Build, Plant, and Marry
Return, Dwell, and Harvest:
Symbolic Code as a Tool of Cultural
Hegemony in the Book of Jeremiah

Claire Elizabeth Carroll
University of Dublin
Trinity College

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Declaration

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For Thomas and Maureen Carroll

פְּדוּ אַהֲרֹן אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַאָבֵמֶךָ וְאֶת אִמֶךָ
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Abstract

This thesis examines narrative episodes from Jer 29, 32, 35, 40, 41 and 44 in terms of the representation of communal settlement, socio-economic participation, and spatial dynamics, in order to reveal the operations of a symbolic code. This symbolic code centred around norms of household establishment, agricultural productivity, and economic participation operates as a tool of cultural hegemony within the book of Jeremiah. Cultural hegemony is control of social discourse, including facets of the economic and political spheres, via cultural means. Cultural hegemony is the key tool of a social caste of ‘intellectuals’ who, as originators of cultural products, seek to exert socio-political and economic control. The symbolic code, as an array of signifiers gleaned from the surrounding cultural context, is deployed in the text of Jeremiah to broadcast a specific message of adaptation and compliance to the new, post-crisis reality of Judean life under Neo-Babylonian suzerainty. The hegemonic message promoted and reinforced via the semiotic operation of the symbolic code is one of adaptation and survival in the aftermath of the collapse of Judah as a monarchical state and its reformulation within a new all-encompassing Neo-Babylonian imperial system.

Employing interpretive tools garnered from the realms of social, economic, and literary studies this research relies on the semiotic model of a transactional relationship between text and audience while also acknowledging the composite nature of the text under examination, exploring questions of its relationship with other foundational texts of the Hebrew Bible. In performing literary analysis in a mode conversant with the principles of historical-criticism this thesis attempts to offer plausible reconstructions of elements of the historical reality which influence both the form and function of the symbolic code. This analysis demonstrates the coherent presence of certain words, phrases, concepts and recurring themes within the text of Jeremiah as a symbolic code deployed to the specific end of cultural hegemony.
A note on the biblical text

All quotations from the book of Jeremiah are my own translations of the Masoretic Text as preserved in the Leningrad Codex found in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Vol. 8. Quotations from all other biblical books are adapted from the Revised Standard Version.
Abbreviations

BDB  Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon

BHS8  Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Vol. 8 Liber Jeremiae

CAD K  The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago - Volume 8 – K


CUSAS 28  Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology (CUSAS) 28 by Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch

CWSSS  Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals by Naḥman Avigad and Benjamin Sass
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 12

2. Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 16
   2.1. Jeremiah Studies .................................................................................................... 16
   2.2. Influential texts .................................................................................................... 21

3. Methodology ................................................................................................................ 26
   3.1. Research Methods ............................................................................................... 26
   3.2. The Final Form of the Research Question ............................................................ 29
   3.3. Ensuring reliability, validity, and objectivity ......................................................... 30
   3.4. Theoretical Basis ................................................................................................. 32
       3.4.1. Narrative Theory .......................................................................................... 33
       3.4.2. Methodological principles drawn from the discipline of Biblical Studies. 34
   3.5. Marxist Theory ..................................................................................................... 44
       3.5.1. Boer .............................................................................................................. 49
       3.5.2. Gramsci ....................................................................................................... 52
       3.5.3. Lefebvre ..................................................................................................... 55

4. Cultural Hegemony: The Function of the Symbolic Code ......................................... 60
   4.1. Cultural Hegemony ............................................................................................... 60
   4.2. Symbolic Code ..................................................................................................... 62
   4.3. Components of the Symbolic Code ...................................................................... 65
       4.3.1. Torah as a Source ....................................................................................... 66
       4.3.2. Build-Plant-Marry ...................................................................................... 67
       4.3.3. Fruit .............................................................................................................. 69
       4.3.4. Hospitality ................................................................................................... 71
   4.4. Space ..................................................................................................................... 73
   4.5. Symbolic Code in Jeremiah (Jer 29, 32, 35, 40, 41, and 44) ............................. 76
   4.6. Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 82

5. A Critical Approach to the Archaeological Evidence ................................................. 84
   5.1. Archaeological Evidence ...................................................................................... 84
       5.1.1. Potential Biases ............................................................................................ 85
7.3. Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 166

8. Chapter 3: Space, Power, and Subversion in the case of the Rechabites ........................................ 170
   8.1. The Rechabites .................................................................................................................................. 172
   8.2. Space in Jer 35 .................................................................................................................................. 174
   8.3. Hospitality in Jer 35 .......................................................................................................................... 176

9. Chapter 4: The Site of Tell en-Naṣbeh ................................................................................................. 177
   9.1. Historical Location of biblical Mizpah: ............................................................................................ 178
   9.2. Zorn’s New Stratigraphy .................................................................................................................. 179
   9.3. Archaeological Profile of Tell en-Naṣbeh: ......................................................................................... 181
       9.3.1. Redesign ...................................................................................................................................... 181
       9.3.2. Population estimate .................................................................................................................... 183
       9.3.3. Agricultural Activity .................................................................................................................. 184
       9.3.4. Artefactual Remains .................................................................................................................. 187
       9.3.5. Cultic remains ............................................................................................................................. 197
   9.4. Comparison between Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al-ʿUmayri ............................................................... 200
   9.5. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 202

10. Chapter 5: Gedaliah’s Appointment at Mizpah .................................................................................. 205
    10.1. References to Mizpah in the Hebrew Bible .................................................................................... 206
    10.2. The cultic question .......................................................................................................................... 210
    10.3. Tribal Assembly, Oath Making, Leadership Ratification ................................................................. 212
    10.4. The Appointment of Gedaliah ........................................................................................................ 216
    10.5. Gedaliah’s position and Mizpah’s status ...................................................................................... 220
    10.6. Exhortation and Fulfilment in Jer 40:10-12 .................................................................................... 226
    10.7. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 229

11. Chapter 6: Murder at Table in Jer 41 ................................................................................................. 231
    11.1. Murder at Table .............................................................................................................................. 231
    11.2. Meals and the Assertion of Power .................................................................................................. 234
    11.3. Ishmael’s murder of Gedaliah .......................................................................................................... 238

12. Chapter 7: Queen of Heaven: Resistance, Reversal, and Reframing in Jer 44 241
    12.1. The MT of the Queen of Heaven Episode ...................................................................................... 243
12.1.1. 44:9 Who is to blame? ........................................................................... 245
12.1.2. 44:15 ...a large group... ......................................................................... 245
12.1.3. 44:17...to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven... ...................................... 246
12.1.4. 44:19 The Response to Jeremiah .............................................................. 246
12.1.5. 44:25a Jeremiah addresses the men (MT)/ the women (LXX).............. 247
12.1.6. 44:25b the language of vows ................................................................. 248
12.1.7. 44:26 ‘If ever again my name is called’ .................................................. 248
12.2. Building a picture of Queen of Heaven Worship ....................................... 250
12.2.1. The Title ‘Queen of Heaven’ ..................................................................... 252
12.2.2. Cakes ...................................................................................................... 254
12.2.3. Cake Moulds at Mari? ............................................................................. 258
12.2.4. Dairy Products ........................................................................................ 259
12.2.5. Beer ....................................................................................................... 260
12.3. The puzzle of .............................................................................................. 262
12.4. Vows ........................................................................................................... 264
12.4.1. The impact of verse 25 ........................................................................... 266
12.4.2. Vows to the Queen of Heaven ............................................................... 267
12.4.3. Vows Recognised, Oaths Forbidden ..................................................... 270
12.5. Resistance, Reversal, and Reframing ......................................................... 272
12.6. Conclusion ................................................................................................. 275

13. Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 278
14. Bibliography .................................................................................................. 286
List of Figures

Figure 1: Family tree of the sons of Meshullam...........................................110
1. Introduction

This thesis explores a symbolic code, centred around norms of household establishment, agricultural productivity, economic participation, and the corresponding negotiations of space inherent in these pursuits, operating as a tool of cultural hegemony in certain narrative portions of the book of Jeremiah. It attempts to fill a gap in scholarly approaches to Jeremiah by foregrounding specific instances of this symbolic code, and by the treatment of discernible traces of the historical and literary contexts of its constituent elements. The methodological approach employs interpretive tools garnered from the realms of social, economic, and literary studies with the theories of twentieth century European Marxist theorists Antonio Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre playing a particular role.

The symbolic code is an array of signifiers, gleaned from the surrounding cultural context, and deployed in the text of Jeremiah to broadcast a specific message of adaptation and compliance to the new, post-crisis reality of Judean life under Babylonian suzerainty. The encouragement of said willing compliance on the part of a newly subject people is the end goal of this exercise of cultural hegemony. Cultural hegemony is control of social discourse, including facets of the economic and political spheres, via cultural means, for instance through literary and artistic representations. Cultural hegemony is, according to Gramsci, the key tool, and avenue to power, of a social caste of ‘intellectuals’ who, as originators of cultural products, seek to exert socio-political and economic control.

This research relies on a semiotic model of a transactional relationship between text and audience, with the cognitive participation of the latter activating the potency of the symbolic code. As a work of biblical studies this research acknowledges the composite nature of the text under examination and explores questions of its relationship with other foundational texts of the Hebrew Bible, particularly the book of Deuteronomy. At intervals this thesis attempts to offer plausible reconstructions of elements of the historical reality which may have informed both the formulation and perpetuation of the symbolic code. Therefore, aside from expert reading of the Masoretic text of Jeremiah, alongside a keen awareness of the varying Hebrew, Greek and Syriac recensions of the text, this scholarly approach also requires significant engagement with archaeological and epigraphic evidence.
At several points the shorthand phrase ‘build-plant-marry’ is used to express underlying elements of the symbolic code which relate to the establishment of a settlement or household. These three actions, to build, to plant and to marry, carry a significant symbolic weight, being associated with the ideal mode of life for a Judean male, particularly as expressed in segments of Deut 20 and 28. In the context of Jer 40 the related tripartite expression ‘return-dwell-harvest’ is used to characterise the particular iteration of the symbolic code at work in Gedaliah’s exhortation to the assembled Judeans at Mizpah. Mizpah, and the archaeological evidence found at the site of Tell en-Naṣbeh, form a particular area of focus in the latter chapters of this thesis.

Ideas and notions surrounding the concept of agricultural productivity, particularly the cultivation of fruit, alongside traditional norms of hospitality also contribute some of the multivalent signifiers which constitute the symbolic code. Conceptions of obedience, and blessings of abundance, particularly associated with participation in the agricultural economy, are promoted at various points, most notably in Jer 29 and 40 where, whether exiled to Babylon, or gathering under Gedaliah’s stewardship at Mizpah, a certain form of ideal behaviour is demanded of the Judeans.

This articulation of settlements, households, gardens and fields, as zones of domestic activity expected to operate to the benefit of an overarching imperial power is accompanied by a certain politics of space. Spaces are constructed and utilised in certain narrative episodes where the symbolic code seeks to uphold certain ‘Representations of Space’ in the Lefebvrian sense; more fully discussed in the Methodology section. This occurs alongside presentations of hospitality in both Jer 35 and Jer 41 which proffer an understanding of particular spaces as the power domain of the host. The closing section of this thesis focuses on a narrative example in Jer 44 where these same elements, established in the operation of the symbolic code elsewhere in Jeremiah, finally breakdown, being subject to resistance, reversal and reframing.

Chapter 1, ‘Jeremiah the Anathothite,’ demonstrates elements of the symbolic code operating in representations of the character of the prophet Jeremiah himself. Jeremiah’s position within an influential clan based power structure, and his hereditary connection to the Benjamin region, are both examined. The specific land redemption episode of Jer 32 is discussed both in terms of Jeremiah’s participation in explicitly dynastic politics, and the appearance of specific elements of the symbolic code. A
speculative genealogy is constructed which assists in analysing Jeremiah's status as a member of a specific clan with links to both priestly and clerical sectors of the Judean administrative class.

Chapter 2, ‘Jer 29:5-7 in the Neo-Babylonian Economic Context,’ seeks to interpret the meaning and ideological impetus behind the exhortation of Jer 29:5-7, where Judean exiles in Babylon are encouraged to build, plant, and marry. Examinations of references to horticulture in Mesopotamian literary contexts, and the limited available epigraphic data on exiled populations in Babylonia are conducted in order to argue for the status of these verses as a succinct expression of the message of cultural hegemony enshrined within the symbolic code.

In Chapter 3, ‘Space Power and Subversion in the Case of the Rechabites,’ the significance of Jeremiah’s invitation to the Rechabites to join him in the temple compound in Jer 35 is considered. Analysis of the Rechabites’ rejection of agricultural productivity as a mode of economic participation produces an interpretation of this enigmatic group as representing an implicit threat to the authoritative imperial status quo promoted by the symbolic code.

In Chapter 4, 'The site of Tell en-Naṣbeh,' the archaeological evidence which informs contemporary scholarly engagement with biblical representations of Mizpah is reviewed. The archaeological evidence from Tell en-Nasbe is explored in order to establish biblical Mizpah as a historical location with its own archaeology, geography, agricultural, economic, and cultural profile. Fuller awareness of the site’s distinct characteristics thereby offers further insights into the historical context underlying the setting of narrative episodes in Jer 40-41.

Chapter 5, ‘Gedaliah’s Appointment at Mizpah,’ charts the deployment of the symbolic code, throughout the narrative presentation of Gedaliah’s establishment in a leadership role at Mizpah. This episode is read as offering an ideal model of imperial participation in the land, a Judah-based analogue to the compliance encouraged among the exiles in Babylon in Jer 29. Mizpah’s importance as a key settlement and administrative centre is considered as part of an effort to more precisely define the position Gedaliah is represented as occupying. This chapter explores some of the cultural and historical associations of Mizpah which inform the presentation of Gedaliah’s appointment in terms of a wider biblical tradition of covenant making and popular ratification of leadership positions.
Chapter 6, ‘Murder at Table in Jer 41,’ explores Ishmael’s murder of Gedaliah in Jer 41 in terms of murder at table as an identifiable literary trope in the Hebrew Bible. Occasions of commensality, particularly feasting, are examined in terms of the development of biblical ideas of monarchy, leadership and power. The murder of Gedaliah is analysed as a breach of the conventions of hospitality which inform the symbolic code’s articulation of the settlement or household as the inviolable domain of the host.

The final chapter, ‘Queen of Heaven: Resistance, Reversal, and Reframing in Jer 44,’ examines how the norms enshrined within the symbolic code up to this point now encounter opposing symbolism and consequently collapse. A detailed examination is conducted of the worship practices the Judean community in Egypt is presented as engaging in. The resulting analysis seeks to explain the apparent subversion in Jer 44 of key components of the symbolic code which has so heavily dominated the selected narrative episodes previously examined.
2. Literature Review

This survey of the scholarly literature relevant to the present research endeavour begins by reviewing key interpretive texts and commentaries from the field of Jeremiah studies as a subdiscipline of biblical studies. As a consequence of this field’s subdisciplinary status within a broader realm of research, this portion of the review reflects in a specific, Book of Jeremiah-focussed manner, several of the same key debates which are more widely present in biblical studies in general. The debates around the relationship between the book of Jeremiah and some form of Deuteronomistic editorial trend, the formation of a pre-exilic Torah or proto-Torah, and of course the dispute over the relevance or otherwise of a number of critical approaches, are all present in scholarly discourse around Jeremiah. Key archaeological, historical, and hermeneutic texts are then surveyed in terms of their influence in the construction of the present thesis.

2.1. Jeremiah Studies

As reflected in the bipartite publications of a great number of commentaries there appears to be a logical hinge-point in the book of Jeremiah between chapters 25 and 26. Not least because it is the midpoint of this famously long biblical text, but also because it is from chapter 26 onwards that we encounter the majority of the prose narrative material with which the present study is concerned.¹

The collective presence of prose, poetry, first and third person accounts, and lengthy prose sermons in Jeremiah has long presented a challenge to readers and interpreters attempting to take a holistic approach to the book. These circumstances gave rise to efforts towards systems of classification for this varied material, initially given impetus by Bernhard Duhm in his 1901 Das Buch Jeremia. Duhm identified three distinct material types; prophetic oracles (‘die echte Prophetie’), a biography of Jeremiah by the hand of Baruch (‘Lebensgeschichte Jeremias’), and supplementary additions (‘Erganzungen’).² This was soon followed in 1914 by Mowinckel’s classic A-B-C-(D) formulation. Mowinckel adopted Duhm’s tripartite structure, defining the supplementary additions as C-type material, characterising C as prose discourses of

Deuteronomistic editorial content. Mowinckel also suggested D, a minor source appearing across chapters 30-31. By the mid-twentieth century the three main categories of A, B and C were a truism in Jeremiah Studies.⁵

Under the additional influence of Noth’s formulation of the Deuteronomistic History, which first appeared in 1942, Winfried Thiel performed an exhaustive analysis of the Deuteronomistic editing of Jeremiah from the 1970’s to 1980’s. Thiel characterised a pervasive Deuteronomistic editorial layer across three distinct types of material in the book:

_Hauptabsicht der Redaktion war es, Jeremia in genereller Übereinstimmung mit Ideen und Maßnahmen der dtn. Reform zu zeigen…Das durchgängige Motiv von D ist eine Geschichtsdeutung. Die Geschichte steht unter dem Befehl Jahwes…Die Redaktion verarbeitete mindestens drei Quellen:

Baruch’s Rolle von 604,

Ein oder mehrere Sammlungen jer. Orakel,

Baruch’s Memoiren.

[The main editorial intention was to show Jeremiah to be in general agreement with the ideas and activities of the dtn. Reform…The consistent motif of D was an historical interpretation. History is under the control of Yahweh…The redactional process occurred in at least three sources:

Baruch’s scroll from 604,

One or more collections of Jeremiah oracles,

Baruch’s memoirs.]

⁴

These two major theories; three main content types (A, B, and C), and an overarching Deuteronomistic editorial process, came to dominate among scholarly approaches to Jeremiah throughout most of the twentieth century. There have been some shifts in this position in recent decades. Occasionally the all-pervasive influence of some kind of scribal school or editorial guild associated with the Book of Deuteronomy is called into question. The characterisation of the A-type material as prophetic oracles originating with the prophet Jeremiah himself does not meet with


universal acceptance. However, these earlier developments proved essential in the formation of Jeremiah studies as a subdiscipline within the scholarly biblical guild and continue to exert a discernible influence on research on the book of Jeremiah today.

The tripartite classification, which originated with Duhm’s 1901 study, continues to exert influence, including in the present study’s focus on the so-called biographical narrative episodes found among the ranks of Mowinckel’s B-type material. There remains however considerable divergence among scholars about the various stages of composition and editing which created the text in its present form.

The variety present across the range of commentaries on the book of Jeremiah clearly illustrates the diversity of both technical and thematic approaches to the book. While a significant number of commentaries were consulted in the course of this research, three in particular acted as key texts. Robert Carroll’s 1986 two volume commentary, *Jeremiah; Volume 27* in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series, a commentary on chapters 26 to 52 by Keown, Scalise and Smothers appearing in 1995; and William McKane’s two volume *International Critical Commentary* on Jeremiah which was completed in 1996.

Robert Carroll’s 1986 commentary offered an uncompromising redactional analysis of the text, highlighting key components of the debate around the historical-critical approach, and questioning whether such an approach was even possible or indeed warranted. Carroll challenged several of what he identified as ‘dogmas’ within the field; not least the attribution of the prophetic oracles to Jeremiah himself, and the assumption of an overarching Deuteronomistic editorial process:

> It is the redactional framework which attributes the poems to Jeremiah; there is nothing inherent in the poetry to identify who the speaker might be (a function of the prose). It is a dogma of Jeremiah studies that the prophet is the poet of the tradition. That dogma cannot be established by argument; it can only be believed.

While accepting the presence of a Deuteronomistic editorial hand at work in Jeremiah, particularly in the prose sermons, Carroll at the same time challenged certain assumptions, particularly with regard to that process as a wholesale and uniform phenomenon, and also with regard to dating. Carroll was careful to point to

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5 Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, pp. 50-64.
William McKane's earlier (1981) criticism of Thiel's characterisation of the Deuteronomistic editorial process and was unwilling to accept any theoretical framework which denied the true complexity and 'untidiness' of the text.7

There can be little doubt that the book of Jeremiah shares certain linguistic features in common with the Deuteronomistic corpus…but the significance of these shared elements is a matter of much debate. Thiel's comprehensive analysis argues for a very systematic production of a Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Jeremiah, even to the point where words only found in Jeremiah are attributed to Deuteronomistic activity…8

Each theory chases too little information for too much text to be able to provide a coherent or persuasive answer. Too many fundamental problems of interpretation remain with reference to Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic history for a solution to the central questions to commend itself to a consensus of opinion.9

In the extensive introductory section to the first volume of his commentary on Jeremiah William McKane theorised a set of compositional patterns. The 'rolling corpus':

I have concluded that Sept. gives us access to a Hebrew text which is shorter than MT, and so enables us to identify expansions of the Hebrew text in the period which lies between the Hebrew Vorlage of Sept. and MT.10

What is meant by a rolling corpus is that small pieces of pre-existing text trigger exegesis or commentary. MT is to be understood as a commentary or commentaries built on pre-existing elements of the Jeremianic corpus.11

and the 'reservoir' theory:

The fundamental contention is that the vocabulary of Jeremianic poetry is re-used in the prose for the book, so that the poetry is a 'reservoir' for the prose.12

We are encountering aggregations of material with a piecemeal character which are products of generation or triggering; they accumulate from local stimuli which consist of no more than a verse or a few verses of text...aggregations to the core which are in accord

7 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 37.
8 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 41.
9 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 66.
11 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 1, p. lxxiii.
12 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 1, p. lvi.
with the ‘generation’ or ‘triggering’ process... [and] do not produce a cumulative literary unity.\textsuperscript{13}

McKane’s hypothesis of gradual accumulations upon earlier ‘core’ verses, with poetic segments generating or inspiring the content of the prose portions, has been an influential compositional theory in the present research project. This characterisation of an extended process of composition, with the ‘rolling corpus’ gathering bulk, snowball fashion, is not incompatible with a similar mechanism at work in the transactional relationship between reader and text necessary for the functioning of the symbolic code, which forms the core subject matter of the present thesis.

Volume 27 in the \textit{Word Biblical Commentary} series provides a wealth of material, particularly from a philological point of view, and also with regard to the range of differences between the Hebrew Masoretic Text of Jeremiah and the Greek Septuagint version, alongside accessible references to textual variances across a range of manuscript editions.

Theories of a wholesale Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah have lost some ground in recent years. This is a welcome development not least because it avoids the pitfalls of pan-Deuteronomism.\textsuperscript{14} Thomas C. Römer in his contribution to Schearing and McKenzie’s 1999 edited volume, \textit{Those Elusive Deuteronomists}, highlights a number of troubling inconsistencies. Römer raises doubt about a supposed common artistic style or ‘\textit{Kunstprosa},’ not universally present in Jeremiah and indeed conspicuously absent from the books of Isaiah and Zephaniah.\textsuperscript{15} He also queries why, if the Book of Jeremiah received extensive Deuteronomistic editorial treatment, the prophet himself is completely missing from the Deuteronomistic History, as are Amos and Hosea, in spite of the admittedly Deuteronomistic ‘sound’ of their own eponymous texts?\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} McKane, \textit{Jeremiah Vol. 1}, p. lxii.
\textsuperscript{16} Römer, ‘How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert to Deuteronomistic Ideology?’, p. 195.
Detecting no major contradictions between the pronouncements of Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic ideology, Römer proposes a late exilic ‘conversion of Jeremiah into a dtr preacher’ via the ‘deuteronomization’ of a pre-existing Jeremiah tradition. When combined with the criticisms of Carroll and McKane acknowledged above, Römer’s observations serve to significantly undermine assumptions of an all-pervasive Deuteronomistic editorial hand at work in Jeremiah.

2.2. Influential texts

Scholarly approaches to the archaeological evidence of life in Judah during the sixth century BCE, particularly those years characterised as the exilic period, have at times been portrayed in terms of a minimalist versus maximalist debate. On the maximalist end of this spectrum we find those proponents of the ‘continuity school,’ particularly Hans M. Barstad and several others who follow the same line of argument as his highly influential 1996 monograph *The Myth of the Empty Land*. However, characterising the spectrum of opinion on the archaeological evidence for the reality in Judah at this time in these strictly polarizing terms is probably inappropriate, or at the very least outdated. The myth of an empty land, as identified by Barstad, is predominantly a literary construct, founded upon the biblical representation of a devastated Judean landscape in the aftermath of the Neo-Babylonian assault, not a primarily historical or archaeological concept. Barstad further identifies the contribution of nineteenth century biblical scholarship to the perpetuation of the image of Judah in the sixth century BCE as uninhabited and uninhabitable. The present study has, through in-depth engagement with the archaeological data, attempted to avoid any tendency to slip into what Barstad criticised as mere ‘paraphrastic recapitulating of the biblical stories’ on the part of historical-critical practitioners.

Indeed, some of the conflict between proponents of the maximalist, or continuity positions, and those archaeologists in particular who argue for minimal levels of continuous occupation at sites in Judah during this time, pointing specifically to the significant destruction layers found at Jerusalem and elsewhere, may be down to differing understandings of the import of the word ‘empty.’

He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the

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17 Römer, ‘How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert to Deuteronomistic Ideology?’ pp. 197-99.
establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil seventy years. (2 Chron 36:20-21)

Certainly, the implication of the representation of a devastated land bereft of cultural and economic life, laying desolate for a period of seventy years, as found in certain biblical texts, is that of complete literal emptiness. From an archaeological perspective however a scenario of significant destruction and associated major depopulation is far more realistic.

As such this thesis has drawn on the work of archaeological experts who endeavour to provide as accurate and informed a reconstruction as possible of the historical context of life in Judah, particularly on the question of economic activity. This includes those of the so-called continuity school, particularly Oded Lipschits, and scholars who lay far greater emphasis on the evidence of wholesale destruction in large swathes of Judah at this time, namely Ephraim Stern and Avraham Faust. Notably, regardless of their perceived positionality on the question of an ‘empty land’ there is widespread consensus within the archaeological guild on the question of Benjamin. The fact that the region north of Jerusalem in the traditional area of Benjamin escaped destruction, in stark contrast to evidence from sites excavated south of Jerusalem, is acknowledged as a key characteristic of the archaeological data by multiple scholars. For details of the archaeological landscape of Benjamin and specifically interpretation of evidence from the site of Tell en-Naṣbeh the body of work by Jeffrey Zorn, most importantly his 1993 doctoral thesis Tell En-Naṣbeh: A Re-Evaluation of the Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age and Later Periods, has been invaluable to the present research project. Zorn’s dating of Stratum 2 at Tell en-Naṣbeh to the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and his interpretation of the architectural evidence as indicative of a major reorientation and redesign of the settlement during this period, are central to the argument for biblical Mizpah as a key economic and administrative centre within the dominant Neo-Babylonian imperial regime.

In terms of a scholarly genealogy the present thesis might be identified as a descendant of, or certainly drawing inspiration from, the scholarly approach of Carolyn J. Sharp in her 2003 work Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah. Acknowledging a natural tendency among both beginning exegetes and seasoned scholars alike to be tempted to oversimplify their interpretive approaches, Sharp highlights that monolithic
approaches seldom suffice and instead readily applies the tools of tradition-historical, literary, and redaction-critical analysis.

Prophecy and Ideology engages in a far more ambitious task than the present thesis, examining the intersection between the ideological roles played by the paraenetic prose in Jeremiah, and the redactional interests in prophecy evident in the Deuteronomistic history, while also addressing the extent to which the prose in Jeremiah should be considered ‘Deuteronomistic.’ This involves not just an in-depth study of Jeremiah but also engagement with significant portions of the books of Kings also. Her analysis of the recurrent appearances of the motif of ‘my servants the prophets’ in Jeremiah points to the presence of two distinct, competing, ideological streams, the pro-Gola and pro-Judah, in a struggle for authority in the Deutero-Jeremianic prose.

Sharp asserts that ‘not enough attention has been paid to ways in which tropes and motifs in less obviously political passages in Jeremiah may have been shaped toward particular ideological ends.’\(^{19}\) Clearly the present thesis attempts to take on a similar task, and will hopefully add something of value to this effort. In attempting to tackle these features of the text of Jeremiah, Sharp’s willingness to employ a variety of critical methods, alongside her declaration that it is ‘no hopeless, chaotic literary mess but rather an elegant and powerful composition,’ have been guiding principles.

Mieke Bal’s Murder and Difference profoundly influenced the articulation in the present thesis of the concept of a symbolic code. The aim of Bal’s work was to study the disciplinary codes at work in the distinct hermeneutic approaches to the two accounts of Sisera’s death in Judges across the disciplines of history, theology, anthropology, and literary analysis. The premise of Bal’s analysis being ‘that the hermeneutic approach practiced within an academic field or discipline is based on a code that defines and delineates this field or discipline.’\(^{20}\) In order to successfully do this Bal offers a full and cogent definition of a code, and its characteristics, drawing from Umberto Eco’s earlier formulations found in A Theory of Semiotics (1976) and Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language (1984). In Murder and Difference Bal characterises a code as a socially conventionalised signification system. Bal’s determination that codes are both material and interested, that they are anchored in


social life and ultimately determined by and serve particular interests as a phenomenon of cultural power, is fundamental to the articulation of a symbolic code as a tool of cultural hegemony in the present thesis. While Bal concentrates on codes as phenomena inherent within the scientific efforts of various disciplines in their encounters with two versions of the murder of Sisera in Judges, this same model of the characteristics and operations of a code is applied in this thesis to detect and illumine a matrix of signifiers in the narrative episodes of Jeremiah under examination.

Bal’s foregrounding of the vital element of power in how a code operates, where groups wielding social and cultural power ‘determine which meanings are permitted and which meanings are prohibited,’ alongside her assertion that codes are ‘not stable, and still less transhistorical,’ significantly informs the approach taken in the present thesis. These elements of Bal’s approach have had a profound influence on the treatment here of a symbolic code in Jeremiah as a potential instrument of cultural hegemony which is also vulnerable to resistance and reframing.21

The undeniable influence of Marxist philosophy on the methodological approach has necessitated the inclusion of a critique of Marxist historical approaches to the ancient world and the foundational principles they share with the theoretical frameworks of Gramsci and Lefebvre in Chapter 3. In terms of the most influential texts relied upon in the production of the present research Roland Boer’s Marxist Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (2014) and The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel (2015), has been of fundamental importance in formulating a synthesis of Marxist approaches both to the economic mechanisms underpinning the efforts towards cultural hegemony in Jeremiah, and to the spatial politics which also figure at certain points in the narrative episodes under examination. Boer’s textual analysis of 1 Sam 1-2, drawing on the principles of Lefebvre’s The Production of Space, offers a coherent template for reading spatial elements within the narrative episodes of Jeremiah under discussion here along the same Lefebvrian parameters. What Boer achieves via Lefebvre, Rachel Havrelock, in her contribution to The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field, articulates in terms of Edward Soja’s contemporary reworking of the same Marxist-Lefebvrian model. These works provide the foundational principles upon which the space of women’s resistance in Egypt as articulated in Jer 44 is discussed in the present study.

21 Bal, Murder and Difference, p. 5.
In *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* Boer applies *Régulation* economic theory, while also drawing on Soviet-era Marxist scholarship, to conduct a study of the economies of ancient Israel within the wider context of ancient Southwest Asia. Boer identifies key institutional forms, such as subsistence survival, kinship-household, and tribute-exchange; the building blocks of specific economic regimes between which ancient Israel would have vacillated at various times in its history. Most important for the present study is Boer’s articulation of what he terms ‘the regime of plunder,’ as it provides a coherent framework against which to read the available evidence for Neo-Babylonian imperial economic practices both within the Mesopotamian heartland and in the more remote context of sixth century Judah as a peripheral imperial possession.

Boer’s example of Marxist literary criticism of biblical texts, foregrounding conflicts and opposition at the social and economic levels of society, is eminently compatible with the present methodological approach which seeks to delineate the operation of a symbolic code in narrative episodes of Jeremiah as an exercise in cultural hegemony. Aside from Boer’s explicit use of a Marxist interpretive lens, Steed Vernyl Davidson’s post-colonial readings of Jeremiah, particularly his *Empire and Exile* (2012), have been instrumental in the present thesis’ articulation of the Rechabites of Jer 35 as a fictionalised proximate other.
3. Methodology

This chapter will begin by charting the developments in the research approach over time, setting out the central question of this PhD research project and the process by which this question was arrived at. There will follow an explanation of the research methods, techniques, and strategies employed to conduct this analysis. Possible flaws of this research methodology and potential pitfalls in the project are also addressed, with subsequent consideration of the critical strategies which have been employed to attempt to mitigate these. A vital component of this chapter is the final section ‘Theoretical Basis’ which explains the theoretical underpinnings of this project, the methodological first principles which form the foundation of the present critical approach.

3.1. Research Methods

In the first instance it was necessary to produce original translations of all the relevant portions of the Masoretic Text. This approach ensured that the various textual, philological, and linguistic challenges of the task of translation could be encountered first-hand. Comparisons were then made between these translation results and the outcomes of previous translations and commentaries in the field of Jeremiah studies in order to gain a wider picture of the present scholarly consensus regarding textual inconsistencies, uncertain readings or any notable connotations present in certain words and phrases. Proceeding in this manner facilitated the selection of which elements of the text required further research. By close examination of the etymology of certain words and phrases, and cross referencing the occurrence of these terms and their cognates in a variety of texts, a deeper understanding of certain terms as signifiers was gained.

The research was conducted using a text-first approach; analysing individual words and phrases used in each passage. By examining the building block elements of each narrative passage, it was possible to glean details about unusual elements, words with multivalent meanings and other features of interest; these constituted the elements of a potential symbolic code at work. This inductive model, starting at the specific micro-level and moving outwards to identify the recurrence of thematically related components operating as a wider matrix of meaning, placed the text of Jeremiah at the centre of the research. The Masoretic Text of the selected chapters of Jeremiah were
the primary data source and all other data accessed was evaluated in terms of its relevance to a close reading of that primary data.

Original translations and a series of close reading exercises were conducted using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* edition of the Hebrew Masoretic Text. This stage of critical analysis focussed on details, patterns, and motifs occurring and recurring in the narrative prose material. The results of the close reading exercises, in tandem with the survey of preceding research, produced two key conclusions. Firstly, the selected narrative prose portions of Jeremiah share a number of key elements forming a recurrent theme which could be investigated as a potential symbolic code. Secondly, the putative symbolic code that can be reconstructed from these elements is consistent enough in nature to potentially constitute an ideological standpoint expressed in the material as an instrument of cultural hegemony.

It was then necessary to utilise a range of interdisciplinary data to extrapolate how the symbolic code may have operated in relationship with the ancient audience. Research activities included the analysis of archaeological data, historical surveys, and a variety of archival documents, letters, songs and literatures, from contemporaneous contexts. This approach ensured that the biblical text remained at the very centre of the research, to prioritise analysis of the book of Jeremiah in the first instance, and to utilise relevant historical and textual data from various other sources in its analysis. It was hoped such a research strategy would produce a work of biblical studies, rather than risk producing a work of historiography with merely a biblical flavour.

After performing my own translations of the MT and engaging in close readings of the book of Jeremiah via a range of English translations a certain set of characteristic features of a distinct type of narrative passage within the prose material of the book emerged. The diagnostic parameters I established for identifying this type of prose narrative included the presence of a chronological marker, a geographical locus, and a central event around which the characters and actions of the piece centre. The more of these features an episode contained, and the more pronounced each feature was, the stronger a segment’s potential to be assessed in terms of the research question. Furthermore, the fact that all of these episodes in some way or another incorporated interaction between different sources of authority and resistance, or a background element of change and crisis, meant that these passages were ideal sites of interpretation in terms of the concept of cultural hegemony.
The texts of the book of Jeremiah which form the core setting of this research were selected because of their event centred narrative nature. Chapters 29, 32, 35, 40, 41 and 44 all include specific actors or subjects, the presence of a chronological marker, a locus, and a central event. Based on the perceived potential of these passages for analysis in terms of their historical context, what events, figures or circumstances these segments of Jeremiah might portray, they were initially treated as avenues towards discussion of social crisis and geopolitical disruption in the kingdom of Judah in the late seventh to early sixth centuries BCE. The assumption that these particular narrative passages would be fruitful ground upon which to explore these questions was greatly influenced by their identification as 'biographical' or B-type material. These key characteristics served to make the historical context of each episode appear potentially more tangible than that of the famously difficult poetic sections. Since these key elements of each narrative passage were identifiable in each, then perhaps more could be done along similar lines.

It would not have been sufficient to deal only with the straightforward, and more accessible aspects of each passage's narrativity; characters, setting in time and place etc. A mediating process, foregrounding the semantic function of the narrative passages, was necessary. Key interpretive tools for carrying out this mediating process, facilitating a less direct but more methodologically sound portrayal of the relationship between text and historical context, were found within the discipline of narrative theory, and the Gramscian concept of hegemony:

Starting from a traditional dichotomy — characteristic of Italian political thought from Machiavelli to Pareto — between ‘force and consent’, Gramsci states that the supremacy of a social group or class manifests itself in two different ways: ‘domination’ (dominio), or coercion, and ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ (direzione intellettuale e morale). This latter type of supremacy constitutes hegemony.

