and invoking the general legal demands to keep away from the Canaanite peoples. Ezekiel dwells on Those Who Remained’s supposed ongoing adherence to despised local abominations (Ezek 16:1–43), to suggest that their existence in the land of Israel will end in expulsion and annihilation, in accordance with the conception of the Holiness Code (Lev 18:24–30 and 20:22–24). This tactic of categorizing Those Who Remained as of foreign (Canaanite) origin appears in Ezra-Nehemiah’s denigrations of the local community in Yehud.

Present status. Ezekiel differentiates between the communities with respect to their religious and moral qualities in various ways. The Jerusalem community trespasses capital offenses, both religious and moral, which determine their doom, total calamity, according to both Deuteronomic and Priestly/Holiness Code’s legal traditions. At the same time, concentrating on Jerusalem’s offenses alleviates the burden from the Exiles. Since Ezekiel does not consider the Exiles obedient or virtuous, Jerusalem’s present sins serve as a warning for the Exiles (14:1–11 and implicitly, Ezek 18:1–20). By comparison with the community in Jerusalem, the Exiles enjoy higher prestige. As a community they are certainly not doomed to annihilation (14:11).

Future Prospects. Passages of hope within chapters 1–24, as well as the prophecies of consolation (chapters 34–37), express the legitimation of the Exiles as the future restored community. The God-people relationship will resume in exile (20:32–38). God’s dynamic presence will constantly escort the Exiles (11:16). In the future restoration God will gather them again into the land of Israel, their land (11:17), and transform their hearts to promise eternal obedience (11:18; 36:26–27). The covenant formula which constituted the covenant relationship between God and the Sons of Israel (Lev 26:11; Deut 26:17), will apply to this community of Exiles (11:20; 36:28; and 34:30).

The prospects of the Exiles’ restoration in the land correspond to several prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem and Judah, in the description of the desolation of cities and land (as in 6:11–14). Hence, the idea that the land lays barren and awaits the returnees is already part of Ezekiel’s message to his community of Exiles (36:4–15).

In opposition, de-legitimation of Those Who Remained in Jerusalem brings Ezekiel to adapt the linear sequence of iniquity-destruction-exile and restoration in the concept of exile as presented in the Pentateuchal legal codices. But
Ezekiel either cuts the sequence, perceiving the Jerusalemites’ catastrophe as involving neither exile, nor survivors (as in 5:1–17); or treats refugees from Jerusalem as further doomed to complete annihilation (5:1–4). In any case, survivors of the 586 destruction will not join the Exiles in Babylon (12:15–16; 14:21–23). Hence, Ezekiel holds to his separatist exclusive perspectives against Jerusalem both before its destruction and in the aftermath of the disaster. No reconciliation is offered to those few refugees of the past sister community.

Ezekiel’s sociological identification with the Jehoiachin Exiles has brought the prophet to set clear ideological distinctions between the two Judahite communities. With his rhetorical skills and his innovative adaptations of Pentateuchal traditions to accommodate the complicated reality of his time, Ezekiel has established himself as the first major speaker for the Exiles in Babylon.

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