Treating the selected passages as narrative therefore necessitated an examination of how the narrative elements in each passage operated on the semantic level. Close readings revealed regular occurrences of several components, specific words and concepts, relating particularly to agricultural activities and domestic ideals such as marriage, children, and home building. These interrelated elements appear to

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form a *symbolic code* at work in these portions of Jeremiah. The regular reoccurrence of these components formed a set of interrelated themes, which points towards an inherent (though neither consistent nor omnipresent) ideology operating in the selected texts. By using the tools of narrative theory, it was possible to identify the components of this symbolic code and to offer a model of how it functioned as an instrument of cultural hegemony within the text; the focus of the following chapter.

The thematic relationships between certain features throughout these passages meant it was possible to identify recurring patterns, on the level of a code or symbolic matrix of meaning. It was however insufficient to deal solely with familiar parallels. It was vital to interrogate how any putative symbolic code would have functioned in relationship with an audience. It became necessary to approach the texts as *fully* narrative in nature, rather than just *accessibly* narrative. As a result, the research question had to develop, from a purely historical-critical one, to a more nuanced interrogation of how these narratives may have functioned as narrative in their historical contexts. As the presence of competing ideologies in the biblical text is a widely accepted truism of Jeremiah studies; the presence of a symbolic code at work in the text, is an *a priori* assumption of this research project. The operation of symbolic codes, matrices of meaning at work in texts, is an essential element of both the narrative theory and Gramscian philosophical positions from which the methodological first principles of the present critical approach are taken.

### 3.2. The Final Form of the Research Question

Over time it became increasingly clear that in the selected narrative portions a symbolic code, repeatedly utilising key components of domestic establishment, agricultural production, and negotiations of space at both the domestic and public levels, was present. The task of the research project then developed to investigate how this set of symbols was operating as a bundle of ideologemes in the text, and to what ideological end. This is the basis for the central research question of the present thesis. The research question developed gradually, beginning from an exclusively historical-critical perspective and becoming progressively more refined in terms of identifying a set of components working as part of a symbolic code in the text. The central question of this research project can be expressed in two parts:
1. What common elements of Judean daily-life, including norms of agricultural productivity, households and relationships within them, and the corresponding negotiations of public and private spaces inherent in these pursuits, are operating together as a symbolic code in the text?

2. To what end might such a symbolic code be employed in an operation of cultural hegemony at work in the text?

This research project therefore attempts to fill a gap in scholarly approaches to Jeremiah; not by rejecting the historical-critical questions of context and ideological motivation; but by approaching these same historical-critical concerns via a specific methodological lens, foregrounding specific instances of a particular symbolic code in these passages and charting the operation of this set of symbols and concepts as a function of cultural hegemony in the text.

3.3. **Ensuring reliability, validity, and objectivity**

Significant efforts were made to ensure objectivity in the academic approach to the research material. The skills of a reflective practitioner were brought to bear on the research methods and output via audits of the scholarly analysis so as to prevent, or failing that, to minimize, biased and subjective intrusions into the critical analysis. Early on in the research process it became clear that the theoretical underpinnings of this project are part of a highly contested matrix of theoretical approaches, not just in the wider field of biblical studies, but also within the subdiscipline of Jeremiah studies itself, particularly the contested validity of the historical-critical method.

It must be acknowledged that the data treated in this research are to some extent contingent in nature. The data available to any scholar is contingent on a variety of factors. Foremost among these are issues of accessibility. We can only use the data available to us; it is a matter of conjecture that further corroborating data exists. Further data which does exist may be not made available for accurate and diligent scrutiny, e.g. unpublished private collections, not to mention the attendant ethical questions the treatment of these collections as resources raises. Interpretation of the archaeological data depends on the readings performed on it by earlier scholars, the vagaries of site records, stratigraphy, and the interpretation of artefacts. Individual scholars for example may espouse a set opinion or harbour personal academic or political loyalties to one school, critic, archaeologist, or nationalist historiography.
A research project of this nature must of necessity incorporate a willing interdisciplinarity into its methodological approach. It bears noting however that all other disciplines brought to the critical approach here, themselves share these contingent elements. Furthermore, the willingness of researchers to make use of the fruits of some disciplines and eschew others can be influenced by their own positionality. A scholar from outside the ‘global north’ or ‘The West’ may be more inclined to see the applicability of postcolonial theories to the ancient scenario.

The entirely non-random character of the cases studied in the present thesis must also be highlighted as a potential pitfall of this methodological approach. None of the narrative portions analysed in this study were selected at random. While the passages subjected to critical analysis were selected based on their shared characteristics under the rubric of the diagnostic criteria established at the outset, all were chosen from an extremely limited body of texts, the Masoretic Text of a single book of the Hebrew Bible. Had even a small degree of randomization taken place, for example by selecting a broader spread of passages, from any part of Jer 1-25 for example, then instances of the symbolic code in operation might have been shown to be distributed more diffusely across the range of texts studied.

However, widening the research field would have made any reconstruction of a relevant model of the symbolic code as rooted in a historical context so vague and conjectural as to be of no value to biblical studies. Widening the research field would have made any survey of the instrumentalization of these particular ideologemes practically impossible. Hence, there are certain intriguing aspects of the cultural-historical matrix from which the symbolic code gains its potency that have been deliberately eschewed in the present thesis. For example, issues of gender and the role and position of women within the social world which produced the symbolic code are largely left unexplored.

Only in discussion of the narrative episode of Jer 44 are the questions of gender roles and female agency given any direct attention. Additionally, while Steed Vernyl Davidson in *Empire and Exile* successfully demonstrated that Jer 29, 32 and 40, can be analysed in an insightful and productive manner via the lens of postcolonial theory, it has not been possible here to apply these same interpretive tools in greater depth. Hence, the portrayal of Neo-Babylonian imperial authority in Jeremiah is only treated as specifically relevant to the present study in those moments where it
intersects with components of the symbolic code, specifically in the exhortation to the exiles in Jer 29 and the initial agricultural idyll of Gedaliah’s establishment at Mizpah in Jer 40.

An awareness of two unavoidable issues in any treatment of the biblical text and its context: be that from an historical-critical or a literary perspective, has been key in attempting to minimize methodological missteps. The first of these issues is the predominantly ‘top-down’ perspective on the past our sources tend to provide, that is via these texts we are given access to only a very small, literate, and socially elevated section of the population.\(^\text{24}\) The second being that our present-day academic approach is a necessarily anachronistic task, influenced by the researcher’s own position in a particular twenty-first century economic and political system, which by default determines and shapes the scholarly approach.\(^\text{25}\)

Furthermore, there is a potential risk of taking an à la carte approach; selectively using examples to construct a model of cultural hegemony at work that fits too neatly into the a priori assumptions of the theoretical lenses being utilised and relates too little to the evidence that is actually available for analysis. The establishment of firm selection criteria for the material under discussion, a clear statement of research methods, the inductive trajectory of the research, and a thorough familiarity with legitimate concerns around the theoretical assumptions and scholarly positionality from which this research has been conducted have all been brought to bear in an effort to ensure objectivity, validity, and reliability.

### 3.4. Theoretical Basis

In order to clearly articulate the theoretical underpinnings of this research it is necessary to acknowledge the scholarly sources which have provided the methodological first principles upon which the critical approach of the present thesis is based. Several areas of scholarship provided this research project with valuable interpretive tools which lent themselves to the construction of the present methodological framework. As primarily a work of biblical studies this research relied upon earlier foundational studies which have already exploded any pre-existing notions of straightforward textual unity in either composition or redaction. A brief discussion of


the place of the present work within the ranks of attempts within biblical studies to 'do history' must take place. Significant heuristic devices were gathered also from the realms of narrative theory and particularly Marxist philosophical positions on the role of economic superstructures and their associated social and cultural dynamics.

3.4.1. Narrative Theory

The use of narrative theory in this research project is grounded primarily in the work of Seymour Chatman, particularly his 1978 book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. It is necessary here to point out the key elements of narrative theory and the manner in which they are expressed by Chatman in *Story and Discourse* which informs the critical approach to Jeremiah in the present thesis. The Russian Formalist and French Structuralist schools in mid-twentieth century Europe conceived of the phenomenon of narrative as a system. For the formalists, such as Vladimir Propp and Tzvetan Todorov; this was a simple dichotomy of *fabula* and *sjužet*, where *fabula* was the totality of events narrated, and *sjužet* was the plot, how the story was told, linking events together, in a sequence. For structuralists, like Claude Lévi-Strauss, it is the binary pair of *histoire* - story, and *discours* - telling, which is at work.

Drawing heavily on the influence of the Russian Formalist and French Structuralist schools, Chatman succinctly expresses the function and performance of narrative discourse in a manner best suited to the present research project. As outlined in *Story and Discourse*, in order for narrative to operate effectively it must rely on an audience’s ability to hold simultaneously in its mind a vast array of details and understandings. Narrative discourse is the means by which the content, the events, characters, and setting are communicated to the reader; each element having a role in the wider meaning-making scheme of the text.

A foundational principle of narrative theory as espoused by Chatman is that narrative discourse is self-regulating. A narrative will police its own borders and maintain coherence. Admitting any item that does not function within the sequence of discourse would result in a breakdown of meaning, i.e. the collection of various elements, events, and characters would cease making narrative sense. Chatman

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recalls a statement by cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget to support this idea: ‘transformations inherent in a structure never lead beyond the system but always engender elements that belong to it and preserve its laws...’

According to Chatman, narrative is a singular whole ‘constituted of elements – events and existents – that differ from what they constitute.’ The phenomenon of narrative discourse is essentially transactional. Audience participation is unavoidable, as Chatman explains:

Whether the narrative is experienced through a performance or through a text, the members of the audience must respond with an interpretation: they cannot avoid participating in the transaction. They must fill in gaps with essential or likely events, traits and objects which for various reasons have gone unmentioned...The audience’s capacity to supply plausible details is virtually limitless.

In semiotic terms when the audience are presented with a sign they are expected, as their part in the narrative transaction, to supply all the signified details this sign connotes as part of a symbolic code (the symbolic code operating as a tool of cultural hegemony in the book of Jeremiah will be more fully explored in the following chapter).

This transactional relationship is an integral component in how the symbolic code functions in each of the narrative episodes under examination in the present thesis. It is the transactional relationship, the cognitive participation of the audience which gives the symbolic code, as a collection of signs, its potency. Jeremiah’s audience, by virtue of its embeddedness in a wider cultural context, cannot help but participate in the narrative transaction which imbues the symbolic code with a set of meanings and therefore an ideological efficacy. With the audience thus inscribed in a transactional relationship with the text it becomes fertile ground for the deployment of the symbolic code as a tool of cultural hegemony, an exercise of power to a specific end.

3.4.2. Methodological principles drawn from the discipline of Biblical Studies

This research project was also carried out with a set of theoretical first principles, specific to the discipline of biblical studies. While the broader fields of literary

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28 Chatman, Story and Discourse, p. 21.
29 Chatman, Story and Discourse, pp. 28-9.
and cultural studies have certainly produced comparable scholarly approaches to composite and multivalent textual artefacts there were number of characteristics of the book of Jeremiah as a text within the canon of the Hebrew bible which necessitated a critical approach founded on certain theoretical principles specific to our guild. These were:

- the composite nature of the text under examination,
- the question of the relationship of this text with the Torah,
- the question of a relationship of the text of Jeremiah with an oft-cited Deuteronomistic editorial phenomenon,
- and the place of this research endeavour within the debate surrounding the role of the historical-critical method.

The variety of styles, modes of expression, disrupted narrative timelines, and key differences between the MT and LXX renderings of Jeremiah all point to the book being composite in nature. Jeremiah is a collection of literature that has aggregated over time into its final canonical form. There is endless debate about how the different types of textual material gathered together in the book should be categorised. Various models are available, the most influential model in twentieth century Jeremiah scholarship has certainly been Duhm’s tripartite division, further developed by Mohwinckel in his A-B-C-(D) schema. Certainly, the narrative passages selected for examination in the present study all share a number of B-type or ‘biographical’ characteristics which prompted their initial labelling here as ‘event-centred’ narrative portions.

The key methodological principles followed in the present study with regard to the book of Jeremiah’s treatment as a composite text are firstly, an awareness that the text aggregated over centuries and involved a variety of compositional and editorial hands, contexts, and stages. Secondly, this study acknowledges that the development of Jeremiah took place in a lived reality, emerging from a historical context which influenced how the text took shape and both what it included and excluded. It was also necessary to decide whether or not to address the idea that the book of Jeremiah may have undergone a stage, or multiple stages of, Deuteronomistic editing; a methodological concern solely specific to the academic study of the Hebrew Bible.
Two theoretical models of the particular compositional development of the book of Jeremiah, developed by William McKane were of immediate relevance to this discussion; the ‘rolling corpus’ and ‘reservoir’ theories:

I have concluded that Sept. gives us access to a Hebrew text which is shorter than MT, and so enables us to identify expansions of the Hebrew text in the period which lies between the Hebrew Vorlage of Sept. and MT.  

The fundamental contention is that the vocabulary of Jeremianic poetry is re-used in the prose for the book, so that the poetry is a ‘reservoir’ for the prose. McKane’s suggestion that the poetic portions of Jeremiah generate or inspire the content of prose portions of the text is a helpful theory to keep in mind when discussing the possible relationships between disparate segments of the book. Such relationships might include the conflict between Jeremiah and the assembled people in Jer 44 and the shorter poetic reference to the same worship practice in Jer 7, or indeed the possible latent symbolic links between a variety of references to fruit cultivation and gardens across the text, for example in Jer 24, 29 and 40. McKane’s theory of the poetry-prose relationship in Jeremiah is also helpful as it points to a similar mechanism in the functioning of the symbolic code, some kind of audience recall or prior knowledge is relied upon to give it its fullest effect.

At various points within the literary corpus of Jeremiah studies there occur statements about influences, connotations, allusions, quotations, and direct literary borrowings between Jeremiah and the Torah; the book of Deuteronomy in particular. However, there is a marked lack of consensus within this subdiscipline of biblical studies as to how this relationship between Jeremiah and the Torah is to be defined. While some degree of intertextual influence is present it is not certain which text is determinant and which is derivative. Indeed, such instances of intertextuality may possibly indicate commonalities in each texts’ context of composition or shared wellsprings of inspiration, rather than any direct one-to-one relationship. It is better to consider both bodies of literature developing simultaneously, rather than one being directly responsible for the content of the other. Acknowledging such deficiencies in the state of our knowledge with regard to each texts’ time and context of development does not preclude the possibility of some form of literary influence having occurred.

30 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 1, pp. l-li.
31 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 1, p. ivi.
Many Jeremiah scholars suggest the hand of one, or several, Deuteronomistic editors as a cornerstone of their interpretive approach. In some cases, the book of Jeremiah has been interpreted as having found its final form under a pervasive and potent redaction process carried out by a coherent Deuteronomistic movement, in others a series of separate editorial endeavours in different time periods are credited with shaping the text as we now encounter it. Fortunately numerous nuanced readings have encouraged the development of academic perspectives which eschew any linear rigid characterisation of Deuteronomistic editing as a singular process. Various labels, for example T. Römer’s Jer Dtr and Jer Dtr², have been employed in order to identify different putative stages in the development of a Deuteronomistic recension of the book of Jeremiah.32 The situation is readily admitted as complex, necessitating considered and precise responses, consensus however is lacking:

A great deal is lost, of significant theological import, when the outlines are blurred of these groups that had so much at stake in the beginning of the sixth century and through the early exilic period.33

...some overriding ideas (some of which are usually characterized as dtr), some basic traditions and some understandings of the past are bound to be expressed in more than one of the books written (or redacted) at that time. After all, if these texts are associated with a similar cultural space that is produced – at least in part – by a small number of postmonarchic literati, then some degree of intertextuality (if defined in these terms) is to be expected.34

This does not mean that every prose sermon or discourse in the book can be understood in a similar manner; some appear to be the ad hoc creations of the Deuteronomists who developed the Jeremiah tradition. This much is clear, however, that where ever possible the exegete should attempt to related these prose discourses and sermons to the ministry and preaching of Jeremiah himself and then, equally important, show how they have subsequently been developed or adapted to meet the needs of the alter period and situation in which they were given their present form.35

‘Pan-Deuteronomistic’ readings risk overlooking the complexity of both the text of Jeremiah and the types of editing that certainly are present in varying forms and to varying degrees throughout the book. To assume a blanket presence of so-called Deuteronomistic perspectives in Jeremiah is to underestimate the presence of subtlety, nuance, counterpoint and multivocality existing within both Jeremiah and the wider literary corpus often labelled ‘Deuteronomistic.’ Such a position would also imply a monolithic ideological perspective at work in the book of Deuteronomy itself, and an assumption that Deuteronomy, or indeed Joshua-Kings, are somehow invulnerable to those same disruptions, disconnections and the various idiosyncrasies which tend to accompany a composite literary development over an extended period of time.

Hence, while the present study will attempt to uncover the components and operations of a symbolic code in certain narrative sections of Jeremiah, no significant attempt will be made to attribute the origins of this code to any particular group or guild of ‘literati’ present either in Judah, Babylon or indeed Egypt during the exilic period. While other studies, for example Carolyn J. Sharp’s 2003 text *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, have attempted to illuminate a limited set of specific phrases and motifs as elements of Deuteronomistic influence on Jeremiah, the present thesis avoids making any definitive pronouncements on what about the book of Jeremiah may or may not be either Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic in nature. The following chapter, discussing the phenomenon of a symbolic code in Jeremiah functioning as a tool of cultural hegemony, acknowledges a relationship of some kind between Jeremiah and the Torah, without attempting to define its nature or chronology. The key components of the symbolic code, agricultural productivity (fruit cultivation in particular), household and domestic spaces, building, planting and hospitality, are all far too common in the biblical literature, and pervasive within the wider Ancient Near Eastern context to be utilised in any meaningful way to reconstruct the specific outlook of any single hypothetical ideological school.

The aim of this study is not to understand, define or categorise Jeremiah per se. From a literary standpoint, in a discipline influenced so fruitfully by poststructuralist perspectives, it is true only in the most limited sense that we have but a single text of Jeremiah before us. For many decades in our guild it has been impossible to credibly assert a single understanding of a text, this remains a welcome development. Enriched as we are by the theoretical innovations of the later twentieth century, and also reminders of much earlier contributions, it would be a retrograde step for the present investigation to claim any single or unified understanding of the book of Jeremiah.
Rather, the present purpose is to explore specific elements of the selected texts and to credibly hypothesise a code at work, drawing from what we can access, however imperfectly, of the aspects of the world which produced them.

When analyzing any biblical text, with all its attendant layers of editing and complex transmission history, it is easy to slip into the habit of thinking of biblical characters as just that, characters in a piece of literature, not flesh and blood individuals who once lived in particular real world contexts, who experienced real events in specific geographic, historical, social and architectural settings.36

As a cultural artefact, the book of Jeremiah reflects elements of a historical reality, however these elements are mediated via a number of channels before arriving on the page before us. Our access to the past is inescapably imperfect. The investigative methods applied in this research project were selected based on their compatibility with the idea of the transactional nature of the audience-text relationship, and the likelihood of their aiding in the production of a plausible reconstruction of elements of that historical reality. This attempt at plausible reconstruction is offered here as a literary analysis of the selected narrative passages in a mode conversant with what is commonly labelled as the ‘historical-critical’ method in Biblical Studies.

3.4.2.1. History in the Mode of Biblical Studies

Concerns have been raised that any explicitly historically focused study of Jeremiah might result in invention at best:

…it is neither the ghost of the historical Jeremiah nor the ghosts of later Judean scribes but we ourselves who haunt the original setting(s) and the Nachleben of the Jeremiah traditions. Inventions of the prophet will inevitably mirror, directly or obliquely, the cultural concerns of readers’ own times and places.37

Certainly, any research carried out with a view to engaging in the task of history in relation to a biblical text should not permit informed speculation to descend into entirely fabricated constructs, presenting what one might like to find in the data under discussion, rather than what is actually present and available for scrutiny. However, the

type of ex nihilo inventions so roundly ridiculed by Sharp and Holt are in fact relatively infrequent occurrences in academic biblical criticism. The actual work produced within the field of Jeremiah studies rarely falls so far short of such ultimately unattainable ideals of unadulterated historical engagement with the text. In reality very few professional practitioners of biblical criticism take quite as naive an approach to the task of history. Perhaps then the present project is not in need of as vigorous a defence as this caricature type of strawman argument seeks to invite. Nevertheless, the important question of how the task of history in biblical criticism is to be understood does remain.

This brings us, inexorably, to the ‘the surprisingly difficult question: What is history?’ We cannot escape the questions which surround the interplay of narrative and history, literary depictions of elements of the past and their transmission to the modern interpreter. Space does not allow for a full investigation here of the plethora of definitions which might be attached to the term ‘history.’ Engagement with elements of historiographic debate in the present work is largely confined to an evaluation of the utility of Marxist philosophy in terms of the study of the ancient world, particularly the use of theoretical frameworks developed by Gramsci and Lefebvre.

Consequently, in producing a treatment of Jeremiah as it relates to the history of the period it seeks to represent it is necessary to wrestle with the challenges of what it means to perform the task of history in the mode of biblical criticism. Tackling these challenges requires open acknowledgment that scholarly access to the past will always be imperfect and tainted with unavoidable anachronism. This ineluctable imperfection aside it is still necessary to both interrogate and appraise the hypotheses and associated tools used in this effort. In terms of the question ‘what is history?’ and the related question of the relationships and occasions of interplay between narratives and history, representations and depictions of the past, and the further complicating factor of their various means of transmission, the statements of Folker Siegert and, in the specific context of biblical criticism, John Barton will be relied upon in the present discussion. This is done in an effort to offer an outline of certain parameters within which the present research seeks to operate.

Our knowledge and understanding of the past can only ever be partial. We must therefore admit 'a fringe of incertitude,' as an aspect of all endeavours in the production of history. Siegert, embarking from the standpoint of the philosophy of language, highlights that the raw data available to us are 'not facts as such, but representations of facts.'

History, taken in a sober sense, is about facts related to humans. Even revelation is related to humans, and it has its fixed points in time and space. History—as told or written history—may be defined as an account of the past, with the corollary that it is always somebody's (or some group's) past.

In history, however, references must go to things experienced; and the historians' proper concern is sharing—and describing—experiences of the past. For historians' use, “truth” may be defined as the content (or, meaning) of a statement that is confirmed by human experience, including proper inquiry. In order to be “understood,” historical truths need some link with actual experiences of the person who deals with them, which is the proper domain of hermeneutics…In the science of history, as in many others, truth is a matter of interpersonal acceptance.

By arguing for a reframing of the task of biblical criticism in terms of history as the use of certain hypotheses in an effort towards understanding, as an essentially hermeneutic exercise, John Barton highlights how the well established terminology of the ‘historical critical method’ in biblical studies is not fit for purpose.

…a concern for reconstructing history is not in itself part of the definition of biblical criticism. The idea that biblical critics are as a class interested in history (rather than, say, theology) is wide of the mark; but even when they are, what marks them out as critical is not that interest in itself, but the spirit in which they inquire into history.

The historical-critical method thus proves to be a less than ideal term for communicating what biblical criticism is about. In essence, criticism is neither historical nor a method. There has been a strong correlation with history, at least since the nineteenth century, and there has frequently been a tendency to speak as though criticism has methodological implications. But in itself the critical approach to

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41 Siegert, ‘On referring to Something, Meaning Something, and Truth,’ p. 45.
the Bible is not a method but a series of explanatory hypotheses, driven by a particular attitude toward texts and textual meaning.\(^{43}\)

Similarly, according to Harald Samuel, the historical-critical approach within the discipline of biblical studies, should be more properly understood not as a singular methodological approach but a ‘bundle of methods within the historical branch of biblical criticism.’\(^{44}\) Therefore the heuristic frameworks utilised in the present methodological approach are not to be read as a credal statement of scholarly positionality but rather as an array of those tools deemed most suitable for this kind of investigation. For a number of reasons the tools offered by elements of the Marxist theoretical mode have suited this endeavour the best. This will be explored in further detail below.

Agreement with Barton that the traditional label is likely ill-suited to the enterprise of biblical criticism, at least since the early 20th Century, does not preclude us from addressing those areas of this thesis where the primary constituent hypotheses of the historical-critical method have played a role. This thesis does, on occasion, intersect with the realms of form, source, redaction, and genre criticism. On the question of form criticism the concerns of the earliest stages of examination of the book of Jeremiah were particularly relevant. The identification of specific event-centred narrative episodes concerned itself with the presence of particular elements, i.e., the presence of a chronological marker, a geographical locus, and a central event around which the characters and actions of the piece centred. Likewise, in a wider sense each of these identified ‘event-centred narrative portions’ were situated within larger segments of the book of Jeremiah which had already been labelled successively biographical and B-type material by Duhm and Mowinckel respectively.

Aspects of form and genre criticism play a role in the effort made at points in this study to identify and unpack the presence of typical linguistic patterns, repeated phrases, and refrains. Key examples of this are analyses of the phrase ‘in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem,’ and variants of the same, as they appear across Jer 7 and Jer 44, and the repeated tripartite phraseology of ‘build-plant-marry.’ In terms of the letters of Jer 29 and the reported oratory of Gedaliah in Jer 44 no doubt a great deal more could also be unpacked in terms of genre and questions of


exhortatory speech and its transmission.

Caricatured as the ‘paradigm case of thin, bloodless historical critical method,’ source criticism has also had an influence on the present methodological approach. The foregoing acknowledgment of the debate surrounding a putative ‘pan-Deuteronomistic’ editing of the book of Jeremiah would not exist were it not for source criticism, only the most narrow definition of which confines that label to those studies concerned with the JEDP model exclusively.

The foundational hypothesis of source criticism, the postulated existence of earlier coherent documents, unattainable ideal types as they admittedly are, which in various patterns of combination over time produced the biblical text presently available for analysis, is a key ingredient of the methodological first principles discussed above. A key starting point in the present scholarly enterprise is an acknowledgement of the composite nature of the text of Jeremiah as we now have it. On a more textually minute level the discussion in chapter 12 of the impact of Jer 44.25 as potentially providing tacit legitimation to the heterodox worship of the Judean women in Egypt, and the potential for the following verse to be interpreted as a later insertion to counteract this, likewise betrays traces of the intellectual heritage of the so-called historical-critical method.

The interpretive tools provided via the critical hypotheses of form, source, and genre are therefore useful to the present enterprise not in attempting to reconstruct an unavoidably theoretical past ideal form of the text, but in the effort to understand elements of the text we have now in front of us. As such, the present study makes prudent use of the textual and archaeological data available in order to offer a reasoned and informed examination of the presence of a distinct set of signals, the components of a code, which encourages the audience to interpret the text’s representation of human lived reality along specific lines. This study highlights the components of this symbolic code as stemming from a predominantly agricultural and household-kinship construction of space also present in the Torah. It could be tempting, while discussing the event-centred narrative portions of the text Jeremiah, to follow the example of some earlier studies and apply categories of authenticity to them:

Aside from the generous quota of textual and exegetical difficulties with which they present us, the poetic sayings in the Jeremiah book give rise to relatively few critical problems. All the “confessions” and

the overwhelming majority of the oracles may confidently be held to have come from Jeremiah himself and to represent as close an approximation as is possible of the prophets ipsissima verba.  

The incidents narrated in these chapters are full of striking and realistic details...All this suggests not "traditionists" but an eyewitness account, or at least access to Jrm’s own testimony; in short, Baruch.  

Of course one could always argue that a later writer has accurately depicted the realia of late pre-exilic Judah. However, what adds to the probability that we are dealing with an eyewitness account [chapter 36] is the precise delineation of the location of the offices in question.  

The labelling of materials within Jeremiah as authentic or inauthentic is not a particularly helpful practice for the purpose of the present research. Particularly because such a practice might serve to move the discussion further away from any holistic approach to elements within the Masoretic text in its current form. We might suggest that oracles, references, narrative passages, episodes etc. may be reflective of an element of the historical context, however it is worth remembering we are not on any kind of quest for a historical figure or the identification of his ipsissima verba.  

It is not the ambition of this study to offer oracles within the text as direct quotes of a historical Jeremiah, or to interpret any of the narrative episodes as accounts of actual events. But rather to examine and elucidate the presence of a symbolic code tracing an established theme within portions of Jeremiah. This code is indicative of a particular operation of cultural hegemony and as such may point towards a broader political power situation informing the material circumstances surrounding the production of the text. This method has not been adopted with a view to creating a reified and unassailable statement on the nature of the ancient past. Rather, this study aims to provide an insight into how and why certain promoted norms and values are promoted in the Book of Jeremiah’s literary portrayal of certain events and circumstances.  

3.5. Marxist Theory

46 Bright, Jeremiah, pp. lxix, 265.
Marxist literary and cultural studies inherently foreground the nature of art and literature as phenomena with social, economic, and political realities embedded within them. These same social, economic and political realities are all essential components of the present treatment of Jeremiah. The present analysis of narrative episodes within the book of Jeremiah draws significantly on a number of Marxist theoretical frameworks; Boer's use of the Régulation model, Antonio Gramsci's articulation of the concept of hegemony and his characterisation of a social caste of 'intellectuals' as its agents, and Henri Lefebvre's tripartite model of space. However, the writings of Karl Marx as the wellspring of philosophy from which these theoretical positions emerged, receive little to no attention in the present analysis. Gramsci and Lefebvre engaged in philosophical examinations of human society and its structures, not history or historiography per se. As such the applicability of these Marxist theoretical frameworks to the present thesis must be examined. Firstly, it is necessary to address the question of Marxist engagements with the challenges of historical study and history writing, particularly in relation to the pre-modern societies of the Ancient Near East.

There are significant criticisms to be made of any self-consciously Marxist theoretical approach to a study of elements of the ancient world, not the least of which is anachronism. What role, if any, can Marxist thought have in an academic treatment of the ancient world? Consequently, the charge of anachronism might be levelled at the present research in terms of the application of specific Marxist theoretical concepts such as Gramsci’s ‘hegemony’ and ‘intellectual caste,’ or Lefebvre’s ‘representational space,’ in its analysis of passages from the book of Jeremiah. The strongest and most frequent criticisms of the use of Marx and Marxists in the production of history are that Marx’s scattered statements later interpreted as a programmatic approach to history on his part, and those elements thereby bequeathed to the discipline of Marxist historiography, are responsible for a rigid dialectical materialism. The Marxist approach to history is frequently dismissed as excessively deterministic and inflexible. That it is inexorably bound within reified constructs of ideal types and associated reified definitions of class, modes of production, and predetermined epochs of socio-economic development. As such Marxist historiography is often characterised as a demonstrably false narrative of unilinear momentum towards an inexorable climax of revolution.

Karl Marx only wrote one work related to classical antiquity, his doctoral thesis, this was not a work of history but an analytical comparison of the philosophies of Democritus and Epicurus.\textsuperscript{50} He made occasional casual observations about slavery in the ancient world, but only in the context of his much stronger interest in the contemporary debate about slavery in the United States of America. Despite efforts to elevate his infrequent casual remarks to the status of definitive pronouncements, the fact remains that Karl Marx’s interest in the ancient world was marginal at best.\textsuperscript{51} Marx’s oft quoted declaration that in ‘broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society,’ was made, not as part of a programmatic statement on the nature of history, but in a brief, and predominantly autobiographical, preface to \textit{A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy} in 1859.\textsuperscript{52} This so-called ‘Asiatic mode of production,’ appearing without definition, subsequently developed into an amorphous label for any economic order that did not readily correspond with the identifying characteristics of the ancient, feudal, or modern. This lent itself to the construction of a stunted and ill-fitting ‘Orientalist history of eternal stagnation’ foisted on those civilisations which failed to meet a set of preconceived methodological expectations.\textsuperscript{53} The phraseology of ‘Asiatic mode of production’ subsequently fell out of use only after decades of increasingly fruitless efforts to parse it based on the ill-founded assumption that it had appeared in Marx’s brief preface as part of an authoritative statement on the nature of the concept of history itself.

The idea that this page or so of Marx’s introductory remarks at the beginning of \textit{A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy} should be read as the fixed credal statement of Marxist historiography emerged only in the 20th Century. This was in no small part due to V. I. Lenin’s 1918 declaration that this brief passage was ‘an integral formulation of the fundamental principles of materialism as applied to human society and its history’ which ‘indicated the way to a scientific study of history as a single process which, with all its immense variety and contradictoriness, is governed by

\textsuperscript{51} Nippel, ‘Marx and Antiquity,’ pp.200-203.
\textsuperscript{53} Vlassopoulos, ‘Marxism and Ancient History,’ p. 218.
It was only after the de-Stalinization process of the later 1950s that it was possible for historians within the various Marxist schools to embrace that ‘immense variety and contradictoriness’ acknowledged by Lenin in 1918 beyond the authoritarian strictures of the ‘definite laws,’ he at that time had ascribed to Marx’s 1859 formulation. Over time dogmatic formulations such as the phases of history as six distinct stages of development, and class struggle as the prime mover for social and cultural change, have been, replaced with a more holistic outlook which continues to place a significant emphasis on socio-economic factors.

It should already be clear from this brief discussion of Marx’s 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and its afterlife within the discipline of Marxist historiography, that the practice of selective quotation has been extremely problematic. It is therefore necessary to further unpack the broader context of Marx’s 1859 comments in their original context, not least because of their relevance to later developments in Marxist historiography and their impact on both Gramsci and Lefebvre’s examinations of social relations in terms of thought, power, and space. Marx’s comments in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* do not begin with his statement on ‘the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production,’ but with a meditation on the relationship between the human consciousness and its material circumstances:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

It is this philosophical first principle, that the social, political, and intellectual life of a human society is conditioned by the material circumstances, particularly the economic

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realities surrounding and impacting upon all participants, that has informed the ensuing Marxist schools of historical and philosophical thought. It is from these Marxist schools that the interpretive tools utilised in the present thesis originate.

The major criticisms of approaches to history via a Marxist theoretical lens are an excessive reliance on inflexible models, an inability to account for diversity of evidence and experience, and a rigid and exclusive focus on economic factors which fails to incorporate questions of gender, race, culture, and politics into its metanarrative of global history. Certainly, in the past all of this has been true. Marxist approaches to history have oftentimes remained excessively devoted to strictly defined theoretical structures as the fixed parameters within which all analysis must be performed, promoting an overreliance on ahistorical ideal types such as slavery and serfdom for example. The older Marxist metanarrative, constructed along essentially Eurocentric lines, from antiquity to feudalism to capitalism, has been significantly undermined by more recent heightened interest in questions of gender, race, and culture, none of which traditional economically focussed Marxist approaches to history seem, at first glance, equipped to engage in. However, the key point of departure for a Marxist approach to history; that the social, political, and intellectual life of a society is conditioned by the material realities experienced by all members, has meant that historians making use of Marxist theoretical tools have been much better positioned to engage in history from below.

In terms of historical study of the ancient world the significant contributions of scholars based in and utilising the preferred methodologies of the Soviet Union must not be overlooked. Igor M. Diakonoff as one of the leading Soviet scholars greatly influenced historical approaches to models of state formation in the ancient world and Mohammed Dandamaev’s work Slavery in Babylonia highlighted a greater diversity within the models of forced labour in ancient Mesopotamia than had previously been assumed. More recently Mario Liverani has continued to find great academic utility in the Marxist concept of modes of production. Liverani expresses an awareness of

60 Vlassopoulos, ‘Marxism and Ancient History,’ pp. 214, 216.
issues which might blunt the overall efficacy of a Marxist economic approach to the ancient world, its foundation on an understanding of a modern capitalist economy and the severely limited and indirect access 19th century researchers had to evidence from the Ancient Near East. He however remains confident that the Marxist idea of modes of production remains a significant tool in a historical survey of the Ancient Near East. Liverani highlights the applicability of an understanding of the economic structure of ancient society based on modes of production particularly in offering insights into issues surrounding ‘identification of types of ownership of the means of production (especially in terms of land), the relationship between means of production and workforce, the size of production units, and the accumulation of surplus.’

Consequently, it is reasonable to assert that Marxist theoretical frameworks can continue to provide fruitful avenues into, and insights from, an engagement with the ancient world, particularly in the growing areas of Subaltern studies in the context of South Asian history. It will be necessary to continue to recognise ‘that diversity, contradiction, and change are defining aspects of historical processes and their entanglements,’ and that no discipline should be allowed to fall victim to the kind of inflexibility which in the past has allowed methodological tools to be reduced to ossified dogmatism.

3.5.1. Boer

Roland Boer, in his introduction to The Sacred History of Ancient Israel makes specific mention of Soviet era Russian scholarship, Régulation theory, and the work of Liverani himself, as the sources for a suitable model for his study of the economy of ancient Israel within the wider context of ancient Southwest Asia. Boer takes care to highlight the explicitly Marxist elements of these theoretical foundations and explains; ‘Their genius is to be able to discern, amid the chatter of data, deeper economic patterns rather than imposing alien theoretical constructs into which one makes the material fit.’ Boer takes up Liverani’s willingness to engage with the concept of modes of production and utilises the greater nuance in this realm developed within Régulation theory which emerged from the groupe de recherche sur la régulation de l’économie capitaliste in 1980s France. Boer’s use of elements Régulation theory produces a

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63 Vlassopoulos, ‘Marxism and Ancient History’, p. 211.
64 Vlassopoulos, ‘Marxism and Ancient History’, pp. 224.
65 Boer, Sacred Economy, p. 4.
framework via which to approach the economic landscape of the ancient southern Levant which incorporates enough diversity and flexibility to more readily account for diversity of experience and evidence:

As mentioned earlier, any economic system (mode of production) is made up of key building blocks (institutional forms) that come together in unique formations (regimes) to provide very limited continuity for a time within the larger scale of a mode of production. Due to internal contradictions, these regimes easily fall apart, giving way to the economic norm of “crisis.” In those efforts at continuity, a whole series of compromises have to be made, which are enabled and sustained by cultural assumptions, social forces, beliefs, and practices (mode of régulation).  

The application of economic theory in the present thesis largely follows the pattern offered by Boer in *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel.* He conducts an exploration of what he terms the ‘sacred economy’ of ancient Israel within the wider context of ancient Southwest Asia. This approach is somewhat contrary to the norm in studies of economic activity in ancient societies which, for the most part, rely on the more familiar parameters set out by classical and neoclassical economic theorists, particularly Adam Smith. Indeed, as will become clear in the subsequent discussion of the economic landscape of the Neo-Babylonian imperial heartland, the backdrop to our discussion of Jer 29, it has not been possible to completely eschew the transhistorical application of such neo-classical economic terminology as ‘market economy,’ ‘market orientation,’ and ‘monetisation.’ Certainly, the impression, however anachronistic, of Babylonia in the sixth century BCE as something of a premodern ‘limited Smithian success story’ has been retained in the present treatment. An assumption that the principles of normative economic theories stemming from capitalist schools of thought are any less vulnerable to charges of anachronism and inapplicability to an ancient context than Marxist philosophies would certainly be a grave error. For the most part however, a concerted effort has been made to operate within the framework of the concept of *Régulation,* because of an identifiable compatibility between this theoretical model and the idea of a symbolic code functioning within the selected narrative portions of Jeremiah as a tool of ‘cultural hegemony,’ a Marxist concept advanced by Antonio Gramsci in the twentieth century discussed more fully below.

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From the French *régulation*, *Régulation* theory is concerned with the social, institutional, and ideological factors that engender stability and transformation in a social system as a whole.\(^69\) These same social, institutional, and ideological factors are present in, and promoted by the symbolic code. *Régulation* theory proposes that social relations are the primary determinative factors in the makeup of a society and the main mechanism by which periods of continuity and stability are created. This model posits that crisis is in fact the norm and that only through the coalescing of a variety of institutional forms into a broader socio-economic regime, can relatively brief periods of stability be achieved.\(^70\) In the specific case of Jeremiah then, we are looking at the existence of Judah and Judeans within the framework of the early decades of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, a 'regime' which itself lasted less than a century.

In the *Régulation* theory model these fundamental social relations are codified in various 'institutional forms' such as subsistence survival, kinship-household, patronage, (e)states, and tribute-exchange.\(^71\) These institutional forms all overlap and interact to varying degrees within a regime, with no single institutional form functioning as the foundation of an entire economy.\(^72\) It is noteworthy how many different institutional forms feature in the present analysis of economic activity in the context of the book of Jeremiah, either detected in readings of the narrative episodes themselves, or gleaned from an interpretation of the contemporary archaeological evidence. For example, some level of patronage and the operation of royal and temple estates might be discerned in the workings of a state administered land cultivation system as discussed in the context of Jer 29. Additionally, there are clear traces of both the subsistence survival and kinship-household institutional forms present in the land redemption narrative of Jer 32, while a gradual trend from subsistence to tribute-exchange may be discerned within the archaeological evidence of increasing provincial administration at both Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al 'Umayri.

Boer identifies the key socio-economic regime for the period of the first millennium BCE as a 'regime of booty.' That is, he identifies a growing trend towards imperial plunder, particularly by large empires, during this period. This type of extractive economic regime would have featured a variety of mechanisms of appropriation and expropriation including crude seizure alongside more 'polite' and

\(^{69}\) Boer, *Sacred Economy*, p. 32.
\(^{70}\) Boer, *Sacred Economy*, pp. 32, 35.
\(^{71}\) Boer, *Sacred Economy*, pp. 2, 38.
\(^{72}\) Boer, *Sacred Economy*, p. 5.
'elite' forms such as taxation and tribute. This scenario is the backdrop against which our examination of a symbolic code in Jeremiah is set. It is the willingness of *Régulation* theory to treat the entirety of a socio-economic system as integrated, with institutions and cultural assumptions embedded within an overall dynamic and active regime, which facilitates reading elements of the symbolic code in the narrative portions of Jeremiah. This symbolic code is thus not reduced simply to a single ideological strand within the text which is divorced from any wider socio-economic historical reality but rather functions as an ideological instrument communicating these same institutions and cultural assumptions.

*Régulation* therefore applies not only to the economic operations of society but how those operations are encouraged, facilitated, and maintained via a determining ideological framework. In the case of ancient Israel Boer identifies this determining ideological framework as inherently sacred. The language, thought forms, beliefs, practices, and customs of the human inhabitants of this regime were all understood in terms of a sacredness which saturated daily, and consequently economic, life. It is the argument of the present thesis that part of this inherently ideological framework can be discerned as a symbolic code present across a number of narrative episodes of Jeremiah and that it operates as an instrument of cultural hegemony in order to promote and preserve aspects of a socio-economic regime oriented towards imperial plunder. To borrow from Boer: 'in more conventional Marxist terminology, this is the zone of culture and ideology.'

3.5.2. Gramsci

In a similar case to Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci did not produce either a programmatic historiography or any in depth engagement with the ancient world. That being said, he did demonstrate a keen awareness of the legacy of the ancient world, the Roman Empire in particular, in terms of the foundation myths of contemporary European Imperialism, specifically the rise of fascism in his native Italy. The sporadic references in his works to the Graeco-Roman world are generally in terms of his using

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75 Boer, *Sacred Economy*, pp. 5, 8.
them as analogies for the contemporary phenomena he is analysing. Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* are often our only avenue into his theoretical position and while identifiably Marxist they lack any comprehensive editorial structure and translation and transmission of the insights and theories therein have often been rather asystematic.

In the present thesis an effort has been made to utilise the theoretical framework of cultural hegemony, a concept rooted in Gramsci’s articulation of the ideas of ‘intellectuals’ and ‘hegemony.’

Hegemony was already part of the Marxist theoretical arsenal, having been an element of Russian social democratic and, later, Bolshevik philosophy since the early 20th century. Key statements by Gramsci in the Prison Notebooks articulate this concept in specific terms. Beginning with his definition of the intellectual caste:

...there was a certain unstable equilibrium among the classes due to the fact that certain categories of intellectuals (in the direct service of the state, especially the civil and military bureaucracy) were still too closely tied to the old ruling classes...In this sense, the church itself could become state, in which case the conflict would manifest itself as secular and secularizing civil society versus state-church (when the church has become an integral part of the state, of political society monopolized by a specific privileged group that embraces the church in order to reinforce its monopoly with the support of that segment of “civil society” represented by the church)...it is the bureaucracy that is the crystallization of the management personnel that exercises coercive power and at a certain point becomes a caste.

The intellectuals are the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise:

1. The ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2. The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of...
society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.\textsuperscript{82}

A study of how the ideological structure of a ruling class is actually organised: that is, the material organisation meant to preserve, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological 'front'...The press is the most dynamic part of the ideological structure, but not the only one. Everything that directly or indirectly influences or could influence public opinion belongs to it: libraries, schools, associations and clubs of various kinds, even architecture, the layout of streets and their names...\textsuperscript{83}

The ‘intellectual’ segment of as society therefore assumes the non-militarized modes of leadership in civil society ensuring the population’s compliance and consent to various forms of cultural domination – Gramsci’s definition of the concept of hegemony. The intellectuals are active in political, social or ‘persuasive’ and ‘narrative’ roles in the hegemonic system and its associated apparatuses of consensus.\textsuperscript{84} They deal with ‘everything that directly or indirectly influences or could influence public opinion.’

This mechanism involves direct participation from the populace from whom this ‘spontaneous’ consent is elicited. In the realm of culture we might consider participation in communal religious ritual to be an example of this mechanism in action. This ensures that the values and norms of the ruling group, the intellectual caste working as the deputies of this coterie, penetrates downwards into the lower echelons of society, being adopted by the subject population as social norms or ‘common sense.’ The ruled therefore participate in their embedding within this system of dominance, an inherently dialectical relationship.\textsuperscript{85} Any elements who resist cooperating with this hegemonic construction can conversely be utilised within the system as negative symbols subjected to social stigma, demonisation and ostracisation.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{82} Gramsci, \textit{Prison Notebooks Volume III}, p 165.


\textsuperscript{86} Zucchetti, introduction to \textit{Antonio Gramsci and the Ancient World}, pp. 2-3.
Within the pages of the book of Jeremiah it is possible to discern traces of the operation of such a hegemonic system operating on a cultural level, the text being analysed as a cultural product emerging from a historical context - cultural hegemony. Cultural hegemony in Jeremiah is identifiable via the presence of a symbolic code, the components of which are explored in the following chapter.

That is not to say that Gramsci would have intended for his model of hegemony to be utilised in terms of a study of the ancient world, rather it is necessary that we are adopting this definition as ‘a tool to look into the complexity that brought a certain social formation to act together, and could transform our own questions about the sources, despite them being invariably written in a largely male upper-class milieu.’ This is something of a post-Marxist turn, moving away from the rigid essentialism earlier Marxist historiography has been so frequently accused of, and incorporating theoretical models from later 20th century Marxist philosophy alongside certain elements of poststructuralism, Foucault’s idea of the pervasive and diffuse nature of power for example.

3.5.3. Lefebvre

French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre does, at several points in his philosophical engagement with the human cognitive relationship with space offer treatments of the ancient world. In his 1972 book *Marxist Thought and the City*, particularly in that section where he treats of *Das Kapital* he offers up examples of phenomena from the ancient world, the city of Rome, specifically. It is the tripartite model of the human cognitive interaction with space as proposed in Lefebvre’s 1974 book *The Production of Space*, and later adoptions of the same by Soja and Havrelock, which are utilised in this research to enhance our examination of cultural hegemony in action in the book of Jeremiah.

Lefebvre proposes three levels at which the human cognitive relationship with space takes place; Spatial Practice, Representations of Space, and Representational Spaces (also translated by several scholars as ‘Spaces of Representation’):

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88 Zucchetti, ‘Hegemony, ideology, and ancient history,’ p. 359.
A conceptual triad has now emerged from our discussion…

Spatial Practice, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society’s relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance.

Representations of Space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations.

Representational Spaces, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of spaces than as a code of representational spaces). 90

Spatial theorist and geographer Edward Soja reframed Lefebvre’s conceptual triad in his own model of ‘Firstspace,’ ‘Secondspace,’ and ‘Thirdspace,’ with ‘Thirdspace’ standing as an analogue of Lefebvre’s ‘Representational Spaces:’

Social Space is not a thing, but a set of relations that are produced through praxis…I define Thirdspace as an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life…thirding produces what might best be called a cumulative trialectics that is radically open to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge. 91

I use Thirdspace to refer to a particular way of thinking about and interpreting socially produced space. It is a way of thinking that sees the spatiality of our lives, the human geographies in which we live, as having the same scope and critical significance as the historical and social dimensions of our lives. 92

A subsequent rendering of this tripartite formula in an explicitly biblical context is offered by Rachel Havrelock’s articulation of spatial politics in biblical texts in terms of the imperial, national, and local:

In the biblical context, imperial configurations of territory define the firstspace. The Assyrian and Babylonian empires are the most relevant to the cases at hand….The empires define the space where Israel and Judah take shape, setting up borders that local powers claim as national signifiers. As the states of Israel and Judah interact with imperial rule or strategize about defence, their military and political institutions engage in mimicry that capitulates and resists

empire at once. The space to be defended from empire becomes, in turn, the secondspace of national practice.\(^{93}\)

The symbolic code at certain times seeks to enforce a particular politics of space, offering certain ‘Representations of Space’ in the Lefebvrian sense. This is perhaps most obviously the case in Jer 35 where the Jerusalem temple performs the role of incongruous backdrop for the extraneous presence of the Rechabites. With regard to what Havrelock terms Secondspace ‘mimicry’ of imperial spatial practice, elements of Jer 29 and 40 are particularly obvious. What Havrelock identifies as the interaction of the institutions of the Judean state with imperial rule may be traced in the encouragement of subject Judean populations, both in Babylon and at Mizpah, to establish domestic spaces, households, built dwellings, and agricultural installations, for the benefit of the wider imperial economic system. As will be further elucidated in the relevant chapters, the ‘build-plant-marry’ of Jer 29 and the ‘return-dwell-harvest’ of Jer 40, may both be seen to function in this sense of Secondspace mimicry, reproducing on a more immediate level the conditions necessary for the success of the grander, more remote, Firstspace configurations of the territory of empire. Havrelock’s articulation of Secondspace in her study of the local domain and female power is particularly compatible with an exploration of instances of cultural hegemony as she follows Soja in identifying Secondspace as the site of ideology and discourse:

Where firstspace operates as maps, charts, and quantified tables, secondspace is primarily discursive. Ideology becomes material at this second level where order takes form and asserts its limits. Referring to the present case, I think of secondspace as the national dimension of space at which ideas of normative collective are enacted.\(^{94}\)

Lefebvre identifies the third element of his formula, Representational Spaces (espaces de la représentation), alternatively translated by several scholars as ‘spaces of representation,’ as both lived and living:

Representational Spaces: space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’. This is the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects... Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have


\(^{94}\) Havrelock, ‘Home at Last,’ p. 244.
their sources in history - in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people...Representational space is alive...It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations...95

Representational Spaces are the spaces of lived reality, the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users,' created through the active agent's symbolic use of a physical space and its associated objects.96

Lefebvre further highlights that a spatial element must be considered in discussing any characteristic system of ideas:

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology - the Judaeo-Christian one, say - if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle?...More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space.97

3.5.3.1. Power

Power, be that the control of the means of production or the distribution of scarce material resources, control over what activities are permitted to engender different spaces with meaning, or the exercise of power inherent in the creation and dissemination of artefacts of culture, informs every facet of this analysis of Jeremiah. As such it is necessary that the role of power, where it is exercised, competed for, its inherent instability, and where it unavoidably breaks down, be at the forefront of our consideration in the following discussion. This is by no means an alien approach in a biblical studies context, simply a more blatant articulation of the theoretical framework upon which the present argument is built.

Examinations of the Hebrew Bible via the hermeneutic lens of class have already been expertly performed.98 The existence of different socio-economic strata in the populations of the ancient world is clearly evident from the artistic, literary, and

95 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, pp. 39-42.
96 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 39.
97 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 44.
archaeological evidence. Acknowledging the existence of distinct groups within society, their social status determined by their access to economic and cultural resources, and their exercise of, or proximity to, power, is a prerequisite for an understanding of the concept of cultural hegemony which informs so much of the following discussion.

The symbolic code, various components of which will be discussed in the following chapter, is simply one facet of cultural hegemony at work in Jeremiah.60 This array of symbolic elements in the text is characterised as a code, not to imply any concealed message that demands to be deciphered, but plainly in the sense of a semiotic phenomenon with individual words and concepts prompting an inference on the part of the audience. Certainly, the examination of a symbolic code here is by no means an analysis of cultural hegemony in Jeremiah to the fullest extent, rather a treatment of a single aspect. The symbolic code as a single aspect of cultural hegemony in the present context is accessible via its reification in a written text, where its appearances, reiterations and cumulative effects can be readily charted. Thus, cultural hegemony is the end goal to which the means of the symbolic code are deployed. Because a Marxist, or properly post-Marxist theoretical positionality foregrounds these fundamental questions of power and offers a model of how to analyse efforts at hegemonic control via cultural production, it remains an appropriate school of thought from which to draw these heuristic instruments.

This thesis contends that the text of the book of Jeremiah, particularly in the narrative episodes examined here, utilises symbols taken from the wider cultural context to convey a message of adaptation and compliance to the new, post-crisis reality of Judean life under Neo-Babylonian suzerainty. Initially this chapter will provide a definition of ‘symbolic code.’ This groundwork done, it will be possible to identify the components of the symbolic code and to explain their potency before subsequent chapters treat the phenomenon of cultural hegemony at work in these narrative passages in greater depth. The specific instances in the book of Jeremiah where the phenomenon of cultural hegemony is apparent all relate to representations of communal settlement, agricultural participation, and spatial dynamics. There are recurring references to agricultural and domestic concepts and products; building, planting, hospitality, vineyards, fruit, private domains and public spaces. The present thesis aims to uncover and explore aspects of these recurring themes as a network of signifiers – a symbolic code.

The language of hegemony is preferable to that of ‘ideology’ in this instance as the latter fails to incorporate that vital element of power which hints at the motivation underlying the functioning of the symbolic code. Discussing the symbolic code identified here in terms of ‘ideology,’ rather than the more fulsome definition of hegemony, might risk reducing the present analysis to a simple commentary on artistic literary techniques. Conversely the idea of hegemony more accurately captures the diffuse, nonlinear, and multivalent aspects of the power matrices operating in this context. We can imagine the hegemonic environment, of which these narrative episodes in Jeremiah are but a small part, as an array of interdependent authoritative relationships, constantly shifting, contested, at risk of breaches and breakdowns. Rather, use of the terminology of ‘ideology’ throughout the present study will be confined within the definition offered by Louis Althusser: ‘Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.’

4.1. Cultural Hegemony

In the political theory of Antonio Gramsci, we find frequent, though scattered, references to a class of ‘intellectuals,’ a ‘caste’ which assumes the intellectual and moral leadership of civil society. It does this, he explains, by ensuring the population’s compliance and consent to the state through the use of various forms of cultural domination – hegemony.

…it was a certain unstable equilibrium among the classes due to the fact that certain categories of intellectuals (in the direct service of the state, especially the civil and military bureaucracy) were still too closely tied to the old ruling classes...In this sense, the church itself could become state, in which case the conflict would manifest itself as secular and secularizing civil society versus state-church (when the church has become an integral part of the state, of political society monopolized by a specific privileged group that embraces the church in order to reinforce its monopoly with the support of that segment of “civil society” represented by the church)...it is the bureaucracy that is the crystallization of the management personnel that exercises coercive power and at a certain point becomes a caste.100

Cultural hegemony is the main weapon in the arsenal of the intellectuals as the originators of cultural products. Through literature and art, the social discourse, including facets of the economic and political spheres, can be shaped, manipulated, and controlled without reliance upon, or indeed having any access to, methods of military aggression and violence. In biblical studies then, it is not difficult to imagine the ancient equivalent of Gramsci’s class of ‘intellectuals’ being among that tiny portion of the population with either the literacy, prophetic charisma, or religious dynamism – along with the resources – to engage in literary creativity, thus enjoying a near-monopoly on cultural production.

Even though the scribal intellectuals of ancient Judah would have exerted immediate influence, in practical terms, over only a very small subsection of the population, that subsection was a predominantly urban and influential elite. At the same time, the preservation of biblical texts and their ongoing centrality to Western cultural discourse has resulted in a situation where the text continues as a source of information about both the ideas and realities at play in the environment of ancient Judah. Regardless of the many unknowns vis-à-vis the dates and socio-historical contexts of composition, we are left with a literary resource that under critical

examination may display traces of the exercises in hegemony pursued by such a caste of 'intellectuals.'

The specific context of the book of Jeremiah also offers a landscape uniquely suited to the implementation of cultural hegemony. The text of Jeremiah contains an account of the fall of the kingdom of Judah; the end of the Davidic monarchy and any monopoly of violence that royal house may have enjoyed. Cultural hegemony then may be seen ranging through the text as one of the few remaining modes of social control available to a seriously depleted elite intellectual caste. Thus, the symbolic code - as an instrument of cultural hegemony - comes into its own in portions of the text devoted to the encouragement of adaptation and survival in the post-collapse context.

It is worthwhile then to examine the selected episodes of Jeremiah in terms of them being examples of cultural hegemony in practice; to discern how various elements of these texts may work in concert to reinforce a particular message. This thesis will examine the presence of a subtle web of signifiers, an array of symbols covertly signposting a particular, and relatively coherent, viewpoint. This symbolic code functions within a narrative framework that encourages popular compliance by appealing to a deep-seated set of cultural and social values, centred around the concepts of domestic establishment and agricultural productivity.

4.2. Symbolic Code

The idea of a symbolic code has its origins in Semiotics; the study of signs and the mechanisms by which they produce meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure characterised the semiotic phenomenon as that relationship between 'signifier' and 'signified.'101 In Saussure's articulation of the phenomenon then the 'signifier' is the word, phrase or symbol present in the text and the 'signified' is that array of cognitive processes elicited in the reader as a result. In simple terms a red traffic light, for instance, is a single signifier producing a number of associated signifieds, e.g. stop, brake, danger, etc.

The Hebrew פרי ('fruit'), as it appears in the biblical text is a signifier which, depending on a number of factors including the cultural background of the reader and

the literary context within which it appears, then produces a potentially infinite range of signifieds, a number of which are listed below:

פרי ('fruit') =

an agricultural product with associated religious and economic values –

Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruits… (Leviticus 25:3)

All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30)

an item fit for human consumption with nutritive, life sustaining, pleasurable aspects -

And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. (Genesis 1:29)

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its fragrance be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. (Song of Songs 4:16)

fertility and childbearing -

Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

a promised land –

And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.” (Numbers 13:27)

a locus of temptation and sin –

The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12)
In a biblical studies context therefore the signifier פרי (‘fruit’), a single word, may prompt an inference on the part of the audience incorporating any number of the above signifieds, and many more. We may consider the semiotic phenomenon as an algebraic expression, as articulated by Umberto Eco:

…”a sign is an $x$ standing for a $y$ which is absent, and the process which leads the interpreter from $x$ to $y$ is inferential in nature.”

‘Symbolic Code,’ in this sense, can be understood as that matrix of signifiers employed in the text of Jeremiah to elicit an array of cognitive responses (signifieds) in the audience. The symbolic code operates to transmit and promote a specific ideological standpoint, thus fulfilling the purpose of cultural hegemony for which that code has been employed.

Cultural theorist Mieke Bal offers a useful definition of codes and their semiotic functioning in her study of the murder of Sisera in the book of Judges, *Murder and Difference* (1988). Bal’s expertise in Semiotics, combined with her history of scholarly engagement with biblical texts, make her methodological approach compatible with the present research. In *Murder and Difference* Bal explains that the constituent elements of a code are drawn from reality, and that these codes contain the biases of the interested power groups which construct and utilise them. Thus, Bal emphasises the role of cultural power dynamics in the formation and functioning of codes:

Because codes are anchored in social life, and specifically in that of a particular group, they are inevitably biased by the interests of that group…Bias determined by and serving an interest exerts, along with the restrictions inherent in the functioning of codes, a real cultural power. The groups in power have the power over signs. They possess the codes; they determine which meanings are permitted and which meanings are prohibited, according to the interests that are served by this legislation…those in power are obliged to employ all possible means to affirm and reaffirm their grip on the codes they control…”

Bal explains the compatibility of this articulation of a code with the concept of theme. The code is not confined to repeated instances of single words or a set of formulaic phrases but can incorporate a number of concepts such as ideology, power dynamics, and narrative scenarios, all coalescing as theme.

But why...make use of this concept [code] rather than another, for example, ideology, or the unconscious, or positions of power,

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semantic field, or narrative scenario, or what have you? Because the concept of code, especially if it is understood with the particular emphases I have lent it, allows all these other notions to be joined, and to be integrated within the social mechanism of language... The concept of code, which is semiotic, is easily related to that of theme, which is semantic; the first describes how the second functions. 104

The present study of a matrix of signifiers at work in certain narrative segments of Jeremiah will likewise approach that array of symbolic elements as functioning as part of a code. To borrow Bal’s phrasing the code operates semiotically to facilitate the semantic functioning of theme. In the episodes of the book of Jeremiah under discussion here there is evidence of a code, conveying a theme, or a set of interrelated themes, all related to domestic establishment and agricultural productivity. That code will be interpreted as an instrument of cultural hegemony at work in the text. It is now necessary to identify the various constituent elements of this symbolic code, where they appear in the text of Jeremiah and what message is perhaps being transmitted via these repeated instances of cultural hegemony.

The example of the multivalent signifier פרי (‘fruit’), with a relatively small number of associated biblical inferences offered above, is one element present in the code at work in these portions of Jeremiah. Fruit, crops, gardens, harvest, planting, oil, and wine all play a role in the theme of agricultural productivity and participation, alongside the associated constituent elements of the themes of domestic establishment, hospitality, household spaces, building, dwelling, domain, and kinship which likewise play a role.

4.3. Components of the Symbolic Code

As discussed above, the symbolic code at work in these sections of the book of Jeremiah relies on elements drawn from agricultural life, household and domestic spaces and practices, including the rendering of those same domestic concepts in national and supranational constructions, e.g. the king as head of the national household, the temple as the dwelling place of God, etc. Functioning as components of this symbolic code are recurring references to agricultural and domestic concepts and products: building, planting, hospitality, vineyards, wine, fruits, oil, harvest, private and public spaces and the transitions between each, invitation, entrance, and hospitality, guest and host.

104 Bal, Murder and Difference, pp. 5-6.
4.3.1. Torah as a Source

Logically, the first area to examine in our search for the wellspring of these symbols and their attendant norms and values within the biblical worldview should be the Torah. Turning to the Torah however is not unproblematic. A key subdiscipline in Jeremiah studies is that branch of scholarship which interrogates the relationship between Jeremiah and the Torah, and the literary relationship between Jeremiah and the book of Deuteronomy, or indeed a proto-Deuteronomy, in particular. Space does not allow for a full discussion of the variety of scholarly positions held on the relationships between the book of Jeremiah in its present form(s), and the Torah in general, or the book of Deuteronomy specifically. Suffice it to say that a unified and widely accepted theory continues to elude us.105

William Holladay argues for both Deuteronomy and Jeremiah showing signs of mutual influence on each other. His argument is based on a number of factors, including several parallels between Jeremiah and elements of the legal core in chapters 12 to 26 of Deuteronomy.106 In terms of the influence of Deuteronomy, or a possible proto-Deuteronomy, on the text of Jeremiah, Holladay highlights several Deuteronomic laws alluded to in Jeremiah: remarriage after divorce in Deut 24:1-4 and Jer 3:1; prohibition of the destruction of fruit trees in Deut 20:19-20 obliquely referred to in Jer 6:6; parallel phraseology in the references to worship of alien deities in both Deut 12:2 and Jer 2:20, shared elements in the summary of the prophetic function in Deut 18 and the call narrative of Jeremiah in Jer 1:4-10; and the reoccurrence in Jer 32:21-22 of what Von Rad identified as a Deuteronomic credal statement in Deut 26:5b-9.107

At the same time, Holladay identifies instances of Jeremianic influence on later layers of Deuteronomy, particularly chapter 28. Deuteronomy 28:48-52 in its heralding a ravenous foreign oppressor in the form of an ancient nation of unknown language, recalls a near identical description in Jer 5:15-17, and the iron yoke of Jer 28:14. With these indications of influence, between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, pointing in two


106 Holladay, ‘Elusive Deuteronomists, Jeremiah, and Proto-Deuteronomy,’ p. 64.

opposite directions at the same time, no definitive answer is offered in the present thesis as to the nature of the literary relationship between the two.

Acknowledging the limits of our present knowledge of such a relationship does not preclude our acknowledging that some form of literary influence between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy does exist. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest an environment in which that set of religio-social norms now enshrined in the Torah, particularly in Deuteronomy, was formed and promoted; an environment which also influenced the formation and composition of the text of the book of Jeremiah as we now encounter it. While the present interpretive effort is not reliant on the presence of components of the symbolic code outside the text of Jeremiah, it remains helpful to identify these elements at work in other foundational biblical texts, such as Deuteronomy, in order to reinforce an argument as to their potency and widespread acceptance within Judean society at the time of the fall of Jerusalem and in the decades that followed.

Deuteronomy 20 in particular offers itself as a helpful site from which to launch our discussion of the key elements of the symbolic code, thereby setting our examination of these components within the wider cognitive milieu of a Torah text. However, we must acknowledge that the operation of these components of the symbolic code in the text of Jeremiah may possibly precede the instances within which they appear in Deuteronomy.

4.3.2. Build-Plant-Marry

In Deut 20:5-7 three key activities are cited as reasons to excuse a man from battle:

And the officers will speak unto the people, saying:

‘who is the man that has built a house and not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.

And who is the man that has planted a vineyard and not made use of its fruit? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in the battle and another man make use of its fruit.

And who is the man that has betrothed a woman and not taken her [in marriage]? let him go and return to his house lest he die in the battle and another man take her [in marriage]. (Deut 20:5-7)
Thus, the culmination of building, planting, and betrothal are to be achieved before a man’s life may be risked in military activity. These are all activities associated with the establishment of a settlement or household. Indeed, the phrase יישהו לביתו (‘let him return to his house’) is repeated in all three scenarios, thereby tying house dedication, the use of the fruit of one’s vineyard, and marriage consummation, together under the heading of household-associated activities. Adele Berlin highlights how the same functions of build-plant-marry also appear in Jeremiah’s advice to the exiles in the letter quoted in Jer 29, identifying the appearance of this build-plant-marry pattern as a Deuteronomic allusion.

Berlin’s assumption of the indebtedness of Jer 29 to Deut 20 is not necessary to the present interpretive task. Nevertheless, the conjunction of similar sets of components, central to the symbolic code identified in the narrative episodes of Jeremiah under consideration, across several instances in Deuteronomy is noteworthy. To the legislation proclaimed in Deut 20 we must add the inversion of these same build-plant-marry ideals in the adverse scenario of Deut 28. In a passage concerned with military defeat, divinely ordained as a consequence of disobedience, these same elements, albeit in the order marry-build-plant, become sites of prospective refusal and failure:

You shall betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, and you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, and you shall not use the fruit of it. (Deut 28:30)

These elements, build-plant-marry, all appear, either individually or in combination, in a variety of instances throughout the book of Jeremiah, notably in a build-plant pair, which Louis Stulman identified as a ‘promissory motif’:

See I appoint you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to tear down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. (Jer 1:10)

I will set my eye upon them for good. I will cause them to return to this land and I will build them, and I will not destroy, I will plant them and not pluck up. (Jer 24:6)

And it will be that as I have watched over them to pluck up and to tear down, to overthrow and to destroy, and to bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant; a declaration of the Lord. (Jer 31:28)

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4.3.3. Fruit

As highlighted in the use of פרי (‘fruit’) above as an example of a signifier with a multiplicity of attendant signified concepts attached to it, this element of the symbolic code has a number of associated connotations within biblical literature. Notions of obedience and blessings of abundance are particularly associated with the growth and harvest of fruit in the Torah. This is seen for example in the Levitical legislation regarding first-fruit offerings and tithes, and repeated characterisations of a promised land, fertile and rich in resources. While space does not allow here for a comprehensive exploration of all fruit-related connotations in the biblical literature, the attention paid to fruit production in the context of warfare, briefly acknowledged in the discussion of Deut 20 and 28 above, is particularly noteworthy.

In Deut 20:19-20 a prohibition is stated, proscribing the destruction of fruit trees during a siege:\textsuperscript{110}

> When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field men that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down… Deut 20:19-20

Setting aside well-known moral and ethical interpretations there is also an implicit pragmatic economic sense to the preservation of horticultural resources in a subject territory. Fruit in the worldview of the Ancient Near East is not simply a fortuitous consequence of the actions of a benevolent deity providing ‘every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit’ (Gen 1:29). Far from being a wild, uncultivated, food source, fruit farming is a central pillar of the ancient economy. Figs, dates, and apricots, all varieties of cultivated fruit widely grown in the eastern Mediterranean and Levant were essential economic products.\textsuperscript{111} Little wonder then that a conquering army, laying siege to a city, should be encouraged to preserve fruit trees from destruction.


This pronouncement in Deut 20 may also be in reaction to the implicit threat of tree destruction found for example in propagandistic Assyrian royal inscriptions and implied also in the condemnation of Jerusalem in Jer 6:6:  

Daily, he inflicts upon them devastation.  
The king storms against the lofty (?) Qumanian lands.  
All of their cult centers he conquers completely.  
Their lofty cities he smashes to the last one.  
From the fields of their sustenance he rips out the grain.  
He cuts down the fruit, the orchard he destroys.  
Over their mountain lands he causes a Deluge to pass.  

(LKA 63 (reverse) lines: 12-18)

For thus say the Lord of hosts:  
Cut down her trees and pour forth upon Jerusalem a siege-mound,  
She is the city appointed for punishment; all is oppression within her.  
(Jer 6:6)

Considering the vast economic value of fruit cultivation, Steven Cole’s argument for the motif of orchard destruction in Mesopotamian imperial propaganda as a literary trope used in a hyperbolic sense, is eminently sensible. Cole points out that groves of producing fruit trees represented a valuable resource to the conquering power, not least as a potential source of tax revenue. With this in mind his suggestion of a slow systematic destruction of individual trees, as an element of Assyrian siegecraft, is to be preferred to assumptions of patently illogical wholesale wanton destruction.

As an element of a symbolic code which operates by appealing to a set of norms, centred around the concepts of settlement establishment and agricultural productivity, fruit plays a vital role in two episodes:

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Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. (Jer 29:5)

...gather wine and summer fruits and oil and store them in your vessels. (Jer 40:10)

In both of these instances fruit cultivation is highlighted as a central element of the ideal behaviour demanded of the Judeans, whether living in exile in Babylon or gathering under Gedaliah’s stewardship in Mizpah.

4.3.4. Hospitality

The norms and values of hospitality are not discussed in any systematic manner in the Bible. As Gudme highlights in a number of her studies on the concept in a biblical context, it appears the associated conventions about the role of host and the treatment of guests are largely assumed on the part of the biblical writers:

The Hebrew Bible is not particularly interested in educating its readers on the finer details of hospitality, presumably because the authors assumed that their readers would know how such a central social mechanism worked...the authors may invert and play around with cultural norms on purpose, because they wish to achieve a certain literary or dramatic effect.115

Gudme adopts the parameters laid out by the anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers in his study of hospitality in the Mediterranean context. As a basic framework the parameters of hospitality used by Gudme in her assessment of the biblical phenomenon are as follows:

Alternating inequality.
Host and guest must honour each other.
The guest must accept what is offered and must not take what is not offered.
The host must care for his guest and offer the best of what he has.
The host must protect his guest and his honour.116

Hospitable practices, in particular commensality, are a means of neutralising potential hostility on the part of the guest, in their liminal status as stranger or outsider.

to the home territory or domestic domain of the host. This element of potential threat and its neutralisation is articulated by Pitt Rivers:

The stranger belongs to the “extra-ordinary” world, and the mystery surrounding him allies him to the sacred and makes him a suitable vehicle for the apparition of the god, the revelation of a mystery...The inversion implies a transformation from hostile stranger, hostis, into guest, hospes...from one whose hostile intentions are assumed to one whose hostility is laid in abeyance.  

The law of hospitality is founded upon ambivalence. It imposes order through an appeal to the sacred, makes the unknown knowable, and replaces conflict by reciprocal honor. It does not eliminate the conflict altogether but places it in abeyance and prohibits its expression.

In two of the narrative episodes explored in the present thesis these dynamics of hospitality come into play. The parameters of reciprocity and safety, invitation and acceptance are negotiated and indeed negated both in Jeremiah’s faulty hosting of the Rechabites, their accompanying failure in the role of guest in Jer 35, and the complete rupture of convention, particularly with regard to commensality (meal sharing), which happens in the incident of murder at table in the assassination of Gedaliah in Jer 41.

Aside from the key idea of the, at least temporary, postponement of hostilities in the context of hospitality there is also the important question of space, specifically each host’s domain as a locus of power or control, as the setting for these incidents. This provides some additional context for the multiplicity of severe breaches of social convention which for example attend Jael’s treatment of Sisera in Judg 4 as articulated by Bal:

The man who was once so powerful in the superiority of his chariots must now ask for water, the minimal element of survival, from a woman...What Jael offers him are the basic attributes of maternity: protection, rest, and milk. These attributes, which have the power to restore, mark the bottom line to which Sisera has descended. He can go no farther; the door is closed upon his public life, upon that existence where honor and the level of civilization counted.

Likewise, in Gudme’s analysis of numerous incidents of hospitality in the biblical context, it is those where women are active agents of invitation which present the most disturbing breaches of the social code:

118 Pitt-Rivers, From Hospitality to Grace, p. 178.
119 Bal, Murder and Difference, p. 121.
Sisera himself is to blame for his unhappy ending. He should never have gone to Yael’s tent in the first place. Nor should he have accepted an invitation offered to him by a woman. Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 is another horror example. She is forced to offer hospitality to a stranger (David) because her husband, Nabal, is too inhospitable and too foolish to do so himself.\footnote{Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, ‘Med Døden Til Bords: Gæstfrihed Og Kvinder I Det Gamle Testamente,’ Mad og Drikke i Bibelsk Litteratur, Forum for Bibelsk Eksege, 19 (2015), pp. 26-53, p. 26.}

...if you are foolish enough or rude enough to seek and accept hospitality from a woman, then you only have yourself to blame if you end up with your head nailed to the ground.\footnote{Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, ‘Death at the Hand of a Woman: Hospitality and Gender in the Hebrew Bible,’ in Gender and Methodology in the Ancient near East: Approaches from Assyriology and Beyond, ed. by Stephanie Lynn Budin, et al. (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona Edicions, 2019), pp. 23-33, p. 27.}

Incidents where women take on the typically male role of host are subversions of the normal expectations of domestic and household space;

...it is the prerogative of the male head of household to provide for and protect his household. It is his right and responsibility, therefore, to serve as host and make the initial invitation of hospitality. His wife and daughter(s) may serve the guest as well, but only at the behest of their husband or father. Independent action on their part would be a breach of custom.\footnote{Victor H. Matthews, ‘Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4,’ Biblical Theology Bulletin, 21. 1 (1991), pp. 13-21, p. 14.}

4.4. Space

Cultural hegemony is an exercise of power and as a consequence the symbolic code as a mechanism of it has an impact on how spaces are constructed and utilised; ‘Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power.’\footnote{Michel Foucault, The Foucault Reader (New York, NY: Random House, 1984), p. 252.} In his 1974 book The Production of Space, Marxist philosopher Lefebvre proposes three levels at which the human cognitive interaction with space takes place; Spatial Practice, Representations of Space, and Representational Spaces (also translated by several scholars as ‘Spaces of Representation’):

This is all predicated on Lefebvre’s fundamental assertion that the meaning attached to a space is created by human activity. Thus, spaces and understandings of them are produced and evolve over time via their utilisation by active human agents.\footnote{Stuart Elden, ‘There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space,’ Radical Philosophy Review, 10. 2 (2007), pp. 101-16, pp. 108, 11.}
Boer posits Lefebvre’s model as a dialectic relationship where spaces, and the ideological and symbolic meanings attached to them, are produced and reproduced according to the function assigned to them:

For Lefebvre, space is not a given but is produced in the context of modes of production. Thus space is produced in terms of that mode of production, and also the specific acts of production of space determine the nature of that mode.\(^{125}\)

Boer applies Lefebvre’s triad to the production of space in 1 Sam 1-2, highlighting the tension present in the narrative between the official structures of the Shiloh sanctuary and the alternative space of Hannah’s womb as a Representational Space:

If we pick up Lefebvre again, we find that in the production of sacred space, the realm of nature and of women’s bodies is suppressed and removed from the domain of shrine, temple and also city. But this space, what he calls absolute space, does not disappear; rather, it retreats into the interior, into the enclosed spaces of caves, nooks and crannies, alleyways and of course bodies. The womb becomes a prime site for such an investment of alternative space, outside the bodies of males, of sanctuaries and cities…

In 1 Samuel 1-2, the sanctuary at Shiloh initially appears as a representation of space.

Hannah’s womb appears as a space of representation, and therefore resistance.\(^ {126}\)

Havrelock articulates the ‘local’ of her Imperial-National-Local triad in similar terms. For Havrelock it is in this local domain that female agency is creatively exercised.

In Lefebvre’s formulation, ‘spaces of representation’ constitute ‘the dominated - and hence passively experienced space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate,’ yet Soja sees thirdspace as ever at work testing the limits of spatialized power and contesting the absolute nature of its projections…

Thirdspace results from the practice of everyday life, from utopian imaginings, from artistic enactments, and from the physical experiences of the first two spaces. I identify thirdspace as existing on a local level, which I define largely in terms of water systems. At this scale of space, the presence, needs, and survival of everyone living in a particular locality become apparent. Where firstspace positions people according to hierarchies of dominance and submission, and secondspace identifies certain groups as marginal in order to produce a collective, a localized thirdspace includes

\(^{125}\) Boer, *Sacred Economy*, p. 83 n. 3.

everyone drawing from the same well. The local, in the sense of stable, authentic traditions unaffected by history, has long been associated with women.\textsuperscript{127}

Both Boer’s study of the creation of alternative sacred space via imaginative resistance in 1 Sam and Havrelock’s articulation of the local domain as a potential centre of female power, centre around concepts of necessity, survival, and communal resources:

It is as though the wombs are set over against the sanctuary, the other pole around which this story oscillates. Both hidden and foregrounded, Peninah’s fertile womb contrasts with Hannah’s barren womb. It is the cause of their conflict, a marker of Hannah’s economic superfluity (Elkanah gives her but one portion), and the focus of her prayer in the sanctuary...The womb becomes a prime site for such an investment of alternative space, outside the bodies of males, of sanctuaries and cities, it yet remains crucial to the pattern of sacred commerce...\textsuperscript{128}

I define home not only as the household or the domestic, but also in terms of local systems of circulation. Such local systems are intimately tied to resources like water that require management and allocation; decisions about the use and distribution of vital resources cut across gender divisions. When observed from a local perspective, resources are the primary assets of a place that often assume symbolic meaning in ritual...domestic space interacts with other spatial scales including the communal, the national, and the imperial.\textsuperscript{129}

Necessity, survival, and communal resources, these same concepts inform many of the basic elements of the symbolic code. Throughout the narrative portions of Jeremiah analysed here the ideas of household, agricultural productivity, hospitality and its inherent power dynamics, domestic, private and public spaces are promoted and disseminated in order to broadcast a message of accommodation, counselling adaptation in order to ensure survival within the new reality of Neo-Babylonian suzerainty. The same holds true for the final narrative passage in this examination, Jer 44. It is in this narrative episode where those pillars of the symbolic code, the normative values enshrined in the build-plant-marry message encounter an imaginative subversion and Egypt is rendered a Representational Space.

\textsuperscript{127} Havrelock, ‘Home at Last,’ pp. 244-45.
\textsuperscript{128} Boer, \textit{Marxist Criticism of the Hebrew Bible}, ch. 5.
\textsuperscript{129} Havrelock, ‘Home at Last,’ p. 245.
It is in Jer 44 that the symbolic code, present as an exercise in cultural hegemony, falters and ultimately breaks down, because of its encounter with resistance and inversion on the part of the assembled Judean women; worshippers of the ‘Queen of Heaven.’ In the persistent worship activity of the women, their declarative rejection of the prophet Jeremiah’s condemnatory perspective on this behaviour, and their self-assured justification of an apparently longstanding communal worship tradition, alternative sacred space is created in the new and unfamiliar territory of self-imposed exile in Egypt. Thus, the women of Jer 44 are active agents, wielding the power of definition, imposing meaning on the space they occupy by their actions, creating a Representational Space. Havrelock’s assertion that ‘one indicates that she belongs to a place by moving through it in specified ways and by acting as if she belongs there,’ is of distinct relevance in this case, where the Queen of Heaven worshippers successfully resist Jeremiah’s attempts to chastise them into silence and inactivity.  

4.5. Symbolic Code in Jeremiah (Jer 29, 32, 35, 40, 41, and 44)

The elements of the symbolic code in the narrative episodes of Jeremiah under discussion all relate to ideas of household, agricultural productivity, hospitality and its inherent power dynamics, domestic, private, and public spaces. Throughout these narrative portions in Jeremiah the different social expectations, conventions, norms, and values associated with these ideas are broadcast via this symbolic code to convey a specific, conservative, message of accommodation to the new imperial reality in post-collapse Judean society. The recurring theme of accommodation, the encouragement to willingly participate and consent to being inscribed within the wider Neo-Babylonian imperial system appears throughout the narrative material as this set of powerful and rhetorically effective ideas. The symbolic code displays a set of ideals to readers in order to exhort the audience to adopt strategies of accommodation and adaptation in order to survive, and consequently reframe, the contemporary crisis of invasion and exile. The present task is to identify what these constituent elements of the code are and where they appear in the narrative segments of chapters 29, 32, 35, 40, 41 and 44.

Jer 29 represents an exchange of letters between Jeremiah and the population of Judean deportees already in exile in Babylon since the removal of King Jehoiachin in 597 BCE. The narrative traces communications back and forth between Jerusalem and

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130 Havrelock, ‘Home at Last,’ p. 244.
Babylon, including reference to the conflicting positions of Jeremiah and the figures of Ahab b. Kolaiah, Zedekiah b. Maaseiah, and Shemaiah the Nechlamite, who dismiss Jeremiah’s instruction to the exiles to settle in for a lengthy period of residence in Babylon.

Key to an examination of the constituent elements of the symbolic code in chapter 29 are the three verses of Jer 29:5-7.

Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and bear sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to men, and they will bear sons and daughters, and increase there and do not diminish. And seek the welfare of the city to which I have sent ye into exile there and pray for her sake unto the LORD for in her good will be your good. (Jer 29:5-7)

In this small amount of text, we have reference to home building, family establishment, marriage, gardens and fruit. This arrangement of so many of the main elements of the symbolic code; domestic space, agricultural and consequently economic participation, family formation, along with the ideological potency of fruit as product, sustenance, and reward all serve to demonstrate the symbolic code at work. Jeremiah 29:7, where the exiles are encouraged to ‘seek the welfare of the city,’ highlights an underlying message of accommodation. The exiles in Babylon are encouraged to actively inscribe themselves in the Neo-Babylonian imperial system, including their occupation and consequently their creation of space, constituting private domestic domains from which they are to contribute to the public imperial project; ‘build houses,’ ‘plant gardens.’ This exhortation to ‘build – plant – marry’ calls for the recreation of the space of the typical biblical household, the aspirational norm found in Deut 20. The exiles addressed in the letter are encouraged to create agriculturally productive domestic spaces in their new surroundings via these same activities. These efforts are related explicitly to a desire for ‘the welfare of the city,’ all to comply with and participate in the Neo-Babylonian imperial economic project.

In Jer 32 a divine word informs the prophet of the impending arrival of his kinsman Hanamel, and the fact that he will invite Jeremiah to enact his right of redemptive purchase with regard to a plot of land in their ancestral hometown of Anathoth.

And I purchased the field from Hanamel the son of my uncle which was in Anathoth and I weighed out the silver to him, seventeen shekels of silver... And I gave the scroll of purchase to Baruch b. Neriah b. Maheseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle, and in the
sight of the witnesses, the signatories of the scroll of purchase, and in the sight of all the Judeans, the ones dwelling in the court of the guard... For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; ‘Again houses, and fields and vineyards will be bought in this land.’ (Jer 32:9, 12, 15)

The narrative of this purchase serves to inscribe the character of Jeremiah firmly within the symbolic code. The transaction enacted between Hanamel and Jeremiah is redolent with religious, social, and cultural custom and demonstrates the kinship-household institutional form at work. By his conduct in this episode, and via the characterisation of this land redemption transaction as divinely endorsed, Jeremiah is presented as participating in a clan based system of agricultural productivity. The prophet is thus incorporated into the semiotic realm of fruit, crops, gardens, harvest, planting, oil, and wine.

Chapter 35 recounts the episode of Jeremiah’s invitation to the Rechabites to the temple. Ideas of space, and the power dynamics inherent therein, play a significant role in the treatment of the Rechabites as nomadic outsiders, incongruously appearing as a culturally alien presence at the Jerusalem temple, the centre of political and religious life for the sedentary Judean majority. Jer 35 is the only point in the entire Hebrew Bible where the social and cultural identity of this obscure kinship group is expressed:

And they said: ‘No we will not drink wine for Jonadab son of Rechab our father commanded us saying: “You will not drink wine, you and your sons, for all time. And a house you will not build, and seed you will not sow and vineyard you will not plant, and this shall not be for you, for in tents will you dwell all your days, in order that you will live many days on the face of the land upon which you there sojourn” ...’’ (Jer 35:6-7)

In this Rechabite statement of identity the central norms operating in the symbolic code, the construction of permanent built dwellings and engagement in agriculture and viniculture, are highlighted by their negation. The Rechabites do not function within the covenantal relationship with the Lord. Rather they are presented describing themselves as גרים (‘sojourners’) disconnected from the land which so vitally informs the normative covenant-theology of the book of Jeremiah:

And I brought you into the land of Carmel to eat her fruit and good things. But you came and you defiled my land, and my inheritance you set up for an abhorrence (Jer 2:7)
If you will surely remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull down, I will plant you and not pluck up, for I rue the evil which I have done to you. (Jer 42:10)

In the Rechabites’ refusal to drink the wine offered them we see a subversion of the norms of hospitality. The conventional behaviours expected of host and guest are undermined in this episode, a disturbance which, akin to their negation of sedentary domestic establishment, leads to a further highlighting of elements of the symbolic code. The nomadic lifestyle of the Rechabites thereby represents a threat to the foundational norms of the symbolic code. Hence the Rechabites are exoticized and subsequently instrumentalised in order to reinforce the central message of cultural hegemony.

A potent moment in Jer 40, where the symbolic code can be seen operating very clearly, is in Gedaliah’s exhortation to the Judeans gathered at Mizpah, and the account of their subsequent prosperity there. Clear echoes of Jeremiah’s directions to the exiles in Babylon, in his letter of chapter 29, are present:

And Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan swore to them, and to their men saying: ‘Do not fear to serve the Chaldeans, return ye to the land and serve ye the king of Babylon, and it will go well with ye. And I, behold I will stay in Mizpah to serve before the Chaldeans who came unto us and ye will collect wine and summer fruit and oil and place it in your vessels and dwell ye in your cities which ye have seized’...And all the Judeans returned from all the places where they had been there dispersed, and they came to the land of Judah, unto Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and they collected wine and summer fruit, a great abundance. (Jer 40:9-12)

Here we have an idyllic representation of Gedaliah’s establishment at Mizpah, again counselling agricultural participation and advertising resultant prosperity. In the instruction to return to the land and settle in recently seized cities, the Judeans are enticed to adopt an attitude of compliance, adapting to the new circumstances of Neo-Babylonian imperial control in Judah.

Similar to their exiled compatriots in Babylon, addressed in Jer 29, the community at Mizpah is to engage in agricultural productivity and can expect stability and sustenance. The prosperity which is highlighted in Jer 40 as of immediate good to the subject population, no doubt was of far greater benefit to the overarching imperial system of land exploitation enacted by the Neo-Babylonians, and tacitly supported by the symbolic code here and at various other points in the book of Jeremiah. The population which gathers under Gedaliah’s stewardship at Mizpah is encouraged to
participate in agricultural productivity in a new context under Neo-Babylonian control mediated through the figure of Gedaliah himself. The symbolic trappings of domestic stability and security, and agricultural prosperity which are loaded onto this scenario serve to support the ‘Firstspace’ imperial spatial practice of the Neo-Babylonians.

Jer 40 sets the scene of Mizpah as an idyllic realisation of the norms and values encapsulated in the symbolic code, with the Judean population successfully incorporated into the wider imperial economic system, the Neo-Babylonian appointee Gedaliah overseeing proceedings. This is all thrown into disarray by the disruptive events of the following chapter. Gedaliah’s assassination at the hands of Ishmael b. Nethaniah represents a rupture in the stable norm of productivity established at Mizpah. Ishmael’s killing of Gedaliah is a subversion of the fundamental principles of hospitality, the immediate context within which it takes place. Despite a prior warning that Ishmael seeks to harm him, Gedaliah conforms to the conventional behaviour of a host, and his guest violates the implicit tranquillity of Gedaliah’s domain, at the very moment of commensality:

As they ate bread together there at Mizpah, Ish’mael b. Nethani’ah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedali’ah b. Ahi’kam b. Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land. (Jer 41:1-2)

By being shown to be explicitly in breach of the values and norms of hospitality enshrined in the code, and responsible for the collapse of that prosperous agricultural system likewise promoted by the same code, Ishmael’s action openly contravenes the dominant viewpoint of cultural hegemony at work in Jer 41. This is further reinforced by his massacre of the pilgrims the following day.

As the idyllic scene of abundant harvests of wine, summer fruit, and oil in Jer 40 offered an image of what compliance within the newly established imperial system in Judah could offer, the murderous rupture and denigration of that idyll now initiates a tragic denouement. The remnant who flee to Egypt in the aftermath of Gedaliah’s death are roundly condemned for failing to maintain trust in the system of willing compliance and participation demanded by the symbolic code:

‘If you will surely remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull down, I will plant you and not pluck up, for I rue the evil which I have done to you. Do not be afraid before the face of the king of Babylon whom you fear, before his face do not fear him,’ declares the Lord. ‘For I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand. I will give you mercy, and he will be merciful to you and he will cause you to remain in your land. But, if you say ‘we will not stay in this
land," without hearkening to the voice of the Lord your God...It will be that the sword which you fear will strike you there in the land of Egypt and the famine which you dread will follow hard upon you to Egypt and there you will die.' (Jer 42:10-16)

That remnant population subsequently settled in Egypt become a target of execration in chapter 44.

A study of Jer 44 serves as an important control in the present interpretive endeavour. Here the symbolic code, as a tool of cultural hegemony, is deployed but meets resistance and inversion, ultimately breaking down. Jeremiah challenges, and is ultimately rejected by, a group of Judeans worshipping the Queen of Heaven while residing in Egypt. This conflict is the clearest expression of a possible counterargument to the elemental norms encapsulated in the symbolic code we have seen promoted in a variety of ways in the previous chapters under discussion. Here we explore how Jeremiah's interaction with the Queen of Heaven worshippers attempts to reinforce the message of this symbolic code, yet ultimately fails. The Queen of Heaven worshippers' argument is convincing and displays its own internal logic. Alongside considering the cultural-historical basis for this textual representation, an exploration of Jer 44 must also address the variety of power dynamics, both familial and spatial, expressed in this episode.

For we will certainly do all the word which has gone out from our mouths, to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out to her drink offerings. For when we did, ourselves and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, we had enough bread and good things occurred and we did not see evil. And from the time that we ceased to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out to her drink offerings, we have lacked everything and by the sword and by famine we have been consumed. And when we were sacrificing to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out to her drink offerings, was it apart from our husbands, that we made cakes to model her and poured out to her drink offerings? (Jer 44:17-19)

The female respondents to Jeremiah mention fathers, kings, princes, and husbands, all figures drawn from male domestic and communal power hierarchies. The reference to husbands in particular implies a willing complicity on the part of male heads of households in what the symbolic code seeks to portray as heterodox worship. The repeated reference in the text to the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem illustrates a readiness on the part of Queen of Heaven worshippers, both past and
present, to occupy public space and to hence define it according to their utilisation. This activity can be interpreted as an assertion of spatial control on their part.

Furthermore, the interplay between the symbolic values underlying the worship practices described, and the prosperity, sustenance and domestic serenity connotations successfully utilised in the symbolic code in the previous episodes, must also be addressed. Worship of the Queen of Heaven involves making cakes and pouring out drink offerings, transforming the open public space into the domestic realm of the goddess. In this instance provision and consumption are characterised as appropriate and life affirming, a stark contrast to the treacherous murder at table scenario related in the episode of Gedaliah's killing. Discussion of the episode of Jeremiah’s conflict with the Queen of Heaven worshippers illustrates a reframing of core principles of the symbolic code. The primacy of these social norms as the theme of a discourse running throughout the narrative episodes up to this point necessitates the vehemence with which the remnant in Egypt and their worship practices must be condemned.

4.6. Conclusion

Each of the narrative episodes under examination in the following chapters contain representations of communal settlement, socio-economic participation, and spatial dynamics. Taken together this selection displays the presence of recurring themes of building, planting, hospitality, vineyards, fruit, private domains, and public spaces. The aim of the present thesis is to uncover and explore the presence of such recurring themes as a symbolic code. This approach has necessitated engagement with a range of identifiably Marxist theoretical concepts, not least because of a mutual concern with the social, economic, and political realities embedded within cultural products, including the biblical text. Antonio Gramsci’s model of cultural hegemony and Henri Lefebvre’s conceptual triad of the human cognitive interaction with space, are central to this examination. These theories are compatible with the present approach because they both foreground the vital role of power in the behaviour of human societies.

As an instrument of cultural hegemony at work in the text the symbolic code operates as an essentially semiotic phenomenon, with words, phrases, concepts and themes, all prompting inferences on the part of the audience. This thesis examines
each of the selected narrative episodes in order to discern how various elements of each may work in concert, as part of this symbolic code, in order to reinforce a specific message of adaptation and survival in the post-collapse context.
5. A Critical Approach to the Archaeological Evidence

Beyond incorporating the facts of the varying Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac recensions of Jeremiah it is also vital to acknowledge other relevant data. The analysis conducted in this research project is also reliant on the disciplines of archaeology and epigraphy. Such an interdisciplinary perspective requires an awareness of the methodological issues surrounding the use of such data. There are a number of methodological issues surrounding the integration of these types of evidence into how we decipher and interpret the biblical text. There are clear negative consequences of any ancient text being treated as *de facto* evidence for the events of a historical period, a pitfall this research has attempted to avoid. Only after the archaeological and epigraphic artefacts have been assessed in isolation, are they then brought into a confined relationship with the biblical text.

5.1. Archaeological Evidence

The present approach to the available archaeological evidence has been informed by recent developments in the scholarly approach to archaeological data within biblical studies. A conscious effort has been made to avoid, wherever possible, the mistakes of earlier facets of biblical archaeology, particularly represented by the early twentieth century North American school, with William F. Albright as its foremost representative. Such an approach, frequently dismissed nowadays in the all too general terms of ‘bible in one hand and spade in the other,’ was characterised by a typically conservative interpretation of the evidence in support of the historiographies already present in the biblical literature. To what extent these efforts have been successful in separating the internal historiography present in the text of the book of Jeremiah from the evidence presented, particularly from the site of Tel en-Nasbeh, remains for the reader to evaluate. Niels P. Lemche’s observation that there is no such thing as pure unadulterated fact in our encounter with archaeology bears repeating:

> Whatever the archaeologist discovers while digging is in itself a "fact," but this "fact" does not necessarily deliver its information by itself. Archaeological facts begin to speak only when first the archaeologist and subsequently other scholars try to understand and explain the meaning of the discovery. The results of archaeology are always results that have been interpreted...  

5.1.1. Potential Biases

The utilisation of archaeology in the present study therefore shall follow a necessarily imperfect course. We must further remain mindful of the fact that all archaeological excavations performed in the Near and Middle East in the last two centuries, have been carried out within a global context where the biblical text, and its interpretation, is part of the fundamental fabric of the Western and Euro-centric value systems. This will have had an unavoidable impact on these excavations. Consequently, any assertions in the archaeological analyses of direct evidentiary links between the biblical text, the artefact or site under discussion, and an assumed set of historical realia must be approached with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Nevertheless, the archaeological evidence presented and assessed in the present study is hopefully utilised as part of that ‘assembly of disciplines’ which, via prudent application, can contribute to a more fulsome and valuable interpretation of an ancient culture.

Aside from the clear risk of biased interpretation of archaeological data, arising from the positionality of the practitioners themselves, a number of practical issues attend the use of data from excavations. Such issues may include a reliance on data from excavations, some from over a century ago, conducted in a manner now considered deficient in terms of modern standards. Artefacts may be presented with little or no details as to the context of their discovery and sometimes stratigraphic information is entirely lacking. Alongside these issues is the ever present problem of unprovenanced items held in a variety of private and national collections that were sourced on the antiquities market. These items may in fact be genuine but lack any corroborating detail that might render them of greater use in the present analysis. Unprovenanced items and forgeries are a particular problem in terms of the landscape of epigraphic evidence that will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

5.1.2. Pottery Types

One of the most significant issues in terms of using archaeological data in this study is the lack of distinctive pottery types against which to date finds and their

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134 Lemche, The Old Testament Between Theology and History, p. 123.
associated sites. In the context of Judah in the sixth century BCE in particular it is practically impossible to accurately date a site based on the pottery found in excavations. Because of an absence of any secure mid to late-sixth century destruction deposit in the region there are no ‘type finds’ by which to categorise ceramic assemblages.135 While Albright asserted that the sixth century BCE occupation at Bethel provided ceramic types by which the occupation or abandonment of other sites, for instance Tell en-Naṣbeh, might be determined, the less secure the dating of the Bethel stratum appears, the less secure Albright’s comparative dating of other sites becomes.136

This ‘problem of the material culture of the sixth century’ as it is described by Zorn, is at present widely acknowledged by a range of scholars.137 In the present study the ceramic evidence is relevant to analysis of two sites; Tell en-Naṣbeh and Meṣad Hashvayahu. Such evidence can only be used in attempts to recreate the nature of each site and its functions i.e. economic and military activities. Pottery cannot be relied upon in these instances to provide a secure dating for either context. Conversely, the benefit of the analysis of pottery, alongside a range of other artefacts, is that these items are essentially impersonal. The majority of archaeological data is lacking any of the details or characteristics that might tempt us to attribute them directly to particular individuals or specific historical events. Because archaeological data usually indicates generalities, it is valuable in constructing a broad profile of a site in terms of period and function.

5.1.3. Gender

There are further limits to the use of archaeological data. This is particularly the case in terms of a gendered approach to the material remains of the past. Certainly, the overall methodological approach of this research project was not heavily informed by questions of gender. However, at certain points the elements of the narrative

episodes under examination necessitated some engagement with this issue. This was particularly the case in considering ideas of space and its utilisation for certain activities, specifically those activities generally considered to be domestic tasks typically carried out by women. In the analysis of the episode of Jeremiah’s encounter with the worshippers of the Queen of Heaven in Jer 44 this was particularly pertinent. It has been feasible to consider gender related issues in the interpretation of the data only very broadly. While certainly it has been possible, based on both the textual and material records available to associate particular activities such as weaving, baking, and brewing with females – human and divine – no attempt has been made to identify any specific architectural space as an explicitly female domain such as a hearth or ‘cult corner.’ This approach has been guided by the valuable caveats of a number of scholars:

A gender-sensitive approach to household archaeology should be cautiously implemented with awareness that the inference of gender-related activities and behavior based on physical remains alone is on somewhat shaky ground.138

In summary, differentiating between male and female activity areas is a difficult task. Only a limited number of activities can be distinguished, such as cooking and weaving, which were typically performed by women. It is possible that, in the majority of the dwellings, men and women shared most spaces.139

More broadly the concept of spaces, their use and the meaning ascribed to them, frequently intersects with the exploration of elements of Judean daily life, specifically agricultural activity, household settlement establishment, and instances of hospitality. The idea of spatial dynamics as an essential component of hierarchical power structures forms a key feature of the operation of the symbolic code under investigation in the present thesis. This is most evident in a number of episodes where groups of people are forced to negotiate different spaces, either as invited guests to a chamber of the Jerusalem temple in Jer 35, deportees transplanted to Babylonia in Jer 29, or as newly constituted Judean communities in both Mizpah and Egypt in Jer 40 and 44.

This latter episode, Jeremiah’s encounter with Judeans actively worshipping the Queen of Heaven in Jer 44, prompts a discussion of female uses of space, potentially

in a subversive or resistant manner, particularly in terms of a perceived domestic ritual in the public realm. This presents a particular difficulty in terms of methodological approach and more specifically terminology. It is a veritable truism in biblical studies that we are dealing with an essentially androcentric text. By analysing the episode of Jer 44 in terms of labels such as ‘domestic’ or ‘popular’ religion, there would be a great risk of over-generalisation, even caricature. Similarly, in considering the status of pillar figurines from Tell en-Naṣbeh as potential ritual or votive objects, the danger of slipping into lazy and generic descriptions of ‘goddess worship’ and ‘popular folk custom’ is ever present. A concerted effort has been made in the present study to avoid any assumption of a binary opposition between ‘popular’ religion and ‘official’ religion, with the problematic potential portrayal of the ‘popular’ as deviant. An attempt has been made to avoid such issues by concentrating on specific details of the phenomena under consideration without any attempt to develop broader conclusions as to the no doubt diverse patterns of religiosity in Judah during the Iron Age.

As noted above, the majority of the available archaeological data is anonymous, lacking the details and characteristics that might assist us in attributing artefacts to particular individuals or specific historical events. Pottery and other uninscribed items largely speak in generalities. Once assured of their provenance and the details of their context of discovery, such items can be used to paint a broad picture of the past without ever risking a detour into the territory of those imaginative constructions and ex-nihilo inventions so sharply criticised by Sharp and Holt. Often it is impossible to ascribe a definite function to an uncovered architectural space and certainly attempts to affix a gendered interpretation to these spaces is fraught with difficulty. However, one particular body of artefacts within the archaeological record of Judah for this period does not follow this pattern, due to the presence of legible text in inscriptions; the epigraphic evidence.

5.2. Epigraphic Evidence

Epigraphic finds combine the vagaries of both artefact and ancient text in one. The natural inclination of a scholar devoted to the study of ancient texts may be to privilege the written surface of the item over and against any consideration of the item’s

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140 Carol Meyers, ’Seeing Double: Textual and Archaeological Images of Israelite Women,’ in The Bible and Feminism, ed. by Sherwood and Fisk, pp. 514-33, p. 514.
archaeological significance beyond the words on display. The nature of the information recorded in epigraphic texts logically draws the interpreter towards far more specific conclusions than the broad overview or ‘snapshot’ of a particular archaeological period that might arise from a consideration of non-textual archaeological evidence.

A monumental inscription demands a historically focussed interpretation which may attempt to either verify or dispute an ancient monarch’s propagandistic claims. A seal, or its impression, demands that analysts consider the potential historicity of the individual named. Preserved archival texts tend to be free of the propagandistic elements of monumental inscriptions, and also furnish a much greater wealth of detail than the simple onomastic data provided by seals and their associated bullae. However, in all of these cases the problem of unprovenanced items and forgeries remains, just as with non-textual artefacts. Indeed, some of the most influential items of dubious origin to have had an impact on the field of biblical studies in recent years have all tended to involve a textual element. The fact that epigraphic data is so vulnerable to such opportunistic manipulation may well be as a result of this tendency in the fields of philology and biblical studies to privilege an epigraphic item’s textual content at the expense of any thorough attention being paid to issues of provenance and authenticity:

One factor that has complicated the exchange of information between textual and archaeological sources is the division between archaeology and epigraphy as academic specialities... most analysis of texts is done by people who are not actually concerned with the contextual recovery of artifacts.142

To the extent that it has been possible, this study has attempted to treat each item of epigraphic data in light of its provenance within an appropriately stratified archaeological context, paying attention to its materiality alongside a consideration of the import of the text presented therein. As a result of this approach, far fewer items from, for example, the vast corpus of stamp-seal evidence is relied upon. Likewise, this methodological approach has necessitated a cautious treatment of the data supplied via texts from the Āl-Yāḥūdu archive.

5.2.1. **Seals and Bullae**

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The study of seals and bullae for this period of history in Judah has some specific strengths. Seals generally use an individual's official name, usually including a patronym, and may also include the person's official function, and in some cases the name of an individual that they served within the administrative hierarchy. The texts are very short and straightforward and if the excavation takes place at a site that was subjected to or destroyed by fire, there is a reasonable chance of finding numerous intact clay bullae that have become sintered and thus durable. This explains the large number of bullae discovered as part of the 'City of David' excavations and recorded in Avigad's *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (CWSSS).

Bullae and the seals which produced them are generally not found together. Bullae, being attached to official documents, tend to be found in large numbers, usually indicating the past existence of a now extinct archive. Seals are sometimes found in burial contexts, owing to their highly personal nature and official importance, accompanying their owner in death. It is noteworthy that there does not appear to be any consistent pattern of deliberate destruction or defacement on the death of the seal bearer that might prevent illicit posthumous impersonation. The excellent condition of the Jazaniah seal found in the necropolis of Tell en-Naṣbeh is an example of this.

A number of studies have been performed which link the evidence stemming from discoveries of seals and bullae in Judah, in Jerusalem in particular, to a number of named individuals in the book of Jeremiah. In his article, 'The Personal Names in Jeremiah as a Source for the History of the Period' Glatt-Gilad asserts that the high incidence of names occurring among the seal evidence which parallel names in Jeremiah points to 'the essential reliability of the Jeremianic prose material.' Of the 55 proper names in Jeremiah, 42 appear in the CWSSS, a helpful statistic in favour of Glatt-Gilad's argument. However, a great many of the names also appear in textual evidence from later historical periods. Around half of the names also occur in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and 17 in the Elephantine papyri. Furthermore there is a rather low level of one to one correspondences between names in CWSSS and the...
Jeremiah material, as the 42 parallels are based on individual proper names, not on name and patronym combinations.\textsuperscript{148}

Furthermore, we must look more closely at the five seals singled out by Glatt-Gilad as having ‘to a high degree of certainty’ referred to named individuals in Jeremiah:\textsuperscript{149}

Berekhyahu b. Neriyahu (CWSSS 417), corresponding with the figure of Baruch, the scribe who accompanies the prophet Jeremiah throughout the book.

Yerahmeel b. HaMelek (CWSSS 414), corresponding with Yerahmeel the son of the king mentioned in Jer 36.

Seryahu b. Neriyahu (CWSSS 390), identified as Seraiah b. Neraiah b. Mahseiah, chief chamberlain at the court of Zedekiah mentioned in Jer 51:59.\textsuperscript{150}

Gemaryahu b. Shaphan (CWSSS 470), identified as the Gemariah b. Shaphan of Jer 36.

Ahikam b. Shaphan (CWSSS 431), identified as the brother of Gemariah b. Shaphan of CWSSS 470 above, and as the father of Gedaliah b. Ahikam.

There is a great temptation, particularly in a research project such as this one, which incorporates a chapter focussing on the figure of Jeremiah and his own potential relationship with some of these same individuals, to focus exclusively on the tantalising onomastic data presented by these bullae. This would however be a clear breach of the interdisciplinary methodological approach. In fact, of the five bullae selected by Glatt-Gilad only one is of verified provenance.\textsuperscript{151} The seal impression of Gemaryahu b. Shaphan (CWSSS 470). This bulla was found as part of the excavations of the city of

\textsuperscript{149} Glatt-Gilad, ‘The Personal Names in Jeremiah,’ p. 34.
\textsuperscript{150} Nahman Avigad, ‘Baruch the Scribe and Jerahmeel the King’s Son,’ \textit{Biblical Archaeologist}, 42.2 (1979), pp. 114-118, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{151} This is statistically better than the overall picture of provenanced versus unprovenanced artefacts in the CWSSS, which stands at 15% provenanced items versus 85% unprovenanced. Mitka Ratzaby Golub, ‘The Distribution of Names on Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: A Comparative Study,’ \textit{Israel Exploration Journal}, 62 (2012), pp. 206-222, p. 207.
David conducted under Yigal Shiloh in Area G Stratum 10. The context of discovery showed evidence of a major conflagration and also delivered up bronze and iron arrowheads indicating the likelihood that this locus formed part of the destruction layer associated with the Neo-Babylonian invasion. The four other bullae CWSSS 390, 414, 417, and 431 were all brought to Avigad’s attention having been purchased on the antiquities market by private collectors. The Berekhyahu b. Neriyahu bulla CWSSS 417 was later proved to be a forgery, alongside a second bulla of the same seal.

While the remaining three of Glatt-Gilad’s five bullae may in fact be genuine ancient seal impressions, the lack of accompanying archaeological data makes it impossible to confidently attribute any of them to the sixth century BCE. Indeed, several fully provenanced and accurately recorded bullae and seal discoveries from the ‘City of David’ excavation project in recent years appear to have stemmed from the eighth and late-seventh centuries BCE respectively. While the number of one-to-one relationships between named figures in the book of Jeremiah and stamp seal artefacts is not as robust as Glatt-Gilad’s article might assert, when we widen the scope to encompass other elements of the biblical literature a slightly more detailed picture emerges.

In terms of fully provenanced items, to CWSSS 470, the Gemariah b. Shaphan bulla, we can add CWSSS 596, a seal impression of one Azariah b. Hilkiah, discovered in the same archaeological context (Area G Locus 967) during the 1982 summer
excavation season of the City of David project, and recorded as Bulla 27.\textsuperscript{157} The name Azariah and patronym Hilkiah corresponds with the priestly genealogies presented in 1 Chr 5:29-41; 9:10-11, and the ancestral list of Ezra 7. Notably the narrative of collaboration between Hilkiah the high priest with Shaphan the scribe in 2 Kgs 22:8 may provide additional support to the chronological correspondence of the two bullae with the biblical evidence, if the Gemariah b. Shaphan of CWSSS 470 is to be identified with the same individual from Jer 36.\textsuperscript{158}

One of the most striking and well known artefacts from Tell en-Naṣbeh, a seal bearing the inscription ‘Jaazaniah servant of the king,’ was discovered in a stratigraphically mixed burial site in 1932. While not necessarily a reference to a named individual from the biblical text this item may provide a potential insight into the status of the settlement at Tell en-Naṣbeh and administrative activities there. A further seal impression which may also contribute to a reconstruction of the historical context surrounding Tell en-Naṣbeh after the destruction of Jerusalem is that of Milkom’ûr, the servant of Ba’alyaša. This clay bulla, which may have functioned as a bottle stopper, bears the text ‘belonging to Milkom’ûr, the servant of Ba’alyaša,’ and includes decorative features on its middle field, a scarab beetle flanked by standards topped with solar or lunar disks.\textsuperscript{159} This item was uncovered in a random surface survey prior to excavation at the site of Tall al-ʿUmayri in 1984. The bulla was found on topsoil above what was later to be identified as building C, one of public administrative buildings at the site.\textsuperscript{160} The fact that this is one of seventy-five seals and seal impressions found at Tall al-ʿUmayri illustrates this Ammonite settlement’s administrative function while under Neo-Babylonian control. The Ba’alyaša of this seal impression, alternatively transliterated Ba’ališ’a, may be identified with the King Baalis of Ammon mentioned at Jer 40:14 in relation to the plot to assassinate Gedaliah, an

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Tsvi Schneider, ‘Azariahu Son of Hilkiahu (High Priest?) on a City of David Bulla,’ \textit{Israel Exploration Journal} 38.3 (1988), pp. 139-41, pp. 140, 41 n. 8. The same name and patronym combination as CWSSS 596, Azariah b. Hilkiah, also appears on another seal published by N. Avigad; Nahman Avigad, ‘Six Ancient Hebrew Seals,’ in \textit{Sefer Shmuel Yeivin: Mezṭkarim Ba-Mikra, Arkiologyah, Lashon, Ve-Toldot Yisrael}, ed. by Shmuel Abramski (Jerusalem: Qiryat Sefer, 1970), pp. 305-30. This item is however, unfortunately, of unknown provenance.
  \item Herr, ‘The Servant of Baalis,’ p. 169.
\end{itemize}
identification that is strengthened by the palaeographic dating of this bulla to the sixth century BCE.\textsuperscript{161}

A bulla, CWSSS 405, found in 1935 by the British Wellcome-Marston expedition at Lachish, bore the inscription ‘belonging to Gedaliah who is over the house.’ While discovered in an unstratified archaeological context it is of known provenance and has been paleographically dated to around 600 BCE, roughly contemporaneous with the events portrayed in the book of Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{162} The fact that this bulla of an individual named Gedaliah, who obviously held some position of authority, was found at Lachish rather than at Tell en-Nasbeh obviously weakens any potential association between this bulla and the character of Gedaliah b. Ahikam who features so heavily in Jer 40. More recently there has been the excavation in Jerusalem, again in the City of David Area G section, of two fully authenticated and provenanced bullae. The fact that these bullae bore the names Gedaliah b. Passhur and Yehucal b. Shelemiyahu b. Shovi has prompted relatively confident identification of these artefacts with two characters named in a list of Jerusalemite officials at Jer 38:1.\textsuperscript{163}

Nevertheless, none of the authenticated items cited here should be taken as historical verification of any aspect of the book of Jeremiah itself. Rather, each of these artefacts provide certain insights into the political administrative makeup of the historical context out of which the narrative episodes of Jeremiah developed. Hence, each of these items is part of a wider corpus of contemporary epigraphic and archaeological evidence which point to aspects of the administration of Judah and one neighbouring kingdom.

\textsuperscript{162} Peter Van der Veen, ‘Gedaliah ben Ahiqam in Light of Epigraphic Evidence (A Response to Bob Becking)’ in \textit{New Seals and Inscriptions, Hebrew, Idumean and Cuneiform}, ed. by Meir Lubetski (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), pp. 55-71, pp. 55-56; Bob Becking, ‘Inscribed Seals as Evidence for Biblical Israel? Jeremiah 40.7-41.15 \textit{Par exemple},’ in \textit{Can a History of Israel Be Written?} ed. by Lester L. Grabbe (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 65-83, p. 75. Two other bullae, both bearing the inscription ‘belonging to Gedaliah servant of the king’ (לגדליהו עבד המלך) are unprovenanced items belonging to private collections. These additional bullae are sometimes cited as potential further evidence for the elevated administrative position of Gedaliah b. Ahikam as narrated in Jer 40, they will not form part of the analysis of Jer 40 in the present thesis. \\
5.2.2. **Cuneiform Tablets**

Some of the most influential, indeed ‘transformative,’ epigraphic data concerning the lives of Judeans in Babylon in the decades following the fall of Jerusalem stems from a corpus of cuneiform tablets commonly referred to as the Āl-Yāḥūdu documents. While a number of these tablets had been published by different scholars in previous years the most comprehensive publication, 103 documents, all from the private collection of David Sofer, was conducted by Pearce and Wunsch in their 2014 volume CUSAS 28. All of these clay tablets record various transactions, contracts and receipts, largely pertaining to agricultural activity, taxation payments in both silver and date and barley harvests, livestock and slave purchases, military service and corvée labour obligations, in the town of Āl-Yāḥūdu and surrounding areas, in the region of Nippur. Each tablet contains records in an administrative scribal style with exact dates recorded. These documents range from 572 – 477 BCE. All of these transactions can be dated to the day, offering us a unique opportunity to study evolving socio-economic conditions and changing cultural practices of a sizeable group of Judean exiles in Babylonia over a significant period of time.

The Judean identity of the residents of Āl-Yāḥūdu is determined both by the presence of Yahwistic theophoric elements in personal names in the documents, and also by the toponym Āl-Yāḥūdu itself. Meaning ‘Judah town’ this is understood to be an example of the frequent practice of ‘toponymie en miroir,’ where the settlements of transplanted deportee populations are named after the geographic origin of residents. The main problematic feature of the Āl-Yāḥūdu documents is the total lack of provenance for any of these artefacts. According to anecdotal reports some of them had been circulating on the Jerusalem antiquities market from the 1970s, and are presumed by collectors to have originated in Iraq. Without any secure data on the

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context within which these tablets were discovered, the fact that a significant portion of the documents remain unpublished, and the attendant issue of severe limits on academic access while these items remain entirely in private ownership, it is difficult to confidently assert the authenticity of the information contained therein.

That being said, there are certain features which promote the idea of the Āl-Yāḥūdu documents as potential genuine sources of information on the economic activities of a Judean community in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem. The sheer number of tablets, reportedly around two hundred, appearing across a number of different private collections and therefore subject to analysis by more than one set of scholars, stands in support of authenticity. Furthermore, unlike the example of the ‘Baruch’ bullae noted above, these tablets display a uniformity of mundane contents, with the toponym Āl-Yāḥūdu itself standing as the only potentially sensational detail.

In light of the unanswered questions about the Āl-Yāḥūdu tablets it would be unwise to rely exclusively on them for potential historical details of the lives of Judean deportees in sixth century Babylonia. Two other bodies of epigraphic evidence may provide further information. These are the Murašû archive, and a much smaller collection of six provenanced tablets from Sippar which record the activities of a family of Judean merchants there.167 The Murašû archive consists of administrative documents, predominantly loan contracts of the Murašû banking family, dating from during the reign of Artaxerxes I to the reign of Darius II. Several families of Judean origin can be identified among different documents. The earliest tablet is dated to 454 BCE, thus placing these texts firmly in the Persian period.168 These tablets were discovered during the University of Pennsylvania excavation of Nippur in 1893.169 The collection of texts from Sippar which are also used as epigraphic evidence for Judean life in Babylonia consist of six tablets from the British Museum collection; BM 65149, BM 68921, BM 75434, BM 68420, BM 74411, and BM 78391, all of which were

found in Syria, having been deposited there by a population of returning deportees. Eph’al, ‘The Western Minorities in Babylonia,’ pp. 84-87; Tolini, ‘From Syria to Babylon and Back: The Neirab Archive,’ pp. 60, 63.


excavated and recorded as part of official expeditions in the 1880s. This small group of tablets was comprehensively analysed by Yigal Bloch in his 2014 article, ‘Judeans in Sippar and Susa During the First Century of the Babylonian Exile.’

Comparison with these other bodies of cuneiform epigraphic evidence may in fact serve to support claims in favour of the authenticity of the Āl-Yāḥûdu documents. Both the Murašû and Sippar documents demonstrate many similar details of Judean life in Babylonia, implying a certain continuity between the experience of the sixth century Judean deportees and later generations of Judeans. In the present study it will be important to make use of the Āl-Yāḥûdu evidence in an extremely prudent manner, acknowledging the difficulties associated with this unprovenanced corpus which, having been sourced from the antiquities market, has undergone little or no known chemical analysis.

5.3. Conclusion

A critical analysis of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence pertinent to this study necessitates a general awareness of the issues surrounding the integration of these types of evidence into the discussion of any biblical text. Any such task will unavoidably reflect a certain scholarly positionality influenced by inherent Western Euro-centric biases in the fields of both biblical studies and archaeology. The vagaries of the development of the science of archaeological excavation itself over the last century and a half must also be considered. A specific problem in the archaeological record of the Levant, the lack of any secure mid to late-sixth century BCE pottery examples against which to date finds from various sources, has an impact on our effort to understand the history of Judah in this period. The archaeological data is also not ideally placed to provide information on gender roles in the ancient world. We must avoid the risk of over-generalization and caricature that has in the past accompanied analyses of phenomena labelled *inter alia* as ‘popular folk customs’ and ‘goddess worship.’

In terms of epigraphic data, the details provided by such textual items may create an avenue for more specific interpretations in relation to particular individuals and their roles in history. This is particularly the case when a name featured on a seal or bulla closely matches the name of an individual mentioned in the biblical text. Cases of such one-to-one correspondences are however relatively rare, with only one fully
provenanced bulla from the City of David excavations, CWSSS 470, matching the name and patronym details of a person mentioned in Jeremiah, Gemariah b. Shaphan. Another bulla from the same archaeological context, that of Azariah b. Hilkiah may relate to an individual named in genealogical passages in both 1 Chr and Ezra. The Milkom’ûr bulla found at the Ammonite site at Tall al-ʿUmayri mentions a figure named Baʿalyaša, this may be related to the mention of a king of Ammon named Baalis in Jer 40:14. The Jaazaniah seal from Tell en-Naṣbeh, while not linked to any identifiable individual from the biblical text, demonstrates the central administrative role of the settlement within the wider context of neo-Babylonian domination of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Administrative documents in the form of cuneiform tablets are our best primary epigraphic sources for constructing a plausible model of what life in Babylonia may have been like for the Judean deportees of the sixth century BCE. The Āl-Yâḥûdu documents are dated closest in time to the period under consideration, but details on the provenance of these items is unfortunately lacking. Conversely, the Murašû archive, and some British Museum-held tablets from Sippar are fully provenanced but are dated significantly later than this period. Therefore, a synthesis of information from across this range of sources is necessary to reconstruct the historical context of Judean exilic life.
6. Chapter 1: Jeremiah the Anathothite

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the operation of elements of the symbolic code in representations of the character of the prophet Jeremiah. The following analysis will concentrate on Jeremiah’s status as a member of a specific clan with links to both the priestly and clerical branches of the Judean administrative class, and his activities relating to this status. A particular focus on his position within an influential clan-based power structure and his hereditary connection to the Benjamin region, are both important factors in this respect. The discussion of these aspects of the characterisation of Jeremiah relates closely to aspects of the analysis of the episode of Gedaliah’s leadership role at Mizpah in Jer 40, which will be the focus of a subsequent section. Analysis of the textual representation of Jeremiah is particularly important as it impacts our interpretation of the episode of Gedaliah’s regime at Mizpah.

This will not be a biographical treatment of the prophet Jeremiah. The issue of biography from a historical-critical point of view has already formed part of the foregoing methodological discussion. Rather, the present analysis will consider the characterisation of the prophet as a vehicle for a number of ideas within the text, the same ideas which act as vital components in the overall symbolic code within the episodes under discussion. That being said, it will also be important to acknowledge any literary and textual avenues towards a discussion of the historical context in general terms, specifically indications of larger demographic or geographic trends. This is particularly the case in the analysis of the land redemption episode of Jer 32 which offers a fertile context within which to discuss the agricultural economic systems which form a background to not only this, but to several other key episodes. The figure of Jeremiah is part of the narrative discourse of the text, and, as an element of that discourse, deserves to be examined within the parameters of the symbolic code in operation.

Jeremiah is the main character and protagonist in the text, his characterization therefore serves an illustrative purpose. An analysis of the presentation of Jeremiah’s family background, alongside a discussion of a key episode in Jer 32 where he engages explicitly in the dynastic politics of that same family background, is consequently worthy of serious attention. This will also further serve to reinforce the fact that the symbolic code at work in these episodes remains consistent across a
range of episodes and functions as a fully integrated rhetorical strand within the book, rather than a collection of disparate and isolated pockets in the text.

6.1. Prophetic ‘Loner’

At first glance, it appears that the prophet Jeremiah lacks all domesticity and might therefore be considered external to and alienated from an identifiable symbolic code which foregrounds domestic establishment and agricultural productivity as encapsulated in the formulation build – plant – marry. He is presented as unmarried and childless.

And there was a word of the Lord unto me saying: ‘Do not take to yourself a wife, and you will not have sons and daughters in this place. For thus says the Lord regarding the sons and the daughters born in this place, and their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land. They will die deaths of defilement; they will not be lamented and they will not be buried. They will be as dung upon the face of the earth… (Jer 16:1-4)

Certainly, this is not unusual for prophetic figures in biblical texts. The prophet Hosea, for example, appears to be only encouraged to establish a household in order to portray a subversion of the matrimonial ideal, thereby demonstrating the degradation of the relationship between God and his people:

Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her whoring from her face,
and her adultery from between her breasts,
or I will strip her naked
and expose her as in the day she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and turn her into a parched land,
and kill her with thirst.
Upon her children also I will have no pity,
because they are children of whoredom.
For their mother has played the whore;

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she who conceived them has acted shamefully. (Hos 2:2-5)

While by their actions and lifestyles we might expect biblical prophets to flout convention, their behaviour quite often serves to enforce social and political norms, the normative status quo of the message of Yahwistic obedience, reified in the text by a prophet’s performative social disruptions. Thus, the traditional celibate ‘loner’ figure of the prophet gets enlisted to further an agenda of normative compliance: 170

And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, ‘Call his name Ma'her-shal'al-hash'baz; for before the child knows how to cry “My father” or “My mother,” the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.’ (Isa 8:3-4)

As Berquist notes even the most unconventional behaviour on the part of the prophet often serves to legitimize their role as divine messengers:

His life functions as a symbol of the desolation of the people and of the coming end. Thus, the injunction against marriage, procreation, and celebration strengthens a proclamation made by Jeremiah, and supports that proclamation through a severe personal sacrifice. The injunctions against normal social life make Jeremiah a social deviant, and this social deviance can function as legitimation. The confirmation of a message through severe signs within one’s own life underscores the consistency and urgency of the message...Such personal sacrifice is an extreme form of legitimation, but it is not uncommon among the prophets. 171

There are in fact several areas where Jeremiah is less far removed from the values endorsed by the symbolic code than we might assume. His characterisation is integrated into the values of the code at particular points and the figure of Jeremiah operates at various points in the text to reinforce the same hegemonic message of adaptation, compliance, and participation in maintaining and upholding the new post-destruction social order and its attendant economic activities under Neo-Babylonian imperial rule.

Jeremiah’s speeches, along with several of his activities, do uphold the social norms promoted by the symbolic code. In chapter 29 we see a letter sent in his name promoting the ideals of participation in the productive norms of agriculture and domesticity among the exile community already in Babylon. The character’s interaction

with the Rechabites in chapter 35 appears to uphold a number of social and domestic norms against the subversive and potentially anti-imperial threat inherent in that group’s nomadic culture. In Jer 40 Jeremiah is permitted to go to Mizpah and, by his presence there, implicitly endorse Gedaliah’s establishment. In his advice to the people determined to go to Egypt in Jer 42 he again encourages conformity, advising compliance with and submission to the circumstances of Neo-Babylonian dominance:

“If you will surely remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull down, I will plant you and not pluck up, for I rue the evil which I have done to you. Do not be afraid before the face of the king of Babylon whom you fear, before his face do not fear him,’ declares the Lord. ‘For I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand. I will give you mercy, and he will be merciful to you and he will cause you to remain in your land.’ (Jer 42:10-12)

These examples are not the full extent of the exercise of cultural hegemony via the symbolic code in the person of Jeremiah. There are a number of other features of Jeremiah’s characterisation and activities which also indicate elements of the symbolic code in operation. This is particularly evident in his claiming the right to redeem a plot of land, or usufruct rights, from his kinsman in Jer 32. This event relates closely to other features of the literary depiction of Jeremiah, particularly his delineation as of Levitical priestly heritage, and being connected with the town of Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. In the narrative of hereditary land redemption in Jer 32 we are given a glimpse of the clan and territory links which mark Jeremiah as inscribed in the same system of agricultural productivity which the exiles in Babylon in Jer 29, and the remnant of Judeans in Mizpah in Jer 40, are all encouraged to facilitate by their acquiescence. By exercising his right of redemption in Jer 32 the figure of the prophet identifies himself with a clan based agricultural system. In the narrative itself this is portrayed as warranting explicit divine approval: ‘For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land’ (Jer 32:15).

6.2. The Priests of Anathoth

There is a relatively broad scholarly consensus as to the status of Jer 1:1-3 as an editorial addition, a superscript added to the text to introduce it. There is greater diversity of opinion however as to the nature and source of this editorial intervention. Bright, in his 1965 treatment of the text characterises Jer 1:1-3 as simply ‘editorial.'

R.P. Carroll, in agreement with Thiel, labels these verses as a ‘post-Deuteronomistic editorial introduction,’ also highlighting the parallels between Jer 1:1 and Amos 1:1. Mark Leuchter interprets these initial verses of the book as a superscription binding the figure of the prophet to the Jerusalem tradition. Indeed, Leuchter characterizes Jer 1:1-7 as reflecting a similar impulse to that which he detects in the book of Deuteronomy, namely ‘the Josianic harmonization of disparate northern traditions in a Jerusalemite environment.’

In terms of debating whether or not the details of Jer 1:1 originate within an exilic, or indeed post-exilic Deuteronomistic editorial circle, one element is particularly noteworthy. While the MT of Jer 1:1 declares the foregoing text to contain ‘the words of Jeremiah’ the LXX mentions ‘the word of God which came to Jeremiah’ (τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ Ιερεμιαν). Has the MT then dropped the characteristically Deuteronomistic theocracy present in a Greek Urtext or does the longer LXX superscript signify a later, increasingly Deuteronomistic, Greek recension? Mention of a priestly lineage might well indicate a Deuteronomistic perspective, if we accept Leuchter’s argument as to the Levitical origins of an identifiable and prolific editorial movement. However, what matters for the current investigation is not so much the editorial status of Jer 1:1, but rather what this verse contributes to the characterisation of Jeremiah as the central figure of much of the text which bears his name.

The first piece of information Jer 1:1 provides is Jeremiah’s patronym, b. Hilkiah. There is nothing in this verse to indicate that this is the same Hilkiah found in 2 Kgs 22: 8 and there credited with discovery of the ‘book of the Law,’ in the Jerusalem temple. Indeed several scholars, in discussing the scant references to Jeremiah’s relatives in the text emphasise the impossibility of identifying the Hilkiah of Jer 1:1 with any other biblical figure bearing that name, with Robert Carroll further highlighting the fact that both Jeremiah and Hilkiah are relatively common names within the biblical onomasticon. That being said, while there is no way to prove definitively that the Hilkiah of Jer 1:1 is the same Hilkiah found in 2 Kgs 22, it remains a possibility, acknowledged by several commentators, though generally not fully pursued. An

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173 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 90; Thiel, Die Deuteronomistische Redaktion Von Jeremia 1-25, p. 56.
174 Mark Leuchter, Josiah’s Reform and Jeremiah’s Scroll: Historical Calamity and Prophetic Response (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), pp. 77-78.
176 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 89.
exception to this pattern lies in S. Dean McBride Jr.’s analysis which has produced a credible, though necessarily speculative, genealogy for Jeremiah.

In the phrase ‘of the priests who were in Anathoth’ Jeremiah’s priestly lineage is declared, potentially bolstering any hypothetical identification of his father Hilkiah with the Hilkiah of 2 Kings. There is an identifiable parallel between the phraseology of Jer 1:1 and that of Amos 1:1, where Amos is described as ‘of the shepherds from Tekoa’ (בנינדימים מבוקע). As with Jer 1:1, Amos 1:1 is frequently considered to have undergone post-exilic editorial expansion, with the mention of shepherds considered an ‘inserted indication of Amos’ occupation.’ This insistence on reading the reference to shepherds as an indication of Amos’ occupation is no doubt influenced by a later passage, Amos 7:14, where he clarifies his lack of prophetic lineage or guild membership, and explicitly identifies himself as a herdsman (болс שׁ קמים) and dresser of sycamore figs (בוקר). In the cases of both Jeremiah and Amos these statements can readily be understood as declarations of hereditary lineage. In such a scenario the shepherds from Tekoa would be a clan group known by that moniker in light of specialist participation in ovine husbandry, and an association with a particular toponym.

In the case of the ‘priests who were in Anathoth,’ as a known clan group with a particular occupation and geographic association, there is some supporting evidence worthy of consideration, namely Solomon’s dismissal of the priest Abiathar:

And to Abiathar the priest the king said, ‘Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you bore the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because you shared in all the affliction of my father.’ (1 Kgs 2:26)

From the very outset of the book of Jeremiah then we are presented with a character who comes from a clan of priests associated with Anathoth in Benjamin.

The question of Jeremiah’s position within Judean society is perplexing. His status appears to vacillate at various points in the text. We get no explicit indication that

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See also Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 91, where the heuristic course followed by McBride Jr. and further elaborated upon in the present analysis is warned against as ‘an illegitimate leap of interpretation.’
he is a member of any kind of cohort of royal functionaries, nor is any mention made of him functioning as a ‘court prophet’ per se. However, at various points throughout the text we witness Jeremiah interacting with individuals at the very centre of power in Judean society. In Jer 35 he is presented as commanding sufficient cachet to make use of a chamber within the temple compound to host the Rechabites. In the chapter immediately following however he is prevented, for some unknown reason, from entering the temple precincts at all. Later on, he is treated as a subversive threat, working against the interests of the religiopolitical establishment in Jerusalem, and variously beaten, confined, threatened with execution, and imprisoned.

We are given no indication that Jeremiah has any officially sanctioned professional role in the administrative framework of the kingdom of Judah. At the same time however he enjoys, on occasion, a high degree of privileged access to both spaces and persons of significance. Despite his status as a prisoner on both occasions, his interlocutions with king Zedekiah in Jer 37 and the Babylonian commander Nebuzaradan in Jer 40 invest Jeremiah with no small degree of importance. From these scattered incidents it is difficult to place Jeremiah securely within any one section of Judean society as represented in the text. However, aside from his vocation and lengthy public career, there may be some other indications as to why Jeremiah is so influential in certain contexts. Jeremiah’s possible origins within a well-established clan structure with land holdings in Anathoth in Benjamin, mark him as a potential member of that same class of ‘intellectuals’ identified by Gramsci, as noted in the earlier methodological discussion. The intellectual's proximity to power positions them ideally to perform the task of cultural domination in the form of hegemony, and to simultaneously maintain the position of influence which entitles them to assume the moral leadership of civil society. Thus, Jeremiah's position within a landed clan structure, with hereditary claims to clerical and cultic authority, provides a certain level of economic security, and, through generations of participation in the administration of the kingdom of Judah, no small degree of proximity to power.

In the superscription to the book we are told that Jeremiah is the son of Hilkiah, and that, depending on the syntax applied to the MT, either he, or his father, or both of them, were ‘of the priests of Anathoth.’ Either configuration works in ascribing to Jeremiah some kind of priestly lineage through his father Hilkiah. The significance of such a label may initially appear relatively minor, after all Jeremiah does not engage in any traditional cultic functions in the account of his career offered in the text, in fact he has what can be at best described as an ambivalent relationship with the Jerusalem
temple, on occasion occupying part of its administrative spaces for his own purposes, and elsewhere exploding any notion of that same temple’s continued inviolability:

Do not trust in the lying words saying: ‘The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!’...For go now to my place that was at Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I have done to it because of the evil of my people Israel. (Jer 7:4, 12)

The question of whether or not the superscript of Jeremiah, or indeed any other part of the book, indicates an association on the part of the prophet with some form of professional association or guild deserves attention. Jeremiah is certainly operating in a context where the existence of a variety of such groups is a reasonable assumption. Based on the reference in Jer 35:4 to ‘the chamber of the sons of Hanan b. Yigdaliah, a man of God,’ we can hypothesise that a disciple-group, centred around the mantic figure of Hanan b. Yigdaliah, was operating in their own designated space within the Jerusalem temple. Hanan b. Yigdaliah is identified as ‘the man of God,’ this is the sole appearance of this specific marker of divinatory practice in the book of Jeremiah. This label is readily associated with the figures of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, and in the case of the latter two carries the specific connotation of miracle-working.

This would therefore characterise the ‘sons of Hanan b. Yigdaliah, a man of God,’ as a disciple group akin to the several collectives designated ‘sons of the prophets’ (בני הנביאים), which we encounter in the Elijah and Elisha narratives in the books of Kings, and which are also mentioned in Amos 7:14. In the narrative episode of Jer 35 the character of Jeremiah is facilitated, via the use of this groups chamber, in hosting the Rechabites. It does not necessarily follow that Jeremiah is himself characterised as either a member or leader of this or any other group. It is clear however that he is presented as operating in a context where such groups obviously function. We see Jeremiah in communication with and perhaps exerting a certain influence over this group. Alongside this example from Jer 35 we should also consider the reference at Jer 37:21 to ‘the street of the bakers’ (חצר האפים), likely a reference to

179 Bright, Jeremiah, p. 189; Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 652.
180 1 Sam 9:6-10, 1 Kgs 17:18-24, 2 Kgs 1:9-13; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8.
181 Ira M. Price, ‘The Schools of the Sons of the Prophets,’ The Old Testament Student, 8.7 (1889), pp. 244-49.
the tendency of particular crafts and industries to occupy specific locations in ancient cities.182

Professional and family links created networks which were vital for survival in the ancient world. There was no definitive separation between the spheres of occupation and kinship. The use of familial terminology in the description of various occupational groups demonstrates this. Mendelsohn highlights a number of examples of individuals with professional designations expressed in kinship terms. In Neh 3 we encounter ‘Uzziel b. Harhai’ah [of the] goldsmiths,’ ‘Machi’jah son of the goldsmiths,’ and ‘Hananiah son of the perfumers.’ In 1 Chron 2:55 there is reference to families of scribes (משׁプラス ספרים), and to families of ‘the house of linen workers’ (משׁプラス בית-עבדת הבץ) at 1 Chron 4:21:

As was the case in Babylonia and Assyria, persons pursuing a definite calling were often designated by their profession...It is clear that the term ben employed in these cases cannot mean "son" in the literal sense of the word, but as in Akkadian māru and aplu in similar cases, means "member," i.e., "H. member of the perfumers' guild," "M. member of the goldsmiths' guild" and "members of the prophets' guild"...Like the term ben, mišpāḥah cannot be taken in the literal sense of blood relationship; it clearly means "organization" or "guild."183

We might also consider the role of kinship links in the operation of the agricultural village commune in Boer's discussion of how economic activities are socially determined by the clan structure:

...there is the well-documented artificiality and malleability of genealogies. Such flexibility, usually attributed to political and ideological tensions, is better seen as an indicator of the shifting contours of what counts as the socioeconomic unit of the kinship group.184

In the case of Jeremiah, it does not necessarily follow that all references in the text to his family origins are completely contrived. However, we would do well to remember the significant interplay between the concepts of clan and occupation throughout the literature of the ancient world. While it may not be possible to distinguish biographical facts with any degree of accuracy it remains the case that the character of Jeremiah is presented to us as belonging to an influential priestly-clerical

184 Boer, Sacred Economy, p. 89.
clan with historical links to, and property rights in, the territory of Benjamin. A hypothetical model of this dynastic network can be constructed. The most significant effort to construct such a model in recent times has been made by S. Dean McBride Jr in his article ‘Jeremiah and the Levitical Priests of Anathoth.’ McBride’s hypothesis is a potentially helpful model in discussing the characterisation of Jeremiah and his links with a matrix of clan based power that appears to operate in a number of the narrative episodes under discussion.

6.3. The Sons of Meshullam: A Speculative Genealogy

In considering both McBride’s reconstructed genealogy for Jeremiah and the present attempt at a similar speculative exercise in a visual format (fig. 1) we must acknowledge that the figure of Hilkiah, Jeremiah’s father, is one of the weakest aspects in this entire framework. It is only possible to link Jeremiah relationally to the clan of Shaphanides in the book, including key players such as Gemariah b. Shaphan and Gedaliah b. Ahikam via an identification of the Hilkiah of Jer 1.1 with the priest Hilkiah we encounter in 2 Kgs. Hilkiah is only mentioned as Jeremiah’s father once. If we assume the Hilkiah of Gemariah b. Hilkiah’s patronym in Jer 29:3 is the same man, then this figure appears twice in total throughout the entire book of Jeremiah. Hilkiah’s own patronym never appears in Jeremiah, thus we are not told the name of Jeremiah’s paternal grandfather.

Following McBride’s assumption that the Hilkiah of Jer 1:1 is the same Hilkiah found in 2 Kings, present at the discovery of the ‘scroll of the law’ during the reign of Josiah, and that this same Hilkiah is also the father of Gemariah in Jer 29:3, doesn’t solve the issue of Hilkiah’s patronym, as it is likewise missing from 2 Kings. This further necessitates reliance on a ‘genealogical dogma’ from 1 Chronicles, to form a full family tree demonstrating Jeremiah’s place within a dynasty of temple and court functionaries operating at the centre of power in the kingdom of Judah.185

Variants of this same genealogy appear also in 1 Chron 9:10-11, Ezra 7:1-5, and Neh 11:10-11 in both the MT and LXX versions. The name of the son of Zadok and father of Hilkiah is spelled either Shallum or Meshullam in each case, reflecting a wider pattern of orthographic variation in these texts where the same name is also alternatively rendered Shelemiah or Meshelemiah. Hence the identification of the Shallum of 1 Chron 5 with the Meshullam of 2 Kgs 22:3. One aspect in favour of the use of this section of 1 Chronicles to reconstruct a speculative genealogy for Jeremiah is that it appears to have as its sole purpose the legitimation of a claim of uninterrupted priestly succession, not to establish any dynastic link for the prophet Jeremiah in particular. This line of Zadokite priestly succession in 1 Chron 5 is regarded as ‘credible’ by McBride and as a ‘defensible genealogical sequence’ by Boyd-Barrick. Using this segment of 1 Chronicles and the reference to the avonym of Shaphan b. Azaliah b. Meshullam, the secretary in 2 Kgs 22:3, it is possible to construct a speculative Zadokite-Shaphanide family tree tracing its roots back to a common ancestor found in the Shallum of 1 Chron 5:38-39 with Jeremiah at its centre.

Some commentators who follow this line of reasoning are content to posit a familial (uncle-nephew) relationship between Hilkiah and Shaphan in 2 Kings 22:3-4. However, it is only when the wider implications of their shared ancestry through Shallum (Meshullam) are laid out and traced through references across a number of biblical texts, that the full scale and spread of this potential priestly-clerical dynasty is visible. Figure 1. below demonstrates the wider potential impact of this clan based power matrix on the political landscape of Judah and thus the narrative episodes in Jeremiah under examination.

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186 These verses appear in the MT as 1 Chr 5:36-41, the chapter and verse references used in most English translations will be utilised throughout the following discussion including the key verse of 1 Chr 6:13 (1 Chr 5:39 of the MT).  
Figure 1: Family tree of the sons of Meshullam based on McBride Jr and Barrick
Visually represented in this manner it becomes clear that this genealogical model involves two main branches, the clerical-administrative one tracing its lineage back to Shaphan, the scribe of 2 Kgs 22, and a priestly branch encompassing the cultically active members of the family. Typical of this sacerdotal branch of the family would be the figure of Zephaniah b. Maaseiah, Jeremiah’s first cousin, among the priests still active in Jerusalem in Jer 29:5-8, who operates as an intermediary between Jeremiah and King Zedekiah at both Jer 21:1 and 37:3. Another figure on this priestly side of the family is Seraiah b. Azariah, identified as Hilkiah’s grandson (thus Jeremiah’s nephew) based on the same Zadokite genealogy of 1 Chron 5. It is not unreasonable to assume then that this Zephaniah and Seraiah are the same priests executed by the Babylonians at Riblah, referenced in 2 Kgs 25:18-21 and Jer 52:24-27.

The other side of the family tree is occupied by the descendants of Shaphan b. Azaliah b. Shallum, understood in this model to be Hilkiah’s nephew and Jeremiah’s first cousin. Notably a number of figures linked patronymically to this Shaphan feature significantly in the clerical administration of the final years of the Judean monarchy and one figure in particular, Gedaliah, carries this familial involvement into the new era of Neo-Babylonian supremacy, taking up an administrative role at Mizpah after the destruction of Jerusalem. According to this genealogical model Gedaliah and Jeremiah are related. Gedaliah is the grandson of Jeremiah’s first cousin, thereby his first cousin twice removed. There is reference to Gedaliah’s father, Ahikam b. Shaphan, working to protect Jeremiah, preventing his being put to death by his accusers in Jer 26:24: ‘But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death.’ Ahikam’s brother, Gemariah b. Shaphan, is mentioned at Jer 36:12 among the officials sitting in the scribe’s chamber. A third son of Shaphan, Elasah, is mentioned alongside a possible brother of Jeremiah named Gemariah b. Hilkiah, as an envoy of king Zedekiah’s, by whom Jeremiah sends his letter to the exiles in Jer 29.

In what may be two parallel accounts at Jer 39:11-14 and 40:4-6 Jeremiah is entrusted to the care of, or alternatively permitted to go join with, Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan. In both accounts of Jeremiah’s release in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem, Gedaliah’s patronym and avonym are both given, identifying him clearly as a Shaphanide. His ensuing stint as governor at Mizpah, which will be more fully explored in a subsequent chapter, evidently marks Gedaliah as an individual of suitable administrative pedigree to take on such a role. Thus, the text presents us with a
distinctive impression of Shaphanide partisan favour of Jeremiah. The notion that Jeremiah may be related to such figures as Gemariah b. Shaphan and Gedaliah b. Ahikam as part of a wider dynastic network would certainly not contradict this.

Alongside the references to these individuals in the biblical literature, upon which the foregoing diagram has largely drawn, there is also a small amount of extrabiblical, epigraphic evidence, that must be considered. Two seals mentioned in our earlier discussion of the epigraphic evidence are of relevance to this speculative dynastic structure, namely the Gemariah b. Shaphan seal (CWSSS 470) and the Azariah b. Hilkiah seal (CWSSS 596). Among the limited number of properly provenanced and authenticated bullae emerging from Jerusalem and dated to around the sixth century BCE these two seal impressions come from the same archaeological context. Both are particularly noteworthy in that they reflect the same name and patronym details we find mentioned in the biblical text. A number of scholars have pointed to the timeframe and administrative activities associated with this type of evidence as supporting the idea of multiple generations of the same family having been active in the upper echelons of the kingdom of Judah:

The collaboration of Hilkiahu the high priest with Shaphan the scribe gives added support to the chronological correspondence of the two bullae with the biblical evidence. Moreover, it stands to reason that their sons, namely Azariahu and Gemariahu respectively, continued to serve the state in the years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, when these bullae were stamped.\(^{190}\)

If our identification is correct, the personage whose name appears on the bulla from the City of David was one of the scribes active at the royal court in Jerusalem. His father was a scribe at the court of Josiah in his 18th year (622 B.C.E.). Eighteen years later, in Jehoiakim’s fifth year (604 B.C.E.) Gemariah son of Shaphan, and his son Micaiah, are also mentioned. The location of Gemariah’s chamber, in ‘the upper court at the entry of the new gate’ of the Temple (Jeremiah 36:10), where Baruch the scribe read Jeremiah’s scroll, certainly testifies to the importance of this personage.\(^{191}\)

In addition to the lack of a patronym for both the Hilkiah of 2 Kgs and the Hilkiah of Jer 1:1 the contentious communications represented in Jer 29 also pose a potential problem in following this speculative genealogical framework. According to this model the royal envoys mentioned at Jer 29:3, Elasah b. Shaphan and Gemariah b. Hilkiah, may be read as Jeremiah’s first cousin once removed, and brother respectively. The

\(^{190}\) Schneider, ‘Azariahu Son of Hilkiahu (High Priest?) on a City of David Bulla,’ p. 140.
\(^{191}\) Shiloh, ‘A Group of Hebrew Bullae from the City of David,’ p. 34.
letter they carry appears to be a response to a message sent from the exiles in Babylon to the priest Zephaniah b. Maaseiah in Jerusalem, mentioned at Jer 29:25. This same figure is portrayed playing the role of an intermediary between Jeremiah and King Zedekiah at both Jer 21:1 and 37:3. This Zephaniah can only be read as a first cousin of Jeremiah if his father Maaseiah is the same Maaseiah b. Shallum the door keeper mentioned at Jer 35:4. Thus far this framework endorses the idea of Jeremiah’s kinsmen occupying a number of key positions within the administration of the kingdom of Judah in the final years of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{192} However, applying the same identifications that produces this picture also necessitates positing a second son of the Maaseiah b. Shallum of Jer 35, a Zedekiah b. Maaseiah mentioned at Jer 29:21.

In Jer 29:21 Zedekiah b. Maaseiah is accused alongside Ahab b. Kolaiah of engaging in false prophecy, perhaps agitating the exiled population in opposition to Jeremiah’s message of a long-term displacement necessitating the recommended course of adaptation and compliance as endorsed in the symbolic code. Could it be that this dynasty was fractured along ideological lines? Could Zedekiah b. Maaseiah have been among the exiled court elites earlier transported to Babylon, and then formed part of an alternate community of influence decrying the failure of his brother Zephaniah and the remaining Jerusalem administration to sufficiently restrain their cousin the wayward prophet Jeremiah? Such intrafamilial discord is certainly not implausible. Alongside this possibility it is also worth noting the implication of disapproval of Jeremiah and his prophetic activities among the population based in his own home territory:

Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth, the ones seeking your life, who say: ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord and you will not die by our hand.’ Therefore, thus says the Lord of Hosts: ‘Behold I appoint punishment upon them, the young men will die by the sword, their sons and their daughters will die by famine, There will be no remnant left to them for I bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, the year of their punishment.’ (Jer 11:21-23)

Nevertheless, considering how so much of the model produced above points to a certain coherence in the position and activities of a significant number of related individuals across multiple generations the incongruity of Zedekiah b. Maaseiah’s role in Jer 29 is problematic.

\textsuperscript{192} Notably Jer 35:4 places the chamber of Maaseiah b. Shallum in proximity with the chamber of Hanan b. Yigdaliah, the space Jeremiah uses to host the Rechabites.
In more general terms however, this speculative genealogy appears to reflect a discernible trend across the Ancient Near East. Links between temple administration, cultic, and political functionaries across a family group or clan structure are highly likely. Nilli Sacher Fox, in her analysis of the use of the term ‘young men’ (ילדים) in 1 Kgs 12:8 posits a model of court life where generations of royals and clerical administrators would have been educated together, retaining social and professional positions across generations, following a similar model attested to in Egypt and signified by the term ‘child of Pharaoh’s household.’ Fox highlights the biblical and epigraphic evidence which may point to the multigenerational presence of specific court families, particularly the Shaphan family, during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. In the Hellenistic period we can turn to the exploits of the Tobiads and Oniads for a similar pattern of religiopolitical involvement spanning several generations.

While the foregoing genealogical model is an entirely speculative construction it does prompt some consideration of the potential characterisation of Jeremiah as a member of a wider familial network of individuals occupying significant and influential roles in the power structures which would have governed the kingdom of Judah towards the end of the monarchic period. This reminds us of Gramsci’s identification of that class of ‘intellectuals’ mentioned in our earlier discussion of the phenomenon of cultural hegemony. The clan based network illustrated in this conjectural family tree is tied to, and indeed may form a part of a dominant class in late monarchic Judean society. Certainly, a number of the episodes in which these individuals feature portray them as among the leading personnel of a Jerusalem centred bureaucracy. Thus, figures such as Gemariah b. Shaphan, Gedaliah b. Ahikam, Zephaniah b. Maaseiah, and Jeremiah himself, may have been part of a privileged group or caste which exercised a form of social and cultural monopoly.

While no definitive proof can be offered of Jeremiah’s membership of such a class of Gramscian intellectuals, this idea does shed a potentially illustrative light on

194 Fox, ‘Royal Officials and Court Families,’ pp. 227-28, also notes the distinction of including the name of an individual’s grandfather (avonym) in the rendering of their patronymic as a marker of multigenerational involvement in administration, a phenomenon we see with the reference to Shaphan b. Azaliah b. Meshullam the secretary in 2 Kgs 22:3.
certain Jeremianic narrative episodes as exercises in cultural hegemony. If these episodes have been composed around a figure who is understood or constructed as belonging to a group which assumed the intellectual and moral leadership of the surrounding society, then it makes perfect sense for these episodes to contain sets of symbols, and thematically consistent ideologemes, which promote the perspective of this class. In Gedaliah b. Ahikam’s leadership at Mizpah, implicitly endorsed by Jeremiah’s freely joining him there, we see this dynastic network’s political and social influence continue into the era of Neo-Babylonian domination. The repeated message of compliance and productivity, building and planting, which is broadcast through the symbolic code, is certainly consonant with the perspective of a dominant political class which has endured beyond the collapse of the previous monarchic power structure.

6.4. Land Redemption in Jer 32

Turning now to the specific episode of land redemption in Jer 32, this narrative should be read in the light of the foregoing model of Jeremiah’s characterisation within a clan based power network and may serve to further elucidate it. Again the argument here is not for any explicit historicity of the event presented, rather it serves to augment the overall image of the figure of Jeremiah as intimately bound up with those same concerns promoted repeatedly throughout the symbolic code; domestic establishment, dynastic inheritance, land cultivation and agricultural productivity.

The biblical town of Anathoth was located to the northeast of Jerusalem, in the present day Palestinian West Bank. The most likely candidate for identification as the site of the Iron Age II settlement is Khirbet Deir es-Sid which bears traces of occupation from the second half of the seventh century BCE into the sixth century BCE. While none of the action of the book of Jeremiah actually takes place in Anathoth, the figure of Jeremiah is repeatedly associated with this location. Alongside the identification of his origins among ‘the priests of Anathoth’ in Jer 1:1 there is also reference to animosity against him on the part of ‘the men of Anathoth’ in Jer 11, while in Jer 29:27 Jeremiah is himself referred to as ‘the Anathothite’ (האנרתו) by his detractors. Indeed, the reference in Jer 11:21 to the men of Anathoth threatening to kill Jeremiah has

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occasionally been interpreted as an indication of some kind of familial or tribal rift which the land redemption episode of Jer 32 serves to heal.\footnote{Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 621.}

Alongside these several mentions of Anathoth we must also add the incident reported at Jer 37:11-16 where Jeremiah is attempting to make his way from Jerusalem northward to Benjamin, via the Benjamin gate of the city, during a lull in the siege. He is seized and imprisoned, accused by the sentry of seeking to ‘desert to the Chaldeans.’ Whether or not the relatively obscure Hebrew of Jer 37:12 (לְהַלְכֶּךָ מָשָּׁה) is a reference to Jeremiah’s seeking to take possession of this portion of land, as asserted by a number of commentaries, the accusation of treachery is telling.\footnote{Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 674; Bright, Jeremiah, p. 229.} This adds to an overall association of the Benjamin region with acquiescence to the Neo-Babylonian invading forces. This association is distinctly relevant to our later discussions of archaeological evidence from the territory of Benjamin and of Gedaliah’s establishment at Mizpah in Jer 40.

There was a word of the Lord unto me, saying: Behold Hanamel b. Shallum your uncle (הנָמַאֵל בֶּן שָׁלְעָם דָּדָאָה) will come unto you saying; ‘Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.’ And Hanamel the son of my uncle (הנָמַאֵל בֶּן דָּדָאָס) came to me, as the Lord had said, to the court of the guard, and he said unto me: ‘Please buy my field which is in Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin, for yours is the right of inheritance and yours the redemption, buy it for yourself.’ And I knew it was the word of the Lord. And I purchased the field from Hanamel the son of my uncle which was in Anathoth and I weighed out the silver to him, seventeen shekels of silver...And I gave the scroll of purchase to Baruch b. Neriah b. Maheseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle (רָמָאָה בֶּן נָרָי), and in the sight of the witnesses, the signatories of the scroll of purchase, and in the sight of all the Judeans, the ones dwelling in the court of the guard...For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; ‘Again houses, and fields and vineyards will be bought in this land.’ (Jer 32:6-15)

The text of Jer 32 where the land redemption transaction is mentioned is relatively sparing in detail. We are given no exact indication of what circumstances have led to Hanamel’s approaching Jeremiah to take control of a land holding they are both ancestrally linked to. In terms of Hanamel’s exact relationship to Jeremiah the text is also unclear. In the MT Jer 32:7-8 identifies Hanamel as Jeremiah’s first cousin; ‘Hanamel b. Shallum your uncle’ (הנָמַאֵל בֶּן שָׁלְעָם דָּדָאָה) at Jer 32:7 and ‘Hanamel the son of my uncle’ (הנָמַאֵל בֶּן דָּדָאָס) at Jer 32:8. Yet at Jer 32:12 we have ‘Hanamel my uncle’
Following this rendering of MT Jer 32:12 certainly better suits the speculative genealogy produced above. Combining details from v. 7 with the identification of Hanamel as Jeremiah’s uncle in v. 12 would provide an avonym for Jeremiah which is absent from the identification of Hilkiah as his father at Jer 1:1, naming Shallum as Jeremiah’s paternal grandfather. However, there are a number of variances across different manuscript editions in Greek, Syriac and Aramaic which render this phrase in Jer 32:12 as ‘Hanamel son of my uncle.’

Whether cousins or uncle and nephew, Hanamel and Jeremiah share a common heritage based in Anathoth, and Jeremiah is called upon by Hanamel to exercise his property rights there. The terminology used to discuss this transaction varies somewhat across the narrative from the divine prediction of Hanamel’s visit to the event itself. In Jer 32:7 Jeremiah’s position with regard to the field in Anathoth is described as ‘right of redemption by purchase’ whereas in 32:8 the more awkward ‘the right of inheritance and [to you] redemption’ is referenced. The LXX version of this verse further compounds the idea of a hereditary possession with the formulation καὶ σὺ πρεσβύτερος (‘for you are the elder’).

The closest references in the Hebrew Bible to this custom are found in legislation governing a similar scenario in Lev 25 and the more obscure situation encountered in Ruth which presents a hybrid of land redemption and quasi-Levirate marriage:

If your brother becomes poor, and sells part of his property, then his nearest kinsman shall come and redeem what his brother has sold. (Lev 25:25)

If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you. (Ruth 4:4)

While Boaz’s assertion of the right of redemption in Ruth 4 is confined to an oral contract, significant space in Jer 32 is devoted to an account of the drawing up of a deed purchase, the production of a sealed copy, and their burial in an earthenware vessel. Aside from perhaps offering some insight into contemporary scribal and archival practices this segment of the text lays a certain emphasis on Jeremiah’s

199 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 620; BHS p. 848.
200 Bright, Jeremiah, p. 238. The scenario presented in Ruth 4 conforms neither to the land redemption legislation of Lev 25 nor indeed to the Levirate marriage obligation enshrined in Deut 25. It is worth noting however that the narratives of both Ruth 4 and Jer 32 include the participation of witnesses to legitimate the transaction.
procedurally correct fulfilment of custom. By contrast there is a complete lack of detail as to what Jeremiah’s redemptive purchase of Hanamel’s field actually entails.

As parallel instances of such a transaction elsewhere in the biblical literature are so sparse, we are confined to drawing a comparison between the case of Jer 32 and the concept of הַלְכָּת הָשָׁדִּים (‘portion of the field’). This is characterised by Roland Boer, not as a fixed plot of land but rather as an allocated land share, stemming from the verb חַלְכָּה meaning to allot, distribute or apportion.201 Notably Ruth 4:3 is one occasion where חַלְכָּת הָשָׁדִּים appears. Support for applying this same allocated land share concept to the redemption purchase in Jer 32 may be found in the enigmatic occurrence of the verb חַלְכָּה at Jer 37:12, "משׁ ם בתוך העם לחלק. This phrase has been variously translated as ‘to receive his portion there among the people,’ ‘to receive thence his portion [or inheritance] in the midst of the people’ or ‘to escape from there in the midst of the people.’202

The allocated land share system has its basis in the fact that it was usufruct and not acreage which determined agricultural productivity in the ancient world. It is the means by which access to the resources produced through agricultural utilisation of the land can be secured, not the expanse of the agricultural holding, which determined prosperity; ‘land by itself was useless.’203 There was no shortage of available land, there was however, due to a relatively low population, a constant labour shortage. This situation is reflected for example in estate management documents from Ugarit which focus on numbers of labourers, yields, and tools while providing no information on the actual acreage of the estates themselves. This situation is also reflected in the various mechanisms for securing labour through corvée and debt indenture reflected in a variety of ancient texts, including the Code of Hammurabi, documents from Mari, and numerous Old Babylonian tablets.204

One mina of silver belonging to king Ammitaqumma are owed by Nadina and Zikilda, the sons of Kutturu. Instead of the one mina of silver they are to reside in the palace. If someone repays the silver,

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201 Boer, Sacred Economy, pp. 72-73.
203 Boer, Sacred Economy, p. 79.
they may go wherever they wish. Their surety is their family. (ATT/39/148)²⁰⁵

The human being pledged for debt represents the most valuable collateral.²⁰⁶ Instances of corvée and associated service obligations are also attested in documents pertaining to the lives of Judeans resident in Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, for example in the corpus of documents from Āl-Yāḥūdu.

Boer’s reconstruction of this allocated land share model, drawing on Mario Liverani’s earlier description of this model, is based on observations of more recent corollaries observed in the Near East, particularly the musha’a system of communal land ownership in Palestine.²⁰⁷ Hence, Hanamel’s field at Anathoth may better be understood as a clan territory coterminous with the village commune:

Indivisible from this unit also were the social and cultural forces that determined the economic practices of subsistence survival. Collective activity was inescapable within the village and between villages that were 2-4 kilometers (1.4–2.8 miles) apart, for the individual was helpless in the face of natural and social disaster, needing cooperation and reciprocal aid to survive. Thus kinship, both highly flexible and embodied in the patriarchal household, was crucial…It also meant that any tax burden, primarily in terms of labor but also as a tithe of produce, fell on the whole village commune, for it was assessed for such purposes as a unit.²⁰⁸

Even if they were small, the villages were real systems, which the palace saw as administrative units and local cells of judicial responsibility, but which were in fact seen by those who lived there as large family groups owning and organizing the exploitation of an agro-pastoral domain.²⁰⁹

A surplus of land versus a scarcity of labour may also be reflected in the redemption price Jeremiah pays to Hanamel; seventeen shekels of silver. While it is impossible to know the purchasing price of silver at the time, we might compare the price of fifty shekels paid by David for a threshing floor at 2 Sam 24:24.²¹⁰ Though several commentators point to the unknown variable of the size of the plot of land, if we

²⁰⁶ Boer, Sacred Economy, pp. 70, 159.
²⁰⁸ Boer, Sacred Economy, pp. 74-75.
²⁰⁹ Mario Liverani, Israel’s History and the History of Israel (London: Equinox, 2005), p. 22.
are considering this transaction as part of the allocated land share system, then the seventeen shekels is the redemption price for a share in the right of usufruct in a clan based agricultural collective, not for a specific acreage.\textsuperscript{211}

This episode, articulating as it does the familial link between the participants Hanamel and Jeremiah and the right of redemption held by Jeremiah as part of an allocative land share system, succinctly demonstrates the kinship-household institutional form at work. As one of the various modes of economic activity, which when arranged together, operate as part of the regime of imperial plunder. The kinship-household form in this instance provides the social determination of subsistence agriculture at Anathoth,\textsuperscript{212} The narrative of Jeremiah’s land redemption purchase, as related in Jer 32, is steeped in cultural assumptions, customary law, and social sanction; this serves to definitively inscribe the character of Jeremiah within the symbolic code. By conducting this redemptive purchase, the character of Jeremiah is presented as participating in the same clan based system of agricultural productivity at the heart of the symbolic code on display across the various narratives under examination. Presented as enacting his right of inheritance and redemption in Jer 32:8, Jeremiah is thus incorporated into this same system of signifiers. He is incorporated into the semiotic realm of fruit, crops, gardens, harvest, planting, oil, and wine. Rather than a presumed asocial outsider, the figure of the prophet himself plays a role in the themes of agricultural productivity, hospitality, building, dwelling, domain, and kinship.

Several constituent elements of the symbolic code are further reinforced at Jer 32:15: ‘For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.”’ While most frequently interpreted in theological terms as a statement of the symbolic value of Jeremiah’s purchase, as a prophetic sign-act pointing to a divine promise of future restoration, the occurrence of the trio of houses, fields, and vineyards (בתים ושׁ דות וכרמים) is revealing.\textsuperscript{213} This phrase is an exact parallel of the constituent trio of the Rechabites’ statement of negation at Jer 35:7: ‘a house you will not build, and seed you will not sow, and vineyard you will not plant.’ There are also echoes of the houses and gardens of the exhortation to the exiles in the letter of Jer 29. The houses, fields, and vineyards of Jer

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{211} Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 620.
\textsuperscript{212} Boer, Sacred Economy, p. 6.
\end{footnotes}
32:15 must also therefore be read in the light of the symbolic matrix of build-plant-marry identified in Deut 20 and 28. Thus the narrative passage of Jer 32 presenting Jeremiah’s participation in the land redemption purchase acts as a key moment of representation of the prophet, one in which his characterisation echoes this central motif.

The characterisation of the prophet Jeremiah, when considered as part of an overall narrative discourse, plays a role in reinforcing the key values at the centre of the symbolic code. This integration of the character of Jeremiah into the wider symbolic system is not confined to this incident in Jer 32, but relates also to his position within a wider clan structure that informs the enaction of the redemptive purchase. In the discussion of the speculative genealogy produced above the significant potency of this aspect of his characterisation has already been touched on. This characterization of Jeremiah is also relevant to the portrayal of the territory of Benjamin, particularly in the narrative episode of Jer 40, where Gedaliah, himself a Shaphanide, and putative kinsman of Jeremiah, takes on an administrative role at Mizpah.

6.5. The Significance of Benjamin

From the very beginning of the book of Jeremiah we are presented with the prophet as a character who belongs to a clan of priestly lineage, associated with Anathoth in Benjamin. As already mentioned, these details may echo the story of the priest Abiathar being banished by Solomon to his fields in Anathoth in 1 Kgs 2:26. Anathoth is likewise the location associated with Jeremiah’s redemptive purchase in Jer 32. A further reference to the Benjamin region is made in Jer 37:15 where Jeremiah is prevented from leaving Jerusalem via the Benjamin gate and accused of attempted desertion to the Neo-Babylonians. That this attempted exit from the city north towards Benjamin leads Jeremiah’s captor to assume the prophet’s intention of desertion deserves further examination.

Oded Lipschits points out that an awareness of collaboration with the Neo-Babylonians on the part of some deserters informs Zedekiah’s reluctance to follow Jeremiah’s advice in their conversation at Jer 38:19: ‘I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they abuse me.’ Combined with the earlier accusation levelled at Jeremiah, this serves to create an

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impression that perhaps the territory of Benjamin was occupied by the Neo-Babylonians at this time and potentially a locus of collaboration on the part of a certain sector of Judean society. In addition to this, we have the reference at Jer 40:1 to Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, eventually releasing Jeremiah at Ramah, another Benjaminite town.

Is there any extrabiblical data to support this impression? Among archaeologists there is a relatively broad consensus that the territory of Benjamin did not suffer destruction at the hands of the Neo-Babylonians to the same extent as other parts of Judah. While there is some destruction of settlements on the eastern periphery of Benjamin at this time, several key sites closer to the central mountain ridge; Gibeah, Mozah, Mizpah, and Bethel all lack a distinctive destruction layer for this period. In addition, the high concentration of מ(ו)צה stamped jar handles found almost exclusively in this area point to unbroken economic activity.215

To describe the Neo-Babylonian siege of Jerusalem and its immediate aftermath as a time of prosperity for Benjamin would not be accurate. While there is evidence for agricultural and economic activity in Benjamin, particularly at Mizpah, during this time, any prosperity is only relative to the contrasting widespread evidence of largescale destruction in other parts of Judah for this period. Faust’s description of the decline of Benjamin as far more gradual by comparison to the rest of Judah is likely more appropriate.216 In terms of ongoing economic activity in Benjamin during and after the siege of Jerusalem in 586 BCE it is worth bearing in mind that the material needs of the Neo-Babylonian forces engaged in a sustained military campaign, and any administrative and bureaucratic staff, would have necessitated the continued production of the typical Benjaminites, oil, wine, and cereals.217 Nevertheless, the discernible contrast between the fate of Benjamin and that of other parts of Judah does point to a marked difference in treatment of the territory at the hands of the Neo-Babylonians. The hypotheses of the early surrender of Benjamin at the outset of the siege of Jerusalem, or perhaps the annexation of Benjamin as early as 597 BCE, have both been put forward.

In terms of the present analysis of the characterisation of Jeremiah as a member of a Benjaminites, represented as having a specific connection

with the territory in terms of agricultural economic activity, the distinctive fate of Benjamin at this time is pertinent. The differentiated condition of the territory, according to the archaeological data available, further reinforces the association of Benjamin with potential collaboration with the Neo-Babylonians. Jeremiah's characterisation at various points in the text, alongside the narrative of his participation in a redemptive transaction with his Anathothite kinsman in Jer 32, must be also considered in this light.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the characterisation of the prophet Jeremiah as a member of a specific clan with links in both the priestly and clerical branches of the Judean administrative class. It has also highlighted how aspects of the representation of Jeremiah as the central figure in the text, the activity he is presented as engaging in for example, illustrates how the character of the prophet operates as a literary vehicle for a number of ideas. The literary cultural product, the typical lone celibate figure of the prophet, is enlisted and reformulated to reinforce a hegemonic message of normative compliance, maintaining and upholding the new post-destruction social order.

Based on the delineations of Zadokite priestly succession in 1 Chr 5 and 9, alongside a number of references across a variety of biblical texts, and a small amount of epigraphic evidence, it is possible to produce a speculative genealogy for Jeremiah and a number of his contemporaries. This reconstructed family tree portrays a priestly-clerical dynasty. Such a model demonstrates the wider potential impact of a clan based power matrix on the political landscape of Judah. Two main branches may be discerned; a clerical-administrative branch tracing its lineage back to Shaphan, the scribe of 2 Kgs 22, and a priestly branch encompassing the cultically active members of the family who have as their common ancestor the priest Hilkiah, also referenced in 2 Kgs 22. Notably, several figures who share a common Shaphanide ancestry feature in the clerical administration in the final years of the Judean monarchy. Gedaliah b. Ahikam carries the administrative involvement of the Shaphanide branch of the dynasty on into the new era of Neo-Babylonian supremacy, taking up an administrative role at Mizpah after the destruction of Jerusalem. Gedaliah appears to have been an individual of suitable pedigree to take up such a position.

This speculative genealogical model indicates a certain consistency in the official positions and associated activities of a significant number of related individuals across several generations. Links between temple administration, cultic, and political
functionaries within a family group or clan structure are not unusual in the ancient world. Furthermore, we must consider the use of kinship terminology in articulations of a variety of social relationships, including professions, guilds and socio-economic units such as villages and their associated agricultural settlements. Consequently, a certain artificiality and malleability of genealogies is to be expected. Nevertheless, whether truly related by blood or not, the character of Jeremiah is presented as part of a network of individuals occupying various influential roles in Judah’s governing power structures. The clan based power network proposed by this reconstruction may be illustrative of a dominant social class in late monarchical Judean society. Certainly, this network includes a number of individuals portrayed as personnel within the Jerusalem centred bureaucracy. Gemariah b. Shaphan, Gedaliah b. Ahikam, Zephaniah b. Maaseiah, and several others, perhaps including Jeremiah himself, may have formed part of a prominent leading group which wielded some form of social and cultural monopoly.

Antonio Gramsci certainly didn’t have the social formations of the ancient world top of mind when he offered his definition of the intellectual castes as the deputies of the ruling class who take on the mantle of the intellectual and moral leadership of civil society thereby facilitating the enshrinement of the values and norms of that ruling class as ‘common sense’ among the subject population. However, when we look at the clerical, religious, cultural, and later in the case of Gedaliah, political roles of the members of the extended clan network to which Jeremiah himself appears to have belonged the comparison articulated in this chapter is worthwhile, and should at the very least give pause for thought.

Reference in Jer 1:1 to Jeremiah’s being ‘of the priests of Anathoth’ may possibly echo the story of the priest Abiathar being banished by King Solomon to his lands there in 1 Kgs 2:26. Anathoth, which is located in Benjamin, is also the place mentioned in reference to Jeremiah’s redemptive purchase in Jer 32. Mention of the territory of Benjamin is again made at Jer 37:15 where Jeremiah is prevented from leaving Jerusalem and accused of attempted desertion to the Neo-Babylonians. Furthermore, the settlement of Mizpah, the location of Gedaliah’s Neo-Babylonian sponsored administration after the destruction of Jerusalem, is likewise in the territory of Benjamin. Archaeological evidence appears to indicate that Benjamin did not suffer destruction at the hands of the Neo-Babylonians to the same extent as other parts of Judah. This is best characterised as a less rapid decline in comparison to other parts of
Judah at this time. This discernible contrast indicates a marked difference in treatment of the territory at the hands of the Neo-Babylonians, inspiring a number of hypotheses including the possibility of early surrender or perhaps its annexation as early as 597 BCE. The characterisation of Jeremiah as belonging to an influential clan based network with dynastic links to Benjamin in particular therefore must be considered in light of the territory’s unique profile as a potential Neo-Babylonian acquisition in Judah at this time.

From the very outset of the book, the character of Jeremiah is presented to the reader as belonging to an influential clan of Levitical heritage with links to Anathoth. The episode of Jer 32 where Jeremiah engages in a redemptive purchase of land rights in Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel is a key aspect of the prophet’s characterisation as inscribed within the thematic system of agricultural productivity, on display in several of the episodes considered in the present thesis. By conducting this redemptive purchase Jeremiah engages explicitly in the dynastic politics of the clan network of which he is a member. If Jeremiah, as a literary character, may be perceived as belonging to a social group consisting of Gramscian ‘intellectuals’ which exercised influence over the cultural mores of the wider society, the fact that so many of the narrative episodes in which he features contain an array of thematically consistent ideologemes, which promote the perspective of a ruling imperial power which demands agricultural productivity, the maintenance of social stability and ready compliance to a new post-collapse political regime, should come as no surprise.
7. Chapter 2: Jer 29:5-7 in the Neo-Babylonian Economic Context

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the symbolic code at work in Jer 29:5-7. In particular it will interpret the meaning and ideological impetus behind the exhortation to build, plant, and marry:

Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and bear sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to men, and they will bear sons and daughters, and increase there and do not diminish. And seek the welfare of the city to which I have sent ye into exile there and pray for her sake unto the Lord for in her good will be your good. (Jer 29:5-7)

These verses present a crystallisation of several elements: home building, family establishment, marriage, gardens and fruit, and a positive and orderly presentation of urban space. While appearing in a far more diffuse manner in some of the other episodes under discussion, here we have a succinct expression of the hegemonic message of the symbolic code. It is important that in the present treatment of Jer 29 full advantage is taken of such a clear instance of the symbolic code at work. This will be achieved by interrogating the figurative influence of references to horticulture and examining the albeit limited data available on the historical reality experienced by Judean exiles in Babylon.

‘Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit,’ in this single verse domestic space, agricultural participation, along with the ideological potency of fruit and sustenance are all present. To get a better idea of the ideological motivation behind the exhortation of Jer 29:5-7 an examination of the biblical and, admittedly problematic, extra-biblical evidence will be necessary. What are the circumstances of exiled populations likely to have been in reality? In order to answer this question, the corpus of Āl-Yāḥūdu archival documents will be considered, alongside other evidence, as part of a discussion of the circumstances of the community of exiles as represented in Jer 29.

7.1. The Letter of Jeremiah 29

Jeremiah 29 opens with a letter from Jeremiah addressed to what might be considered the leaders of the community of Judean exiles in Babylon; elders, priests, and prophets, transported there alongside king Jehoiachin and the queen mother in 597 BCE. Elasah b. Shaphan and Gemariah b. Hilkiah are named as the emissaries of
King Zedekiah, via whom Jeremiah sent this communication. The letter is framed as a response to a previous communication from certain figures among the exiles in Babylon, complaining about Jeremiah to the authorities remaining in Jerusalem including the priest Zephaniah b. Maaseiah. A key aspect of Jeremiah’s attitude, about which said complaint was made, is his insistence that the exiles settle in for a lengthy period of residence in Babylon:

...why do you not rebuke Jeremiah the Anathothite, the one prophesying to ye? Because therefore he sent unto us in Babylon saying; ‘It will be a long time, build ye houses, and plant ye gardens and eat ye of their fruit.’ (Jer 29:27–28)

Jeremiah’s letter then either echoes the exact phrase some of the exiles in Babylon have already complained of or more likely there is a conflation of different texts. The LXX differs significantly from the MT at verse 28, with the two named characters Shemaiah and Zephaniah instead being admonished for a criticism of Jeremiah on their part.218

The appearance of the same trio of build-plant-marry in Jeremiah’s exhortation to the exiles at verses 5-6, and a partial reappearance in the complaint of verse 28 is intriguing. Even in the negative restatement of verse 28 the key activities of building and planting are highlighted. These verses of course echo the same formulations which we are familiar with from both Deut 20 and Deut 28. Indeed, a cornerstone of domestic establishment, dynastic succession, plays a role in the predicted fate of one of Jeremiah’s detractors. The foreseen punishment for the false prophets in Babylon, Ahab b. Kolaiah and Zedekiah b. Maaseiah, is death by fire at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. However, Shemaiah the Nechlamite, who has called for the Jerusalem authorities to both contradict Jeremiah’s message and to condemn him for it, faces dynastic extinction:

...he shall not have anyone living among this people to see the good that I am going to do to my people, says the Lord, for he has spoken rebellion against the Lord. (Jer 29:32)

Whether or not Jeremiah 29 preserves a genuine exchange is of less importance than the clear rhetorical impact of the passage, particularly the exhortation of Jer 29:5-7, in modelling the ideal behaviour of a community of exiles from the perspective of the text. At first glance these simple commands; to settle and be

218 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 564.
agriculturally productive, are all in keeping with one of the dominant messages of the book of Jeremiah, that the collapse of the kingdom of Judah at the hands of Babylon is all part of the divine plan to which the Judeans must now readily adapt. However, if we pay closer attention to the translation of the Masoretic Text in particular, a further, far more explicitly agricultural, and thereby economic sense to these commands, comes to the fore. Read in this light then the depth of meaning behind this concise instance of the three pillars of the build-plant-marry pattern of Deut 20 and 28, can be exposed. By investigating the implication of the use of build-plant-marry in this particular context in Jer 29, it may be possible to uncover the historical context which provides these elements of the symbolic code with such a robust influence here and elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah.

7.1.1. Reading Jer 29:5 in an Agricultural Sense

The cultivation of fruit was a central pillar of the Ancient Near Eastern economy, and the glory of a city was visualised in her gardens, with monarchs boasting of their expansive irrigation projects and associated cultivable spaces. There is a consistent symbolic relationship between fruit imagery and ideas of obedience, blessing, and abundance in the Torah. A similar pattern emerges in the utilisation of fruit imagery in Jeremiah, at times in a more oppositional mode. A key example of this is the figurative use of figs in Jer 24:

Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘as these good figs I will regard for good the exiled of Judah, who I sent from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good and I will cause them to return to this land. I will build them and not pull down. I will plant them and not pluck up… As the bad figs which cannot be eaten from badness,’ thus says the Lord; ‘ so will I give Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the remnant of Jerusalem, those left behind in this land and those dwelling in the Land of Egypt. I will give them as an object of terror for evil to all the kingdoms of the land, as a disgrace, as a taunt, and as a curse, in all the places to which I drive them. (Jer 24: 5-9)

Notably this divine pronouncement is set at the time of King Jehoiachin’s exile. The letter of Jer 29 is addressed to that same group of exiles, identified as those who accompanied Jehoiachin, his mother, and various courtiers at the time of their removal from Jerusalem. The motif of good and bad figs central to the proclamation of Jer 24 is then utilised again at Jer 29:17, in a potentially deliberate reiteration of this earlier statement: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold I am sending to them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence and I will give them as horrid figs which will not be eaten from badness.”'
The gardens of Jer 29:5 may then be read in light of Jer 24. If the exiles deported to Babylon alongside King Jehoiachin are the ‘good figs,’ destined to be built and planted rather than torn down and uprooted as per Jer 24:6, they can secure divine favour and assurance of their survival by following the instructions of Jer 29:5, by building and planting – good gardens make good figs. We will encounter the fruit motif again in Jer 40:10,12; in Gedaliah’s exhortation to the Judeans assembled at Mizpah and the resulting idyllic scene of agricultural productivity and abundance. For the moment however keen attention must be paid to the possibility of reading the command to ‘plant gardens and eat their fruit,’ of Jer 29:5 in an explicitly agricultural sense.

Paying closer attention to the MT of these segments in Jeremiah a further, far more explicitly agricultural sense to the command of Jer 29:5 comes to the fore. It should be noted that the word ‘gardens’ in Jer 29:5 is rendered גנות in the MT; the feminine noun גנה with the appropriate feminine plural ending גנות. While ג, the masculine noun, occurs about 42 times in the Hebrew Bible, the feminine גנה and גנות collectively appear only about 16 times. In those rarer instances where the feminine noun is used, the meaning of a tree-planted garden, orchard, or grove, is particularly implied:

I laid waste your gardens (גנותיכם) and your vineyards;
your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; (Amos 4:9)

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens (גנות) and eat their fruit. (Amos 9:14)

I made myself gardens (גנויות) and parks (תפארות) and planted in them
all kinds of fruit trees. (Eccl 2:5)

I went down to the nut orchard (גנת אגוז),
to look at the blossoms of the valley,
to see whether the vines had budded,
whether the pomegranates were in bloom. (Song 6:11)

As a consequence of highlighting the agricultural sense of גַּנּות, the possibility that the
divine command of Jer 29:5 demands participation in the Neo-Babylonian economic
system on the part of the population of Judean exiles addressed in Jeremiah’s letter,
becomes far more obvious.

The planting of gardens is a component of the collective activity of build-plant-
marry enjoined upon the exiles in order to ensure their wholesale communal economic
participation in the wider Neo-Babylonian imperial economic system. As the declaration
to the exiles in Jer 29:5-7 calls for both the planting of agricultural gardens and the
pursuit of the welfare of the city, the significance of both garden and city in the Neo-
Babylonian context must be more fully examined. In order to do this, it will be
necessary to take a closer look at the actual agricultural and economic landscape of
Mesopotamia in the Neo-Babylonian period. This will help in unpacking what sort of life
in exile is actually envisioned for the addressees of Jer 29:5-7, and to what end their
obedient compliance is being elicited through this application of the symbolic code.

7.1.2. Agricultural and Economic Trends in Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia at the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian period was emerging
from a centuries-long period of deep agricultural, economic, and demographic decline.
A combination of circumstances coalesced to bring about a surge in economic growth
and infrastructural development, not least among them the end of a period of extreme
aridity. The Mesopotamian climate appears to have become markedly wetter from the
eighth century BCE on. 219 This facilitated the development of sophisticated irrigation-
farming systems. Mesopotamian agriculture was focused on the production of two main
crops; barley and dates. 220 In the Neo-Babylonian period the extensive development of
a network of canals was instigated by the crown as part of a series of ambitious
infrastructural projects, largely enabled by the material gains gleaned from an
aggressive policy of imperial expansion and domination.

On the back of these developments a number of related changes in Mesopotamian agriculture occurred. Perhaps the most significant of these was the intensification of land use enabled by state-sponsored land reclamation and amelioration projects. This agricultural intensification was typified by an increased focus on horticulture, date farming in particular, which will be addressed in greater detail below. There was a concomitant rise in urbanisation with the developing cities in a position to facilitate the creative environment for more long-range planning. Thus the Mesopotamian cities increasingly incorporated networks of rural settlements into webs of ‘suprasubsistence interrelationships.’ In basic terms, the Neo-Babylonian economy could be characterised as a two sector model; a subordinate village-based domestic sector and a dominating urban institutional sector composed of temples and palaces. Agriculture at this time became increasingly market-oriented and the economy more monetised, with significant population growth providing the impetus for technological advances.

All of these factors contributed to a widespread increase in the available agricultural surplus. Thus, the Neo-Babylonian period, often characterised as ‘the long sixth century,’ is a period marked by population increase, internal peace and stability, economic growth, and higher levels of prosperity, particularly in the urban sector. Such prosperity is evidenced for example in the phenomenon of increased labour specialisation. In her study of a number of cuneiform laundry contracts for the seventy year period between the reigns of the Neo-Babylonian King Nabonidus and the Achaemenid King Xerxes, Waerzeggars highlights a remarkably steady wage rate. This emergence of a professional class of labourers specializing in domestic services is further evidence of an uptick in ‘refined consumption.’ The Mesopotamian cities were the foci of this increased consumption, one of the characteristic ‘benefits of empire.’

Esaggil-budia will do the laundry of Bâbu-sarrat, daughter of Iqiša, and her children and of her two slaves, from the first day of month nisannu for the agreed period, and he will make the whites really white. Bâbu-sarrat will pay 1 kor barley in month ajjaru and 1 kor

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223 Adams, Heartland of Cities, p. 50.
dates in month [x] to Esaggil-budia. He takes responsibility for the clothes. (VS 686: 1-10)

Economic growth in the Neo-Babylonian period may also have had an impact on land prices which, based on the very limited data available, appear to have been significantly higher than those in Judah during the same period. Thus the usufruct-focused regime central to our analysis of the redemptive land purchase in Jer 32, was not a determining factor to the same extent in Mesopotamia. The comparable scarcity of land is also reflected, not only in pricing, but also in the fact that the Neo-Babylonian emperors engaged in concerted efforts to expand the available cultivable areas, through renewed colonization and increased exploitation. This situation would have been a key motivating factor in the decision to turn to high intensity date palm cultivation which characterises agriculture in Babylon during this period. In terms of growth, development, and technological advancement, the Mesopotamian economy in the long sixth century was the outcome of a fortuitous coincidence of numerous elements. A combination of longue durée factors such as demography and climate, alongside more immediate transitory political and socio-economic developments, combined to create a relatively thriving agricultural and economic landscape, which Jursa termed a ‘Smithian success story.’

7.1.3. Gardens as a Component of Mesopotamian Agriculture

As has already been noted the Neo-Babylonian period in Mesopotamia is characterised by a discernible shift towards the intensification of land use particularly an increase in horticulture and the cultivation of date palms in garden groves. What exactly does the term ‘garden’ imply in this context? What might the specific aspects of date cultivation be able to tell us about what is implied in the divine command to the Judean exiles in Jer 29:5 to ‘plant gardens and eat their fruit’?

Quite often in studies of ancient Mesopotamian civilisations the phenomenon of gardens is considered only in terms of the famously prestige cultivated spaces which

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228 Waerzeggars, ‘Neo-Babylonian Laundry,’ p. 90.
adorned the palaces of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian emperors. Royal botanical and pleasure gardens are sometimes mentioned in monumental inscriptions as significant state achievements in the reign of a particular monarch. For example, a near-complete stela of the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II discovered in April 1951 at Nimrud celebrates the creation of a palace garden. The text refers to infrastructural projects, the construction of a canal and irrigation of the surrounding area. The stela includes a long list of the variety of plant species collected by the king in his extensive travels across the empire:

I dug a canal from the Upper Zab, cutting through the mountain to its summit, and called its name Pati-hegalli. The meadow-land by the Tigris I irrigated abundantly and planted gardens in its area. All kinds of fruits and vines I planted and the best of them I offered to Assur my lord and to the temples of my land. That city (Kalhu) I presented to Assur my lord. From the lands in which I had travelled and the mountains which I had passed, trees and seeds which I saw: cedar, cypress, box, pine, 'physician's ointment,' juniper... date-palm, willow, mulberry, bitter almonds...oak, tamarisk...pistachio, and laurel, poplar, Dead Sea fruit, itch-plant, pomegranate, medlar, fir, ...pear, quince, fig...plum, Nerium odorum...Persian lilac...sycamore fig, frankincense in the plantations... (ND1004 lines 36-48)

The mention of plants such as 'physician's ointment' and 'itch-plant' in this list also function as a reminder of the importance of physic gardens in the highly sophisticated herbal medicine sector in Mesopotamia at this time, evident from a variety of esoteric medical texts. Another cuneiform text from the reign of the Assyrian King Merodach-Baladan contains an extensive list of sixty-seven plants organised into fourteen different categories, including no less than five varieties of mint.

As can be seen from the stela of Ashurnasirpal II quoted above, prestige luxury gardens were one element in a wider integrated system of canal construction and the expansion of areas of available arable land via irrigation systems. The agricultural gardens under discussion here were certainly far less spectacular than those royal gardens where kings are poetically described luxuriating in their bounty: in the words of Ashurnasirpal II's stela; 'like a squirrel I pick fruit in the garden of delights.' Nonetheless, the far more mundane and practical agricultural gardens were likewise

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part of, and wholly dependent on, this wider infrastructural network of canals and irrigation systems. As an essential facet of the Neo-Babylonian economy gardens were referred to as part of the cultural identity and status-claims of a city, being described in several prayers and hymns for instance as the ‘vitality of a district’ or increasing the ‘pride of the city’.\textsuperscript{236} We are also reminded of Cole’s analysis of the motif of orchard destruction in Mesopotamian imperial propaganda, no doubt a potent ideological weapon considering the centrality of these agricultural gardens to both the economic and cultural life of the city.\textsuperscript{237}

What was it that distinguished the Mesopotamian agricultural garden from arable land use in fields? Intensity of use in particular sets the agricultural garden apart from the field. The agricultural gardens would not necessarily have been located directly adjacent to one’s dwelling. However, they would certainly have been within a reasonable walking distance. Based on the available evidence from extant cadastral documents these plots of land tended to be clustered on the outskirts of the cities, their locations being of necessity linked with the network of canals along which they tended to be sited. This pattern of horticulture thus often formed a belt of gardens around the city’s perimeter, a scenario still reflected in the layout of several cities in modern day Iraq.\textsuperscript{238}

These agricultural gardens were the sole method to grow certain food crops, including particular types of fruits, along with beans, chick-peas and other pulses, garlic, and onions. Indeed, the Akkadian word for garden \textit{ki-sum-ma} literally means ‘place of the onions’\textsuperscript{239} These garden food crops all share particular characteristics in that they need special care and attention to thrive e.g. manual thinning and pollination. Furthermore, the harvesting of these plant varieties can be spread out over the course of the year, assuring a steady product supply. Each crop type also lends itself to the more intensive use of a smaller plot of land.\textsuperscript{240} Gardens require tending by a relatively small labour force but one with particular expertise. By contrast field grasses, such as barley, require a much larger labour force for short periods of intense activity on a seasonal basis i.e. sowing and harvest time. In terms of the development of agriculture among the earliest human civilisations it may well be the case that gardens predate

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{237} Cole, ‘The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare,’ pp. 34, 36.
\bibitem{239} Adams, \textit{Heartland of Cities}, p. 86.
\end{thebibliography}
field farming, it is certainly the case that typical garden crops tend not to need any treatment over fire to transform them into a usable commodity, unlike many varieties of grain.\textsuperscript{241}

Agricultural gardens were of course much smaller in size and would not have expanded over time, unlike cultivable field areas which expanded with successful state-sponsored land reclamation and colonization efforts. Because they required a stable level of continuously available labour and tended to remain static in both physical size, location, and function, agricultural gardens are likely to have had an impact on social structure. It is therefore worth considering what the role of gardens may have been in terms of the social structure and activities of the community of exiles addressed in Jer 29. While remaining modest in size the product yields of agricultural gardens were exponentially greater than that of fields, nowhere is this more obvious than in the case of date cultivation.

The date palm, \textit{Phoenix Dactylifera}, is a perennial xerophyte. Once mature a single date palm tree is capable of producing an abundant crop yield, in excess of 45 kilogrammes of fruit each year.\textsuperscript{242} Thus its yield both in terms of surface area, and per capita of labour, is significantly higher than arable farming. The average date crop volume is nearly 9,000 litres per hectare.\textsuperscript{243} As a xerophyte the date palm is uniquely suited to an arid environment, high water salinity, and alkaline soil, thus making this plant species one ‘perfectly adapted to the ecologic conditions of the region.’\textsuperscript{244} The date fruit itself is easily transported, stored, and preserved. It is also highly nutritious, a relatively inexpensive source of carbohydrates with a much higher caloric density than grain. The plant also produces numerous by-products including timber and fibre. The large seeds of the fruit can be soaked and crushed to make animal feed, the flowers and cooked young leaves of the plant are also edible, and both the fruit and the sap can be used in the manufacture of fermented beverages.\textsuperscript{245} Date palms were grown in multi-use groves, that is the shady area of ground between the tall trees would be used for the cultivation of another garden food crop.\textsuperscript{246} As a consequence of these myriad

\begin{enumerate}
\item Oppenheim, \textit{Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization}, p. 312.
\item Dandamaev, ‘Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy,’ p. 264.
\item Oppenheim, \textit{Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization}, p. 312; Adams, \textit{Heartland of Cities}, p. 11.
\item Neveling Porter, ‘Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II,’ p. 134.
\item Jursa, \textit{Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia}, p. 757.
\end{enumerate}
factors the date palm was central to the shift towards intensive horticulture in Mesopotamian agriculture at this time.

As a fruit crop dates need expert management. The plants are dioecious, that is males and females of the species occur separately, resulting in the characteristically labour intensive aspect of their cultivation. All pollination must be conducted entirely manually with the pollen from the flowers of the male plants being introduced to the female flowers in order to fertilize them. In the present day context this work is generally conducted using either ladders or a climbing harness as the palms generally grow to between 21 and 23 metres. In terms of considering the effect of garden agriculture on the shape of society the longevity of the date palm is key. Date cultivation represents a long term investment. While it is true that some trees can begin producing within six to eight years of planting some female palms can take as long as twenty years to begin producing fruit.\footnote{Cole, 'The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare,' p. 29.} Once productive a tree can produce fruit crops for more than a century.\footnote{Neveling Porter, 'Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II,' p. 134.} The successful farming of dates then would generally be understood to be a multigenerational pursuit.

The long term expert cultivation of a single plant with the potential to produce abundant crops for decades would also explain the severe penalties recorded for the destruction of a productive tree. A court document from the Neo-Babylonian period, TCL 12:89, records a fine of half a mina of silver for the crime of having felled a tree in someone else’s garden.\footnote{M. San Nicolò, ‘Parerga Babylonica VI-VIII,’ \textit{Archiv Orientální}, 4.1 (1932), pp. 325-48; Cole, ‘The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare,’ p. 30.} As the staple crop of the agricultural gardens, the ubiquity of the date certainly extended to the art, culture, and literature of the region.\footnote{Oppenheim, \textit{Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization}, pp. 312-13.} In terms of their literary and artistic representation date palms were cited as symbols of settled life and referred to as the ‘tree of wealth.’\footnote{Cole, ‘The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare,’ p. 30.} In the well-known fable of \textit{The Tamarisk and the Palm}, which appears in numerous recensions among the corpus of Babylonian wisdom literature, the two plants debate each other, making competing claims of superiority.\footnote{Wilfred G. Lambert, \textit{Babylonian Wisdom Literature} (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 151-64.} In the rejoinder of the date palm to the claims of the tamarisk we are provided a literary representation of the centrality of this plant to the ancient Mesopotamian economy, alongside an association of dates with royalty:

‘I am much better than you! You, O tamarisk, are a useless tree. What good are your branches? There’s no such thing as a tamarisk
fruit! Now, my fruits grace the king’s table; the king himself eats them, and people say nice things about me. I make a surplus for the gardener, and he gives it to the queen; she, being a mother, nourishes her child upon the gifts of my strength, and the adults eat them too. My fruits are always in the presence of royalty.  

The regal associations of the date palm are also present in the visual art of the era, for example in a monumental representation of Ashurnasirpal II, the Assyrian king of the stela text considered above. A carved relief found at his North West Palace at Nimrud shows winged celestial figures engaged in the fertilization of a stylized date palm. The winged figures hold clusters of date flowers reflecting the real agricultural practice of manual pollination. One winged figure reaches towards Ashurnasirpal II holding an oval flower cluster, bestowing upon him a divine gift of abundance and security. The artistic representation relies on the audience’s awareness of the reality of date cultivation in order to convey the message of agricultural abundance as a divine gift.

Therefore, gardens and their flourishing are intimately associated with a cornerstone of the agricultural economy of Babylon. It is in this light that the divine command conveyed by Jeremiah to the exiles in Jer 29:5; ‘plant gardens and eat their fruit,’ must be read, accompanied by an awareness of the echoes of Deut 20 and 28. After this command to the exiles to willingly incorporate themselves into the Babylonian garden-based system of agricultural productivity there is a command to marry and have families, further implying that Judean exile there will be long-term. This is followed by a further instruction. Jer 29:7 reads: ‘seek the welfare/peace of the city (שָׁלום הַעִיר) to which I have sent ye into exile there and pray for her sake unto the Lord for in her good will be your good.’ Thus, after an exhortation which expresses the typical build-plant-marry matrix central to the symbolic code, a further instruction to seek the peace or welfare of a city is added. Combined with the explicit reference to horticultural gardens (גַּרְにつ) at Jer 29:5, this mention of the city (הַעִיר), as another key component of the Babylonian social, political, and economic system, is worthy of consideration.

7.1.4. The City in Mesopotamia

There are a number of ways that the phrase ‘the city’ (העיר), as it occurs in Jer 29:7, can be read. It may refer to the specific geographic location of the exiles addressed in the letter. If this is the case the city in question would presumably be Babylon, based on the assumption that these particular exiles departed Jerusalem in 597 BCE in the company of King Jehoiachin. Babylon would be the most likely location in which Jehoiachin would be confined as a valuable hostage. The fact that 이ער appears in the singular in the MT of Jer 29 poses a difficulty for scholars who wish to argue that the reference is to all of the numerous Babylonian towns and cities the Judean exiles would have found themselves in. This difficulty is overcome either by reading the singular 이ער in a distributive sense, or alternatively following the LXX which provides the alternative τῆς γῆς (‘the country’). A slightly different approach is warranted here. By maintaining the singular sense of 이ער and treating it as a reference to ‘the city,’ as a concept in the Neo-Babylonian social context, it may be possible to uncover a further element of the message of accommodation; long-term settlement and economic participation being encouraged in Jeremiah’s exhortation to the Judean exiles in these verses.

The concept of ‘the city’ was a potent one in Neo-Babylonian society at this time. Growing from a combination of centuries-long Mesopotamian settlement patterns and the cultural associations of urbanisation, along with the unique political and economic circumstances prevailing in the long sixth century, ‘the city’ as a distinct civic polity may well inform the instruction to the exiles at Jer 29:7. The letter’s addressees are assured of mutual benefit in perhaps a symbiotic relationship with the city: ‘for in its good will be your good.’ None of this appears particularly incongruous in a scenario where the Judean exiles are being encouraged to adapt and comply within a new imperial regime, similar to the exhortation delivered by Gedaliah to his Judean compatriots at Mizpah in Jer 40. Hence, the instruction to seek the good of the city could well be another aspect of the overall message of compliance and productivity enshrined in the symbolic code. The building of houses, the planting of gardens, and the establishment of family units are all activities which serve to incorporate the Judean exiles into a Neo-Babylonian network of agricultural productivity, that same productivity likewise feeding into the material success, prosperity, and welfare of the city they have been told to seek.

The command of Jer 29:7 that the exiled Judeans are to ‘seek the welfare of the city’ serves to crystallize the underlying spatial politics at work in this instance of the symbolic code as an exercise of cultural hegemony. The verses of Jer 29:5-7 display characteristic signs of what Rachel Havrelock identifies as Secondspace ‘mimicry’ of imperial spatial practice. The subject population of deportees are encouraged to create households and to engage in the activities of building, planting, and marrying which serve to establish and maintain the conditions under which they can supply a stable and productive labour force for the benefit of the imperial economic system within which the text seeks to inscribe them. Jer 29:5-7 thereby encourages the replication, on the more immediate level of settlements of Judean exiles in Babylon, of the grander, more remote principles of imperial Firstspace configurations. Thus, at the level of Secondspace, the houses, gardens, and economic participation called for in Jer 29:5-7 duplicate the Spatial Practice of empire; those social formations allowed for, administered by, and exploited for the benefit of the extensive Neo-Babylonian empire.

While a great number of English translations of the MT of Jer 29 translate שֶׁלֹם הָעִיר as ‘the welfare of the city,’ some render שֶׁלֹם rather as ‘peace.’ In the present context ‘welfare,’ implying material success and economic prosperity rather than peace and stability, is the most appropriate translation. Throughout this portion of the book of Jeremiah Babylon is understood to be in a dominant military position. In keeping with the book’s repeated theological message of this imperial power as a divine instrument, no threat to the security of the Neo-Babylonian empire or any one of its cities is envisioned at this point in the text. Rather, threat to Babylon is only countenanced after the lapse of a seventy year period of divinely sanctioned supremacy, ending with Babylon’s preordained destruction as envisioned in Jer 51.

Reading שֶׁלֹם הָעִיר as ‘the welfare of the city’ is also more in keeping with the historical profile of Neo-Babylonian urban society; built on a foundation of traditions of city-state autonomy, the attendant rights and privileges of the citizenry, and bolstered by the extensive economic growth of the long sixth century BCE. A survey of the numerous cities of Mesopotamia in the decades before and during the Neo-Babylonian period would be too lengthy to include in the present discussion. Rather, insofar as is possible, the city of Babylon itself will serve as an example of the key features of urbanisation in Mesopotamia at this time, particularly in terms of infrastructural development and the question of local political autonomy.
7.1.5. City of Babylon as First Metropolis

Mesopotamia, Southern Mesopotamia in particular, was a land of cities. Large scale urban settlement was a uniquely Mesopotamian innovation and discernible from as early as the fourth millennium BCE. The city of Babylon was established in the nineteenth century BCE in the aftermath of the fall of the UR III dynasty. In no small part due to Nebuchadnezzar II’s colossal building projects in the early Neo-Babylonian period the city was to earn the title of ‘the world’s largest and only metropolis.’

The foregoing discussion of the Neo-Babylonian economy has already pointed to the massive rate of economic development which occurred at the advent of the dynasty of Nabopolassar. This period is characterised by an increase in population density in urban settlements, which functioned as an economic stimulus precipitating associated commercial developments and technological progress. The increasingly market-oriented Neo-Babylonian agricultural sector was one of the main foundations on which the largescale expansion of the city of Babylon during the sixth century BCE was founded. The city of Babylon sat at the centre of a network of productivity and trade, with resources flowing inward from the rural peripheries. This flow of wealth and resources from the periphery towards the centre is the key identifying feature of an extractive economic regime, usually involving a delicate balance between the allocation of land and the seizure of a portion of the crops then produced via taxation.

Nebuchadnezzar II’s extensive infrastructural development activities, on succeeding his father Nabopolassar, would have also played a vital role in providing an economic stimulus. These building projects combined both prestige constructions, the lavishly decorated Ishtar gate and Way of Marduk processional route for example, with eminently pragmatic structures such as massive defensive walls and flood barriers. A moat constructed to encircle the entire city was 12 metres wide. These physical developments on such an unprecedented scale no doubt had ideological as well as practical motivations.

Nebuchadnezzar II was also careful to highlight the ritual centrality of the city of Babylon, and its patron deity Marduk, through the construction and renovation of

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257 Leick, Mesopotamia: The Invention of the City, ‘preface.’
258 Adams, Heartland of Cities, p. 250.
259 Boer, Sacred Economy, pp. 150-51.
various temples and sanctuaries. The refurbishment of the Esagila, the great temple to Marduk, included opulent decorations of gold, silver, and precious stones.\(^{260}\) All of these activities would have contributed to the sustained understanding of the city of Babylon as *prima inter pares* in terms of the urban paradigm of Mesopotamian culture. Nebuchadnezzar II combined this with generous endowments of crown lands to various temples and lavish public festivals, particular the New Year *Akitu* festival, which further reinforced the city’s cultic centrality.

The concept of privileged citizenship known as *kidinnu* and the associated protected status of a city referred to as *kidinnūtu* are illustrated in the interactions between the crown and the urban centres, with accounts of the New Year *Akitu* festivities containing some of the most prominent and well-attested mentions. Prayers on both the second and fifth days of the festival mention the status of the ‘privileged citizens’ (*šābē kidinnī*).\(^{261}\) In the context of the *Akitu* festival the privileged status of the *šābē kidinnī* is part of a whole matrix of ritual obligations on the part of the emperor to maintain the established social and cosmic orders. As Kuhrt describes it: ‘The occasion helped to reaffirm...corporate identity, the social fabric and the prosperity of the country.’\(^{262}\)

This privileged legal status appears in several contexts as part of restorative acts on the part of the Assyrian and Babylonian rulers bringing about the reestablishment of civic order after a time of conflict. A key example is a foundation prism recording Esarhaddon’s reestablishment of the *kidinnūtu* of Babylon. The text mentions the establishment of an *andurāru* meaning a tax exemption or debt remission, the gathering of those sold into slavery and the restoration of their property and civic status, along with the king’s instructions to the local population to settle in Babylon to contribute to the city’s infrastructure and economic prosperity:

The *andurāru* of the oppressed Babylonians, the protected people (*šābē kidinnī*), those ‘entitled to release’ by Anu and Enlil I established anew. Those people who had been sold into slavery and whose lot had been fetters and chains, I gathered together and make them again into Babylonians; their pillaged property I returned to them. I clothed the naked. Then I caused them to take the road to

\(^{261}\) CAD K pp. 342-44.
Babylon. I encouraged them to settle in the city, build houses, lay out orchards, and dig canals. Their *kidinnūtu* which had ended and been lost, I set up anew... (BM 78222)²⁶³

Notably, this propagandistic statement of Esarhaddon, where he recounts his benevolence in restoring the protected status of this subject population, contains reference to the encouragement of settlement within the city of Babylon, the building of houses, and the setting out of orchards. While certainly these features of the text do not align perfectly with the elements of the instruction to the exiles in Jer 29:5-7 there is a considerable overlap. This demonstrates the near ubiquitous symbolic potency of these elements as signs of established settlement, agricultural productivity, and prosperity under the suzerainty and implied security of an imperial extractive economic system.²⁶⁴ Just as the residents of the city of Babylon, after a period of instability and upheaval, were expected to return to their roles as economically productive units within a social system, as expressed in Esarhaddon’s prism (BM 78222), so too are the Judeans addressed in Jer 29 encouraged to settle down and engage in home building and agricultural activity, in pursuit of ‘the welfare of the city.’

Discussion of the concept of the welfare of the city as it appears in Jer 29:7 must acknowledge that this was a highly developed concept in the society to which the Judean exiles had been transplanted. This concept included clear formulations of the rights and privileges of the citizens of particular cities and was predicated on the fact that the crown did not wield absolute autocratic power over them. Rather, this was a case of a symbiotic political relationship between the Neo-Babylonian emperor and his urban subjects. Thus, integration of the community of exiles within the wider socio-economic system also required a recognition of their role in the welfare of the urban


²⁶⁴ A second text from the reign of Esarhaddon, this time addressing the long established *kidinnu* status of Assur, adds two new agricultural tax exemptions to the privileges of the ṣābē *kidinni*, exemption from the corn and straw levies. These are in addition to the already established exemptions from crossing dues and quay tolls along with the *andurārū* debt remission. Esarhaddon declares that in Assur he has established ‘*kidinnu* in their gates forever.’ Hanoch Reviv, ‘Kidinhu, Observations Of Privileges of Mesopotamian Cities,’ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31.3 (1988), pp. 286-98, p. 290.
centres which were responsible for so much of both the prosperity and the civic expression of the empire.

This phenomenon of the crown guaranteeing the privileged status of certain sectors of the population clearly continues into the Neo-Babylonian period. A cylinder of Nabonidus recording the dedication of his daughter Bêl-shalti-Nannar/Ennigaldi-Nanna as a votary of the Egishshirgal temple at Ur mentions his removing the service obligations of certain classes of priests, the kiništšu and shudnabû.265 A brick inscription of Nabonidus, also from Ur, articulates the king’s confirmation of the kidinru of the priests of Egishshirgal as an immunity from imposts.266 Thus, aside from their impressive physical structures, the cities and temples of the Neo-Babylonian empire also enjoyed a type of politico-cultural prestige which was not dependant on royal expenditure but rather on royal recognition of pre-existing protections and privileges. This element of relative autonomy among the citizenry was a key aspect of how Babylonian urban centres operated. This idea was most fully on display in expressions of local autonomy as found in the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the citizenry.

7.1.6. Local Government Autonomy

Debate continues over to what extent the Neo-Babylonian emperors, Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar II, directly acquired both the territories and traditional customs of the Neo-Assyrian empire, in whose wake they established their dynasty. Certainly, on the question of relative autonomy in the arena of local government some continuity is obvious, however this should not be read as a sign of seamless succession from one empire to another, rather the phenomenon of relative autonomy among Babylonian cities arises from a context of instability.

There is of course no clear point of transition from Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian rule in Mesopotamia. The final decades of the Neo-Assyrian empire were plagued by internecine strife and civil war, which included competing claims of control over Babylon. In the power vacuum which resulted in these decades of instability, cities, many of which could trace their history back to a pre-imperial existence as independent city-states, increasingly reasserted their autonomy. Nielsen has

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suggested that there may be a corollary relationship between this increased trend towards the assertion of traditional political independence on the part of these cities and a significant increase in the use of family names among the urban citizenry, a custom which had become heavily entrenched by the time Nabopolassar established his dynasty.²⁶⁷

The increase in the use of family names among Mesopotamian urban kinship groups, a steadily upward trend from the eighth century BCE onwards appears to be linked with the economic growth and heightened levels of agricultural productivity occurring over the same period of time. Nielsen has identified this as a practice among a significant portion of the wealthiest and most educated sectors of the population.²⁶⁸ These individuals tended to be landholders, often in receipt of prebendary grants associated with temples or the crown, many of whom held specific cultic or political titles. While there are a small number of examples of multiple generations of the one Babylonian family all holding a particular title, such as governor, such dynasties were relatively rare.²⁶⁹ Rather than being easily characterised in terms of their use of an individual family name, the behaviour of this sector of the population is more readily analysed in terms of a collective of kinship groups in Babylon who tended to make up the vast majority of the citizens of a given city, thereby enjoying certain rights and privileges, and carrying certain political responsibilities. This situation consequently drew them into a negotiated power relationship with the Neo-Babylonian monarch.

Citizenship rights in Babylon were reserved to specific classes of males. Based on the range of terminology found in the textual evidence the social system was strictly hierarchical with the upper echelons of the populace divided into various categories of elders (šibûtû), foremost (ašāредūtû) and citizens (mār bani) some of whom may also have enjoyed the privileged status of šābē kidinni. Alongside these high status individuals there would have been numerous freeborn non-citizens, including merchants and artisans, and a variety of indentured servants, glebae adscripti, and slaves.²⁷⁰ Those with citizenship rights could be expected to participate in the assembly

²⁶⁸ Nielsen, Sons and Descendants, p. 289.
(puḫru). These parliamentary assemblies in the major Mesopotamian cities are evidence for the enduring tradition of relative autonomy in matters of local government that was still exercised by the civic polities in the Neo-Babylonian period; a tradition stemming from the pre-imperial city-state era. Here we find evidence of the negotiated power relationship existing between the crown and the assembly. This is perhaps best illustrated by a judicial document from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, dated to the year 594/3 BCE:

At that time Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon...discovered all the malicious deeds of Ba‘u-ahḫu-iddina and found out about his conspiracy. He proved the crimes he had committed against him in the assembly of our city (ina puḫur ālīni), looked at him scornfully, pronounced his death sentence, and they slit his throat.271

This text, from a tablet discovered in 1908 as part of Koldewey’s excavation of Babylon, and since sadly lost, illustrates how the king himself was required to present evidence of Ba‘u-ahḫu-iddina’s crimes to the assembly of the city. Nebuchadnezzar II did not hold absolute power of life and death, rather than autocratic authority the power of the king is mediated via the civic assembly.

A later Neo-Babylonian text, dating from the reign of Nabonidus, records how the citizens of a number of cities reneged on their duties during a time of crisis:

...the sons of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Ur, Erech, Larsa, priests and people of the capitals of Akkad, against his great divinity offended, whenever they sought after anything they did wickedly, they knew not the wrath, the resentment, of the king of the gods...they forgot their duty, whenever they talked it was treason, and not loyalty, like a dog they devoured one another. Fever and famine in the midst of them, they caused it to be... (Nabon. H2 lines 14-22)272

It is notable that this undoubtedly propagandistic text blames the breakdown in order and the failure of the citizens of the named cities to fulfil their civic responsibilities for the ensuing famine and associated disasters. This monumental inscription thus hints at the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the monarch and the city assembly as a form of institutionalised community. Hence, unlike those ancient societies which were essentially tribal in structure, there was greater potential in the urban environment of the Babylonian metropolis for communal identification to be expressed in terms of a

specific geographic association. This is evident from the common designation of a city's citizens as its 'sons.'

7.2. Constructing an Image of Exilic life

To get a better idea of what varying levels of Judean integration in Babylonia, both enforced and independent, may have looked like there are some extrabiblical sources we can examine. These sources do reveal a predominantly agricultural existence and a significant amount of interaction with different degrees of the state bureaucracy, perhaps mediated through scribes. There is no reason why individuals of either Israelite or Judean origin might not have made their way to various Mesopotamian cities and their environs in the preceding centuries or decades. Considering the extent of the city of Babylon's economic growth during the sixth century BCE some inward migration of a variety of foreign populations is to be expected, not to mention the presence of a variety of ethnic groups in the region already as a result of the bidirectional deportation policy enacted by the Neo-Assyrian empire. However, the specific population group addressed in the text of Jer 29 are understood to have been forcibly relocated as a direct result of Babylonian intervention in Judean political affairs from 597 BCE onward.

Confirmation of a historical situation somewhat analogous to the scenario presented in the biblical text is provided by four ration receipts mentioning an allowance of oil given to King Jehoiachin, and other Judean royals while resident at the Neo-Babylonian court.

... t[o?] la'-ú-kin, king...
to the qipûtu-house of...
...for Shalamiamu, the ...
... for 126 men from Tyre ...
.... for Zabiria, the Ly[dian]...
(Text A. Babylon 28122 obverse lines 29-33)

10 (sila of oil) to . . . [la]-’-kin, king of la[ . . . ]
2½ silica (oil) to [. . . so]ns of the king of Judah
(la-a-ḫu-du)

4 sila to 8 men from Judah (la-a-ḫu-da-a-a) . . .

(Text B Babylon 28178, obverse ii lines 38-40)²⁷³

1 ½ sila (oil) for 3 carpenters from Arvad; ½ sila each ...

½ sila to Nabû-ēṭir the carpenter

10 (sila) to la-ku-ū-ki-nu, the son of the king (mār šarri) of Judah (la-ku-du)

2½ sila for the 5 sons of the king of Judah (la-ku-du) for the attention of Qana’a[ma]...

(Text C Babylon 28186, reverse ii lines 13-18)

la’u-kinu, the king (šarri) of Judah (la-a-ḫu-du)

the 5 sons of the king] of Judah (la-a-ḫu-du) for the attention of Qanâma (qa-na-a-ma)

(Text D Babylon 28232 (fragment) lines 20-21)²⁷⁴

Despite their fragmentary nature these four texts do provide significant evidence of Judeans among a host of different peoples present at the Neo-Babylonian court. Mention is also made of people from Ashkelon, Tyre, Byblos, Arvad, and Elam alongside Medes, Persians, Egyptians, Ionians, and Lydians. Various types of skilled workmen are mentioned including mariners, shipwrights, carpenters, and horse trainers.²⁷⁵ We are also fortunate that the corpus of administrative texts within which these four texts are found can be dated with reasonable accuracy to the period

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between 595 and 570 BCE. Text B is dated explicitly to the thirteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar II's reign, the year 592 BCE.276

Most importantly for our present enquiry are the references to people of Judean origin. References to Jehoiachin (Ia'-ū-kin / la-ku-ū -ki-nu / la'u-kinu) in the four texts label him as either the king (šarrī), or on one occasion in text C line 17 as the crown-prince (mār šarrī) of Judah. References to his five sons appear in texts B, C, and D, although Weidner did raise the possibility that, in light of the appearance of 'mār šarrī' in text C and the fact that Jehoiachin would have been no more than twenty-three years old at this time, that these princes may in fact be Jehoiachin's brothers, younger sons of Jehoiakim.277 In both texts C and D the ration for the five Judean princes is marked for the attention of an individual named Qanāma, one of a number of names in the ration receipts that are understood to be Yahwistic. The name Qanāma was translated by Albright as Kenaiah, he also offered the highly plausible hypothesis that this Kenaiah was a servant or attendant of the princes and himself a Judean.

Text A supplies a further four identifiable Judeans. An individual named Ur-Miliki is mentioned twice, in line 11 of the obverse and line 13 of the reverse of the tablet, both times with the ethnic signifier ia-ū-da-a-a. A person named Gadi-ilu is mentioned in line 18 of the obverse, Weidner identified this as the Akkadian equivalent of the Hebrew name Gadiel (Num 13:10). Two names, Samakuyāma in line 28 of the obverse, and Šalamyāma in line 31 of the obverse and 22 of the reverse, both have the identifiable Yahwistic onomastic suffix yāma.278 Equivalents to both of these names can be found in Lachish Letter 1. Albright Hebraized them as Semachiah and Shelemiah respectively. Most intriguingly of all is the fact that Šalamyāma (Shelemiah) is referred to as ‘the gardener’ (nukaribbu).279

Since we do not know the exact size of the entourages that these rations were allocated to, it is very difficult to calculate whether or not these allowances signify

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generosity towards the deportees on the part of their Neo-Babylonian captors. A description in Jer 52, of the subsequent release of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar II’s son and successor Amel-Marduk, portrays what might be termed a comfortable hostage situation, with Jehoiachin seated at the king’s table, akin to Mephiboshet’s residing at the court of King David in 2 Sam 9:7:

And it was, in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth of the month. Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted Jehoiachin king of Judah, and he released him from the prison, and he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seat of the kings who were with him in Babylon. And he left off his prison garments and he ate bread before him regularly, all the days of his life. And he gave to him a regular allowance, from the king of Babylon, daily, every day until his death, all the days of his life. (Jer 52:31-34)

As both the Weidner ration tablets and this section of the book of Jeremiah deal with royal personages, they can hardly be treated as indicative of the typical Judean experience of exile. For an insight into the lived reality of the majority of Judeans in Babylon, who were not part of any captive royal entourage, we must extrapolate from the limited number of written sources available. The sources of this extrabiblical evidence are predominantly administrative documents. These collections of cuneiform tablets, the Murašû archive and the Āl-Yāḥûdu documents, alongside a smaller number of documents from Sippar and Susa, are not without their problems. The vast majority of these documents, indeed the entirety of the Murašû archive, date from the Persian period, somewhat later than the period under discussion here. Nevertheless, these bodies of cuneiform evidence demonstrate a remarkable consistency in the types of activities that Judeans resident in Babylon are recorded as having been involved in.

The identification of persons of Judean origin within these documents is made primarily based on the onomastic data, particularly the presence of a Yahwistic theophoric element, usually transliterated as -Yāma, as part of a Western Semitic name. Relying on the onomastic data to reconstruct an ethnic profile of the individuals mentioned in these documents is of necessity an inexact enterprise. Indeed, it may well be the case that there are a number of individuals of Judean origin with Babylonian

names that have been overlooked. For example, the suggestion of a Jewish minority making up about three percent of the population of Nippur and its environs at this time may be a rather conservative estimate. In certain cases it has been possible to construct family trees for several generations of Judeans whose activities are recorded across multiple documents. Furthermore, a very small number of the Al-Yâhûdu tablets feature the use of the Akkadian ethnonyms ia-ṭa-da- and Yâḥûdâya meaning ‘Judean’ or ‘of Judah.’

7.2.1. The Murašû archive

The Murašû archive consists of 730 administrative documents, about 330 of which were preserved entirely intact. The documents, predominantly loan contracts of the Murašû banking family, date from during the reign of Artaxerxes I to the reign of Darius II, with the earliest tablet dated 454 BCE. These tablets were discovered during the University of Pennsylvania excavation of Nippur in 1893. Several families of Judean origin can be identified among different tablets in the Murašû archive. The family of Tob- Yâma appears in the fragmentary tablet BE X.118. This patriarch Tob-Yâma is named alongside sons named Bana- Yâma, Bibi- Yâma, Zabad- Yâma, Zabina and Hanani, and grandsons Ba’l- Yâma and possibly Minahhim. The Yahwistic theophoric element Yâma is present in many, but certainly not all of these names. Likely Hebraizations are Tobiah, Beniah, Zebadiah and Bealiah, with Hanani and Minahhim likely equivalents of Hananiah and Menahem. A second Judean family can be traced across two tablets BE IX.45 and BE IX.25 producing a family tree with a patriarch Bana’el, his son Yadi’- Yâma and four grandsons; Ahi- Yâma, Yahu-natan, Pada-Yâma, Shama’on. Four of these names are clearly Yahwistic, and all six have close biblical parallels: Benaiah, Jedaiyah, Ahijah, Jehonathan, Pedaiah, and Shimeon. Tablet BE IX.45 attests to the fact that Yadi’- Yâma, his sons, and his partners have agreed to lease certain properties with irrigation rights from the Murašû firm for three years at a rate of seven hundred kor of barley per year plus surcharge. Among other probable Judeans mentioned in the contract are individuals named Yigdal- Yâma and Shabbatai.

282 Mein, Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile, p. 63.
Another family tree can be discerned from Murašû archive documents covering the period from the thirty-third year of the reign of Artaxerxes I until the fifth year of the reign of Darius II, that is between 432 and 418 BCE. Attested in these documents are a patriarch named Rahīm-il, his four sons Gadal-Yāma, Barīk-il, Udarna’, and Zabdia, and one grandson Hanan-Yāma.287 There is even a document attesting to a dispute within the family. In BE IX.69 Udarna’ publicly agrees his willingness to halt legal proceedings on condition of the rightful return of his property which had been removed from his house by a group of people including servants of Bēl-nādin-šumu, one of the Murašû family, and his own brother Zabdia.288 The document describes Udarna’ approaching Bēl-nādin-šumu to make his statement ‘ina puḫri Nippur,’ which may be read in the sense of ‘before the assembly (puḫru) of Nippur.’289 The Murašû documents also attest to a variety of occupations among Judeans at Nippur in the Persian period, predominantly agricultural in nature. Thus, we encounter fishermen and date-growers. An individual named Man-dan-Yāma, the son of Shulum-Babili, is recorded in tablet UM 148 dating to the year 418 BCE, a sheep breeding contract, as a sheep and goat herder.290 Notably his father’s name means ‘welfare of Babylon.’291

7.2.2. The Āl-Yāḥūdu tablets

The Āl-Yāḥūdu tablets likewise record various commercial transactions, largely pertaining to agricultural activity and taxation payments in the settlement of Āl-Yāḥūdu and its surrounding areas, likely in the vicinity of Nippur. The Āl-Yāḥūdu documents range from 572-477 BCE, thus the oldest text in the volume is dated only fifteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem and firmly within the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. However, these tablets are unfortunately of entirely undocumented provenance, having been sourced by private collectors on the antiquities market. Believed to number fifty-one in total, several are still awaiting publication.292

289 Alstola, Judeans in Babylonia, p. 197.
292 At the time of writing I can find no evidence that BaAr 6 (Babylonische Archive 6) has yet been published, thus any reference here to tablets featuring in BaAr 6 is based solely on references made to these items by the authors in CUSAS 28.
It is the presence of a distinctive toponym mentioned in these tablets that, alongside the onomastic data, prompts further identifications of Judeans living in rural Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. The two earliest tablets, so identified by Pearce and Wunsch, are CUSAS 28.1 and BaAr 6.1 both dating from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, CUSAS 28.1 to 572BCE and BaAr 6.1 to 567 BCE. In both of these early tablets a settlement named ālu ša Yāḫūdāya is referenced, as this name is written using the standard Akkadian gentilic suffix āya, and is preceded by the determinative lū designating people, ālu ša Yāḫūdāya is thus translated ‘town of the Judeans.’ By the first year of the reign of Amel-Marduk, 561 BCE, the orthography has changed and the toponym appears as simply Āl-Yāḫūdu, ‘Judah town.’

The settlement of Āl-Yāḫūdu would appear then to be a prime example of toponymie en mirroir, the practice of naming villages in Babylonia after the place of origin of their resettled inhabitants. As already mentioned the Neo-Babylonian empire did not replicate the bidirectional deportation policy practised during the Neo-Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar II and his successors were far more likely to settle deported populations from conquered lands in Babylonia without transplanting a new settler population to the newly acquired imperial provinces. Evidence for the presence of a number of communities of diverse geographic origin in Babylonia at this time is found in a variety of place names which reflect the provenance of inhabitants. Thus a significant portion of the population resident in the settlement of Āl-Yāḫūdu and active in the agriculture and commerce of the surrounding area would have been of Judean origin.

Aside from the place name attested to in the documents, these texts also feature several generations of individuals with Yahwistic Western Semitic names. As in the evidence from the Murašû archive discussed above, the Āl-Yāḫūdu texts also indicate the predominantly agriculture-related occupations of the settlement’s residents. Among them are at least two references to ‘ilku’ (service obligation), payments paid in silver or in agricultural produce, dates and barley for example, as well as various other tax bills:

294 Tolinì, ‘From Syria to Babylon and Back: The Neirab Archive,’ p. 64.
Six shekels of silver, the ilku obligation of the 5th year (of the reign) of Cyrus, king of Babylon and the lands, Ahiqam, son of Rapa-Yama, has paid to Pili-Yama, son of Yadi-Yama, who acts as proxy for Yalhu-e-DIR, son of ’Tab-salam, his (i.e., Ahiqam’s) summoner (for corvée). (CUSAS 28.12)\(^\text{296}\)

Bel-ahhe-Eriba, son of Nur-Samas has given the land of Ahu-leti, son of Si-da, from the Nasar canal up to the drained swampy (part), to Sarru-bunu’a, son of Sa-Nabu-su, for cultivation...The harvest of the field (for) six years "they share equally, and [two]-thirds "Sarru-bunu’a "[will enjoy] ... The owner of the field guarantees for the (maintenance) of the dam at the field "(and for) the ilku service for the field...(Written in) the town of Bit-Nasar, on the 21st day of Tasritu, “the 3rd year (of the reign) of Cyrus, king of Babylon (and) the lands.\(^\text{297}\) (CUSAS 28.64)

Alongside these tablets recording the tax bills of the local farming community are various loan documents and promissory notes, along with notes of rent payments paid in fruit harvests.

One of the main protagonists of the archive is Aḫīqam son of Rapā-Yāma, mentioned in CUSAS 28.12 quoted above and in numerous other tablets. He appears to be active up through the advent of Persian domination in the region and is part of a Judean family, four generations of which are attested to in the documents.\(^\text{298}\) Aḫīqam regularly deals in sums of barley and silver far in excess of regular amounts found either in the Āl-Yāḫūdu corpus or other contemporaneous documents.\(^\text{299}\) Aḫīqam operates as a form of intermediary between the farmers of Āl-Yāḫūdu and an estate manager, a Babylonian named Iddinna who is part of a system of bureaucrats that leads all the way up to the ‘Governor of Across the River.’ This is best illustrated by a segment of CUSAS 28.18:

\(^{[160]}\) kor of white barley (are) owed to Iddinâ, son of Šinqā, ‘the deputy of (the one in charge of) the mares, by Aḫīqam (Ḫiqa ʿu), son of Rapā-Yāma.

In Aiāru (2nd month), in Judahtown’ (URU ifa]-ḫu-du), in the measure of Iddinâ, he will deliver these 160 kor of white barley in full.

These 160 kor of grain (are) the equivalent of four minas of silver with ginnû-mark that are owed to Iddinā...the [bar]ley (income) from the fields of the Judean šušanûs - which is under the authority of Uštanu, the governor of Across-the-River, managed by Mudammiq-Nabû

\(^{296}\) CUSAS 28, Document 12, p. 114.
\(^{297}\) CUSAS 28, Document 64, pp. 200-1.
\(^{298}\) CUSAS 28, p. 8.
\(^{299}\) CUSAS 28, p. 130 and Documents 12 (p. 114), 16B (p. 124), and 18 (pp. 128-30).

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As seen in this document and several others, Aḫīqam is operating as part of a wider bureaucratic system of land management which involved several degrees of Babylonian state officials.

7.2.3. Land for Service System

The mention of Judean šušanûs (šu-šā-[na-nî]-e ia-ḫa-da-) in line 7 of CUSAS 28.18 is particularly noteworthy. Šušanû were individuals of dependent legal status, working under the supervision of a manager known as a šaknu, or other officers. This along with the references to ilku payments in the Āl-Yāḫūdu texts points to this community of Judeans as having been part of the state administered land cultivation system in the Persian period. This set of socio-economic circumstances most likely also prevailed in the Neo-Babylonian period. The centrality in these documents of raw produce, particularly dates, being used as payments in kind may also be interpreted as a consequence of the trend towards greater intensification of agriculture during the Neo-Babylon period discussed above. The appearance of the adjective ‘Judean’ (ia-ḫa-da-) in this context in CUSAS 28.18 also reminds us of the earlier appearance of the similar adjective Yāḫūdāya in CUSAS 28.1, the first appearance of the toponym translated as ‘town of the Judeans’ dated to 572 BCE, the thirty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar II’s reign. This highlights a distinctive feature of the Āl-Yāḫūdu corpus in that, occasionally, Judeans are explicitly identified as such through the use of the relevant adjectives, a key difference between these examples and the vast majority of texts from other sites, including Nippur, Sippar, and Susa.

Agricultural land in Babylonia was a mix of privately held lands owned by individuals and estates held by temples or the crown. Based on the evidence available Jursa has suggested: ‘in the sixth century, land held by institutions may have exceeded private land in terms of surface area, but not necessarily in terms of output.’ The land for service system concerns royal land holdings in the main. By apportioning out tracts of cultivable land to certain groups the Babylonian bureaucracy ensured that these

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300 CUSAS 28, p. 128.
301 Pearce, ‘Identifying Judeans and Judean Identity,’ p. 16.
303 Jursa, Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia, p. 760.
lands were farmed and that the state would benefit by receipt of a portion of all produce. In this system collectives, often of a common non-Babylonian origin, were placed on these lands with large portions of their agricultural produce surrendered as a tax contribution of the dependent population.

At other times this service might be also rendered in terms of corvée labour, perhaps on the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, or military service. Jursa has identified the feudatory status of those working these tracts of land as one of the key methods by which the Neo-Babylonian imperial administration successfully integrated these individual foreign population groups into the wider Neo-Babylonian socio-economic system. Foreign population groups would be settled on allotted tracts of land, such as bow-fiefs, and expected to farm them. This was the main way, alongside colonisation and largescale reclamation efforts, in which the crown shaped land use in this period. This certainly appears to be the background of the Āl-Yāḥūdu corpus. The Āl-Yāḥūdu documents also provide some insight into the precariousness of this state-granted land tenure system. Loan documents and promissory notes agreed on the future returns of a harvest testify to the vagaries of relying on favourable weather and good market prices to repay debts. Not to mention the added demands of corvée labour and military service, all of which formed part of the wider socio-economic system and could jeopardise the cash crop productivity levels necessary to pay rents and taxes.

7.2.4. Documents from Sippar and Susa

A smaller body of documents from the regions of Sippar in Babylonia, and Susa in Elam, housed across a number of European museums also provide some detail pertaining to Judean life in Babylonia in the sixth century BCE. Jursa’s 2007 study revealed three generations of a Judean merchant family, headed by a patriarch named Ariḫ, active in the major Babylonian city of Sippar in 546–503 BCE. The resultant family tree displays a distinctive trend in naming patterns. Ariḫ is probably derived from

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304 Jursa, Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia, p. 27.
305 Jursa, Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia, p. 758.
307 Michael Jursa, ‘Eine Familie Von Königskaufleuten Judäischer Herkunft,’ Nouvelles Assyrologiques Brèves et Utilitaires, 2007. 2 (2007), p. 23. The six cuneiform tablets from which the genealogy of the family of Ariḫ can be reconstructed are: BM 65149, BM 68921, BM 75434, BM 68420, BM 74411, and BM 78391. All of these were excavated and recorded as part of British Museum expeditions in the 1880s and continue to be housed there.
Hebrew and can be compared with the biblical name Arah, leading to speculation that Ariḫ was born in Judah. Ariḫ’s four sons are named Basiya, Mardukā, Aḫi-Yāma, and Amušē. Basiya is given the designation ‘royal merchant’ (tamkār šarrī) in BM 68420 while Aḫi-Yāma is likewise identified as a ‘royal merchant’ when he acts as a witness to the marriage contract of his niece Kaššaya in BM 65149 and BM 68921. The name Mardukā immediately stands out as referencing the Babylonian chief deity, while Basiya is also likely to be a culturally Babylonian name. Conversely, the name Aḫi-Yāma contains a Yahwistic theophoric element, and Amušē though not Yahwistic in nature is certainly of Judean origin, being the Akkadian equivalent of the biblical Hoshea.308

In the third generation we find four grandsons, all sons of Amušē; Bēl-uballiṭ, Šamaš-iddin, Nabû-ittannu and Bēl-iddin. All these individuals bear names with theophoric elements referencing Babylonian deities. Amušē’s daughter is named Kaššaya, a namesake of one of the daughters of Nebuchadnezzar II.309 This discernible shift in naming patterns probably signals a gradual cultural assimilation of the family into native Babylonian society, perhaps spurred on by the reliance of the merchant family on a certain degree of social capital in order to do business with their Babylonian clientele.310 A further signal of the integration of the merchant family of Ariḫ into Babylonian urban society comes in the form of two documents recording a marriage contract; BM 65149 and BM 68921. This is the marriage of Amušē’s daughter Kaššaya to a Babylonian groom, Gūzānu, son of Kiribtu, descendant of Ararru.311 Notably Kaššaya’s mother Gudaddadītu had sufficient financial resources at her disposal to provide an appropriate dowry.312

OECT 10.152, a text believed to be from Achaemenid Susa dated to 494 BCE, the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Darius I, features an individual with a Yahwistic theophoric name. Yāḥū-šarra-uṣur appears in a list of individuals of prominent social standing bearing witness to the transaction. Considering the size of the sum of silver involved, one mina, and the fact that Susa was a royal capital, it is likely that Yāḥū-šarra-uṣur was a royal courtier. His father’s name, Šamaš-iddin (‘The god Šamaš

gave’), is a linguistically Babylonian theophoric name. This pattern is the reverse of the progressive disappearance of Yahwistic names in successive generations of the Ariḫ family in Susa. In arguing that this example illustrated that a royal courtier in the Persian period could still acknowledge the Judean deity in his official name, Bloch cites the literary example of the four Judean youths of the book of Daniel, raised at the Babylonian court who retain a steadfast Yahwistic fidelity. However, the lack of a secure provenance for OECT 10 152, due to its having been acquired by the Ashmolean museum via the antiquities market in 1878, renders this example less reliable than the six texts from Sippar used to reconstruct the lineage of the merchant family of Ariḫ.

None of the cuneiform documents relied upon in the present analysis are without their issues, either because they have no known provenance or owing to a significant temporal gulf between their date of composition and the earlier part of the sixth century BCE, the time period on which this research is focused. In addition, they each stem from administrative contexts, recording various economic transactions and agreements. Consequently, all of these texts are written from a specific perspective and focus on a small sector of the population who were of sufficient economic significance to have these details of their activities become part of a durable written record. As such these tablets can offer us only a limited insight into the lived reality of Judean populations in the region at this time. Nevertheless, they do provide insights and background information that is helpful in the task of informed speculation as to the nature of exilic life for Judeans in Babylon, particularly that sector of the population who were involved in the land for service agricultural system.

7.2.5. Slavery and Forced labour

It is difficult to precisely characterise the nature of the engagement of Judean labour as part of the Babylonian economy at this time. There is no direct evidence of Judeans being subjected en masse to conditions of chattel slavery, nor is there

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314 Ashmolean Museum Oxford, ‘Online Collection,’ https://collections.ashmolean.org/object/750510. A similar example of an individual with a Yahwistic name and a Babylonian patronym occurs with the seal of Yehoyisha‘ daughter of Šamaš-šarra-uṣur. This was published by Avigad in 1965 and in his opinion could be dated paleographically to the sixth century BCE. This item, however, is a Hebrew stamp seal and therefore does not form part of the cuneiform textual record, furthermore, as this item was sourced from the antiquities market, no data confirming either its provenance or antiquity is available. Bloch, ‘Judeans in Sippar and Susa,’ p. 139; Nahman Avigad, ‘Seals of Exiles,’ Israel Exploration Journal, 15 (1965), pp. 222-32, pl. 40.
evidence for a large slave class generally in Babylonia at this time.\textsuperscript{315} That is not to say that chattel slavery was not a reality in Babylonia, indeed there is ample evidence that slaves existed and were treated as movable property akin to livestock. In the social hierarchy of Babylonia those enjoying full citizenship were at the top, followed by the class of landless freeborn persons, then \textit{glebae adscripti} a variety of labourers legally tied to the land, and finally chattel slaves at the bottom.

The population of \textit{glebae adscripti} legally tied to the land and forced via extra-economic coercion to participate predominantly in agriculture includes the class of foreign workers labelled \textit{šušânē} in the documents, understood to be state dependants.\textsuperscript{316} Thus the majority of the Judeans encountered in the Murašû and Āl-Yāḫûdu documents were probably not considered slaves from the strictly legal point of view. Such a generalization of course depends on what exact definition of slavery is being applied. Thus, it is best to adopt the ‘continuum of domination’ model proposed by Smith-Christopher.\textsuperscript{317} This recognizes the fact that there would have been a number of factors, not least the transportation of a subject population from its homeland, which contributed to the creation of an environment of forced-labour and its attendant hardships. Certainly, the image of life for these communities, as economically productive agricultural units, which emerges from Michael Jursa’s extensive 2010 study of Babylonian economic history is harsh.\textsuperscript{318} Judean experiences of life in exile in Babylon would have been in no way homogenous and we must assume a certain diversity of experience to which we have little or no access due to the limited evidence available for analysis.\textsuperscript{319}

There is evidence of Nebuchadnezzar II’s use of forced labour on his significant building projects. Royal inscriptions from his reign mention labour sourced from deportee populations brought to Babylon. One of the most important of these texts describes the building of Etemenanki, the monumental ziggurat dedicated to Marduk,

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\textsuperscript{315} Smith-Christopher, \textit{The Religion of the Landless}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{317} Smith-Christopher, \textit{The Religion of the Landless}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{318} Jursa, \textit{Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia}, pp. 216-19.
\end{flushright}
one of Nebuchadnezzar II’s prestige constructions. Eight separate fragments of the text have been found, from which a composite text was reconstructed by Weissbach.\(^{320}\)

...the lands of Hattim, from the upper sea to the lower sea, the land of Sumer and Akkad, the land between the two rivers...the rulers of Lands of Hattim across the Euphrates where the sun sets, whose rulership, at the bidding of Marduk my Lord, I overcame, and the mighty cedars of the mountain of Lebanon were brought to the city of Babylon, the whole of the races, people from far places, whom Marduk my Lord delivered to me - I forced them to work on the building of Etemenanki - I imposed on them the brick-basket.\(^{321}\)

Smith-Christopher highlights the phrase ‘I imposed on them the brick-basket’ (\(e\)-\(mi\)-\(id\)-\(su\)-\(nu\)-\(ti\) \(t\)-\(ú\)-\(up\)-\(ši\)-\(ik\)-\(ku\)) as a clear indication that these captives were in a forced labour scenario.\(^{322}\)

Elements of Jer 29, and an account of the 597 BCE deportation incident in 2 Kgs, also make repeated references to the presence of artisans and skilled craftspeople among the exiled population:

After the going forth of Jeconiah the king, and the Queen mother, and the eunuchs, and the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, and the artificers and smiths from Jerusalem. (Jer 29:2)

...and all the craftsmen and the smiths, none remained, except the poorest people of the land... And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valour, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all of them strong and fit for war. (2 Kgs 24:14-16)

References to the intentional capture of skilled workers may reflect the heightened need for specialised labour for Nebuchadnezzar II’s extensive building projects, including the monumental structures discussed above.

7.2.6. Canals and the ‘Hydraulic Hypothesis’

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\(^{322}\) Smith-Christopher, ‘Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile’, p. 24; Wetzel and Weissbach, *Das Hauptheiligtum Des Marduk in Babylon, Esagila Und Etemenanki*, pp. 46-47. There is also the possibility that Nabonidus may have used garrisons of Judean soldiers in Northern Arabia; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p. 62; Gadd, ‘The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus,’ p. 86.
The opening verses of the book of Ezekiel and Psalm 137 have together had what appears to be an inordinate influence on attempts by biblical scholars to construct a plausible model of what life may have been like for the population of Judeans transported to Babylon in successive waves of deportation in 597, 587/6 and 582 BCE. The fact that both of these texts mention bodies of water has logically drawn attention to the question of the possibility of the use of forced labour of Judeans in the construction and maintenance of the network of canals and associated irrigation systems which are so vital to life in Mesopotamia throughout this period.

In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God…the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there. (Ezek 1:1-3)

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion. (Ps 137:1)

Mention of a river named Chebar (נהר־כבר) in Ezek 1:1 may help to locate this community of exiled Judeans in the region of Nippur, if this is a Hebraization of the Akkadian naru kabaru, a smaller tributary canal mentioned in the Muraşû archive documents.323

John J. Ahn relies on a theory of the wholesale forced labour of exiled Judeans in the construction and maintenance of the Babylonian canal network in order to justify his alternative rendering of the opening verse of Psalm 137:

The opening words of the psalm are best rendered as “By the irrigation canals of Babylon” to illuminate and establish a concrete social context, in contrast to the more generic “By the waters of Babylon.”…The opening words of the verse draw the reader into the first half of the 6th century Babylonian backdrop, where the first wave of Judeans were forced to work on these irrigation canals…The major and continuous problem of salinization was prevalent on all primary, secondary, and tertiary irrigation canals. The arduous and ceaseless

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task of removing salt from the canals for agricultural purposes was forced upon the Judeans.  

How central might the, undoubtedly impressive, neo-Babylonian canal and irrigation networks actually have been to the lives of people deported from Judah at this time? The overall impact of the development of canals and waterways on life in Babylonia during the long sixth century was certainly significant. However, it would be a mistake to assert that the vast majority of deported Judeans were used as forced labour in their construction and maintenance as Ahn’s idiosyncratic translation of Psalm 137 supposes. Based on the limited evidence available a much more complex image emerges.

The expansion of hydraulic technology throughout the Neo-Babylonian empire was one of the primary aims of Nebuchadnezzar II’s impressive campaign of infrastructural development. The characteristics of this development, and its attendant social and economic impacts, identify this phase of the Neo-Babylonian empire squarely as a ‘hydraulic society.’ The label ‘hydraulic society’ originates with the historian K. A. Wittfogel and was popularised by his prominent 1957 publication Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power. Wittfogel’s highly influential theory has no doubt coloured our interpretations of the place of Judean deportees in the Neo-Babylonian milieu within the field of biblical studies. Despite several issues, Wittfogel’s model of a hydraulic empire, particularly as presented in his 1955 article ‘Developmental Aspects of Hydraulic Societies’ remains an appropriate point of departure for the present attempt to build a more holistic image of historical reality.

According to Wittfogel a hydraulic society is an agrarian society based on large-scale government directed irrigation projects. Ancient societies of this type tended to command larger territories and enjoy greater longevity than their non-hydraulic counterparts, and also exerted a much more significant long-term impact on the physical and social landscape. This type of society tended to develop under a form of autocratic governance which predominated in the Near and Middle East which

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Wittfogel labelled ‘oriental despotism.’ The irrigation technology required for agriculture was made available through large-scale government-directed water control.\textsuperscript{326}

The Neo-Babylonian empire does display three key qualities identified by Wittfogel as central to the development of this particular type of social system; it is constructional, organizational, and acquisitive. The empire was constructional, as is clear from the evidence, both archaeological and epigraphic, uncovered from Nebuchadnezzar II’s reign. Infrastructural developments at this time consisted of both large hydraulic constructions; canals, waterworks and aqueducts for conveying drinking water, and also non-hydraulic constructions; monumental structures, defence works, roads, palaces, temples and colossal tombs. In terms of organizational factors, a certain degree of large-scale centralized planning is evident and may have been a contributing factor in the neo-Babylonian empire’s capacity for aggressive warfare and super-regional expansion. Wittfogel also cites a discernible concentration of societal leadership among a relatively small sector of the population who exercised a degree of bureaucratic monopoly. This feature should not be overlooked in our discussion of political organization in Babylonia and its potential impact on the political status of the Judean exiles and on the shape of their own social organization.\textsuperscript{327}

Finally, the acquisitive nature of the Neo-Babylonian empire is evident from control of vast swathes of the population as a labour resource, via corvée-labour and service obligation systems, and heavy taxation exacted in either kind (usually barley or dates) or cash (silver).\textsuperscript{328} While ancient records provide evidence of both private land ownership and state and temple held lands the fact that neo-Babylonian state officials appear to have been reliant on the prebendary system (grants of state land with attendant rights and responsibilities as part of one’s appointment) would indicate a certain degree of central government control of cultivable land.\textsuperscript{329}

The extent to which there is any direct causal link between the development of hydraulic technology on such a grand scale and the rise of a more sophisticated state

system is of course debatable. Ostensibly there is no reason that agricultural systems and their associated irrigation could not be organized and maintained at the village or household level. Furthermore, in a number of ancient societies complex political systems and their associated managerial bureaucracy in many cases predate these specific technological developments. Therefore, there is no simple linear relationship between these technological developments and the rise of governmental sophistication.\textsuperscript{330} We can imagine that actual historical reality itself was more complex than the key features of Wittfogel’s hypothesis may imply. However, the fact remains that the socio-economic context of the neo-Babylonian empire, within which exilic communities of Judeans operated, does display these key characteristics. Characteristics which were so central in precipitating the agricultural intensification and concomitant economic boom discussed above.

As such it is fair to say that the ‘irrigation canals of Babylon’ had a profound impact on the context within which the imagined exiles of Jer 29, Psalm 137, and Ezek 1 are textually located. In terms of direct Judean involvement in the construction and maintenance of those canals however evidence is lacking. By contrast the available extra-biblical evidence does point to the involvement of Judean communities in Babylon in agriculture, particularly as part of the land for service system.

7.2.7. Political Status

With Judean deportees likely operating in Babylon as part of a class of state dependants, engaged in agriculture on allotted strips of cultivable land, what opportunities might there have been for social organization and what shape might such communities have taken? The existence of assemblies (\textit{puḫru}) as evidence for a tradition of relative autonomy in matters of local government within the Neo-Babylonian Empire has already been discussed above. Might a similar tradition of local-level autonomy be present in settlements of workers of foreign origin?

We do know that various groups involved in the land for service system were organized into a type of corporate body known as a \textit{hatru}. This type of small-scale fiscal district is mentioned almost exclusively in the Murašû documents, with only four

examples occurring outside of the context of this archive. The haṭru was designated in terms of the collective identity of the members; for instance a shared occupation or, on occasion, a shared ethnicity. Examples include the haṭru of the Scythians, the Carians, Urartians, Phrygians, Lydians, the haṭru of the aspástūtu (‘horse-feeders’) and the haṭru of the kaškadinnū (‘pastry cooks’). There is no mention of a haṭru of the Judeans. However, the term šušanû is frequently attested in haṭru designations. As barley income from ‘the fields of the Judean šušanûs (šu-šá-[na-ni]-e ia-ḥa-da)’ is mentioned as being under the authority of a governor named Uštanu in line 7 of CUSAS 28.18 discussed above, then a haṭru of the Judeans is certainly not implausible.

Stolper, in his analysis of the haṭru as it is attested across the Murašû archive makes the valuable point that the common denominator among the groups of people so designated is not so much a shared professional or ethnic identity as it is the fact of their common economic and legal dependence on the state and state concessionaries; that is their status as feudatories. Stolper characterises šušanû as a term which indicates a state of ‘semifreedom,’ a situation of constraint implying greater rights and protections than chattel slavery, the position of a dependent ascribed worker. In this respect then, an ethnic group’s interactions with various degrees of state and local administrative authority may have been carried out collectively in the form of such a body. However, this does not necessarily imply any significant degree of communal autonomy. A similar phenomenon may lie behind those instances of toponymie en miroir which signal the presence of a variety of different ethnic groups resident in Babylon at this time. It is worth recalling that in BE IX.69, in his endeavour to have his property returned, the Judean Udarna’ likely approaches the assembly (puḥru) of Nippur. In this case at least there does not appear to have been any autonomous Judean assembly he could have had recourse to.

333 Stolper, Entrepreneurs and Empire, pp. 72, 74; Pearce, ‘Identifying Judeans and Judean Identity,’ p. 15; Zadok, ‘West Semitic Groups in the Nippur Region,’ p. 105.
334 Stolper, Entrepreneurs and Empire, pp. 79-82.
Within the biblical literature, the books of both Ezekiel and Jeremiah mention Judean ‘elders’ (זקני) present in Babylon. Camb. 85, a text documenting the sale of a field and cistern written in Babylon in 529 BCE, records that this transaction has been carried out in the presence of the ‘assembly of the elders of the Egyptians’ (ina puṭur šībūtu šā Mi-šir-a-a). This would suggest that this assembly had some kind of jurisdictional standing in the eyes of the Achaemenid authorities, and may indicate that there was some degree of organisation within a community of Egyptians resident in Babylon, notably several years before Cambyses’ conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE. Several scholars have thus pointed to the example of Camb. 85 and the parallel terminology of ‘elders’ occurring both here and in Ezekiel and Jeremiah as positive indications of an analogous level of social organization and legal recognition of a communal self-governing body of Judean exiles in Babylon.

Dandamaev asserts that Judeans in Babylon were in a position, alongside other ethnic groups, to exercise a form of internal self-government via an assembly. He also draws a parallel between this scenario in the Achaemenid period and a Hellenistic phenomenon:

As early as the beginning of the sixth century BC Ezekiel (8:1, etc) mentions ‘elders’ of the Jewish settlement in Babylonia, who apparently decided questions relating to the internal administration of these settlements and judged litigation within the Jewish colonies in Babylonia. Thus, although the strangers who lived in Mesopotamia had no part in the self-government of Babylonian cities, in some cases such aliens settled in a considerable number in separate places and could establish their own self-government by popular assembly. These self-governing minorities in Babylonia living alongside the popular assemblies of the citizens in many aspects resemble the politeumata of the Hellenistic period.

However, the fact remains that we have no extrabiblical evidence for the existence of any such autonomous Judean popular assemblies in either the Neo-Babylonian or Achaemenid periods, unlike the Hellenistic politeumata which are well attested.

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335 Ezek 8:1; 14:1; 20:1, Jer 29:1.
particularly in Egypt. Significantly, there is no indication, among the currently published material, that such a form of internal self-government existed among the residents of Āl-Yāḥūdu. Ultimately, from the extrabiblical evidence that is available, the argument for the population of Judean deportees in Babylon during the neo-Babylonian period predominantly belonging to a class of glebae adscripti is stronger than the argument for their having formed legally recognized autonomous communal assemblies. Admittedly, these two scenarios are of course not mutually exclusive.

7.3. Conclusion

The advice of Jer 29:5-7 presents a crystallisation of several elements associated with the theme of long-term settlement and agricultural productivity. These verses include an encouragement of the building of permanent dwellings and the planting of gardens (גַּנֵּט). The instruction to consume the fruit of these gardens and pray for the welfare of the city promotes an ideal of orderly, prosperous, and peaceful existence in exile. In Jer 29:5 we find, in the same order, the same trio of symbolic activities which are central to Deut 20:5-7. These three actions; to build, to plant, and to marry, all carry a significant symbolic weight, being associated with the ideal mode of life for a Judean male. In Deut 20, to build, plant, and marry are achievements to be attained and fulfilled prior to risking of one’s life in warfare. In Deut 28 the central importance of these three activities is highlighted through the image of their negation as severe and drastic punishment for disobedience, the worst of all possible scenarios; ‘You shall betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, and you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, and you shall not use the fruit of it’ (Deut 28:30).

Moreover, the build and plant word pair, which Louis Stulman identified as a ‘promissory motif,’ occurs at intervals throughout the book of Jeremiah and further reinforces the theme of building and planting, reinforcing the association of these activities with obedience to divine will, and accompanied by notions of blessing and fulfilment. The promissory motif of building and planting is clear in Jer 24:6: ‘I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up.’ Notably this phrase occurs alongside a comparison between the righteous Judeans in exile, the ‘good figs,’ and the ‘bad figs,’ that remnant of the Jerusalem establishment

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surrounding King Zedekiah. The figurative use of good fruit, ripe and readily eaten, as a sign of divine approval, may also be read in the phraseology of Jer 29:5; ‘plant gardens and eat their fruit.’

When compared with the context of Deut 20, where to build, plant, and marry are markers of ideal Israelite manhood, in some ways the very foundational of a stable and prosperous livelihood within the land promised by YHWH to his people, the formulation of these same activities within Jeremiah’s exhortatory statement to the exiles already resident in Babylon, is quite jarring. The sense of confident, divinely assured, military success found in Deut 20 is absent, and the message is one of stable, compliant, active economic participation in the wider dominant imperial extractive regime. The addressees, as a subject population divorced from its homeland, is being co-opted via the message of Jeremiah’s letter into the dialectical mechanism of hegemony whereby their activity effectively reproduces the conditions of their own domination.

The fact that the text of Jer 29:5 commands building and planting implies that their relocation to Mesopotamia has not removed from the Judean deportees the capacity to actualize the ideal mode of life promoted by the ‘build – plant – marry’ formula. That the people addressed in Jeremiah’s letter are being encouraged to establish settlements and households signals not only the longevity of their sojourn in Babylonia but also expresses a desire that the subject Judean population adapt to its new surroundings in compliance with the immediate reality of life under Neo-Babylonian domination. The build-plant-marry trio and the build-plant word pair thus operate as potent elements of a symbolic code operating along a specifically cultural axis. The hegemonic message here resonates with the intended audience in terms of national and religious identity, promoting active compliance and neutralizing potential resistance.

This instance of the symbolic code in Jer 29 works in particular by foregrounding specific agricultural signifiers, the planting of gardens and the eventual consumption of their fruit. By foregrounding these specific signifiers, as part of a theme of settled domestic establishment and agricultural productivity, the text here promotes a particular perspective originating within the ruling class, thus fulfilling the purpose to which the symbolic code has been employed. The potent imagery of gardens and fruit are drawn from a reality familiar to the audience and are used to transmit the message
of an interested power group. Traces of a distinct ideological structure can be discerned in this occasion of cultural hegemony in the text, an operation of a power structure which seeks to control ‘everything that directly or indirectly influences or could influence public opinion.’

The ideological perspective promoted by the commands to ‘plant gardens and eat of their fruit’ and to ‘pray for the welfare of the city,’ encourages compliance on the part of the subject Judean population. The deportees are advised to adapt, comply and thereby not only survive but potentially prosper in the exilic context. The activities of building, planting, and marrying are promoted as being in perfect harmony with the concept of the welfare of the city. The relationship between the active agency of the deportees and the benefits of peace and prosperity within the wider Babylonian imperial system is reinforced by the instruction that the ‘welfare of the city’ is something to be assiduously sought in prayer. Thus, the relationship between the houses and gardens of the exiles of Jer 29:5 and the Babylonian city of Jer 29:7 is not simply within a local network of productivity but also has ramifications on a wider national and imperial level.

The shape of the economic participation expected of the letter’s addressees becomes clearer via an explicitly agricultural reading of the gardens (גַּנּ ֺות) of Jer 29:5, alongside a socio-politically nuanced understanding of the concept of ‘the city’ in ancient Mesopotamia. The text’s exercise in cultural hegemony utilises and reflects elements of the historical context which can be traced from the extrabiblical evidence, particularly those cuneiform tablets which point to Judean involvement in the land for service system. The גַּנּ ֺות of Jer 29:5, tree-planted gardens, orchards, or groves take on a new significance when considered in light of the centrality of agricultural gardens and particularly high intensity date-palm cultivation to the Neo-Babylonian economy. These agricultural gardens were almost entirely dependent on a wider infrastructural network of canals and irrigation systems. Thus, gardens and canals may be read as vital elements of the Neo-Babylonian economy and part of the cultural identity and status-claims of each city. The city was a precise concept in Neo-Babylonian society and certain sectors of the urban population enjoyed distinct rights and privileges.

The Murašû and Āl-Yāḥūdu tablets, along with a smaller number of texts from Sippar, all record various commercial transactions which offer some insight into the

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lived reality of a number of Judeans in Babylon around this time. Two references are made in the Āl-Yāḥūdu documents to an agricultural service obligation known as ‘ilkū.’ In several of the Āl-Yāḥūdu tablets a Judean named Aḥīqam is seen operating as part of a wider bureaucratic system of land management which involves several degrees of Babylonian state officialdom. While there is evidence for the use of forced labour by the crown in some major infrastructural construction projects, it appears that the majority of Judean deportees were assigned to tracts of agricultural land via the state-administered service-obligation system.

While there is certainly some evidence for a level of autonomous local government among both the native population and people groups of foreign origin resident in Babylonia, there is no direct proof of a Judean collective body such as a ḫāṭru or an assembly (puḥru), nor of a conclave of Judean elders in the available documentary evidence. The toponym of Āl-Yāḥūdu, as an example of the phenomenon of toponymie en miroir, may indicate some level of collective organisation along ethnic lines. Support for this hypothesis may be found in the fact that Judeans are mentioned in connection with the term šušanū, perhaps indicating dependent ascribed worker status. Considering the reference made in Camb. 85 to an ‘assembly of the elders of the Egyptians’ there may certainly have been some occasions where a group of individuals sharing a common identity, ethnicity or profession etc., may have interacted collectively with the state and local administrative authorities. Such a circumstance would not necessarily imply any significant degree of communal autonomy.

The two texts recording the marriage contract of Kaššaya, daughter of the Judean Amušē one of the merchant family of Ariḥ, in some ways reflect the logical outcome of the ‘build – plant – marry’ exhortation delivered in Jer 29:5. Her mother’s ability to provide a sufficient dowry, along with the Babylonian names of the bride and several of her kinsmen who bear witness to the contract, in addition to the groom’s likely native Babylonian heritage, are all signs of significant assimilation and material success some three or so generations after the deportation of 597 BCE. This snapshot of the life of a single family of Judean descent in Sippar succinctly illustrates a settled and prosperous existence as a result of figurative building and planting. Might the instruction of Jer 29:6 to give one’s sons and daughters in marriage have envisioned the exogamy witnessed in this textual record of Kaššaya and Gūzānu’s union?
Chapter 3: Space, Power, and Subversion in the case of the Rechabites

In Jer 35, in accordance with divine instruction, the prophet Jeremiah invites the Rechabites, ancestors of Jonadab b. Rechab, to the Temple in Jerusalem:

The word that was unto Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah King of Judah, saying: Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the Lord, to one of the chambers, and give to them wine to drink. And I took Jazaniah b. Jeremiah b. Habaziniah and his brothers, and all his sons, and all the house of the Rechabites. And I brought them to the house of the Lord, to the chamber of the sons of Hanan b. Yigdaliah, the man of God, which was beside the chambers of the officials which was above the chamber of Maaseiah b. Shallum, the door keeper. (Jer 35:1-4)

Again, according with divine instruction, Jeremiah offers the Rechabites wine to drink, which they refuse, in keeping with the ancestral precepts they continue to follow.

And I set out before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine and cups, and I said to them; ‘Drink ye wine!’ And they said: ‘No we will not drink wine for Jonadab son of Rechab our father commanded us saying: “You will not drink wine, ye and your sons, for all time. And a house you will not build, and seed you will not sow and a vineyard you will not plant, and this shall not be for you, for in tents will you dwell all your days, in order that ye will live many days on the face of the land upon which ye there sojourn (גרים),” And we have hearkened to the voice of Jonadab son of Rechab, our father, to all which he commanded, not to drink of wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons and our daughters. And not to build houses for our dwellings, or vineyards, or field, or seed-sowing (זרע) we have not had. And we have dwelt in tents and we have obeyed, and we have done all which Jonadab our father commanded us. (Jer 35:5-10)

The refusal of wine and subsequent explanation from the Rechabites are followed by a prophetic speech from Jeremiah contrasting the steadfast obedience of the Rechabites to their ancestral law with the disobedience of Judah, despite God’s sending multiple prophetic messengers. The episode closes with words of praise and promise for the Rechabites for upholding their ancestral laws:

And to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said: Thus says the Lord of hosts God of Israel, because ye hearkened to the commandment of Jonadab your father and ye kept all of his commandments and ye did all that he commanded ye. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel, no man of Jonadab b.
Rechab shall be cut off from standing before me for all the days. (Jer 35:18-19)

The interaction between Jeremiah and the Rechabites, and the portion of the text devoted to the statement of the ancestral precepts they hold to, raises a number of pertinent questions. Who are the Rechabites? More importantly, whether historical or not, what is the function of their presence in this episode in Jer 35? What is the significance of Jeremiah’s invitation to the group to join him in the temple compound? What might this signify to readers of Jeremiah’s position, or influence, in that spatial context? What elements of the concept of hospitality, invitation and welcome, are operating, or indeed failing to operate, in this episode? What is the significance of the Rechabites refusal to partake of the offered wine and their accompanying explanation? How is the final commendation and blessing of the house of the Rechabites to be read?

Agricultural productivity as a mode of economic participation, and the construction of permanent dwellings are foundational elements of the compliant settled mode of life promoted by the symbolic code; in Jer 35 we see the Rechabite’s longstanding rejection of two of its central pillars, building and planting. This kinship group’s identity is explicitly defined in opposition to these aspects of a predominantly sedentary lifestyle. The setting for the clan’s statement of self-identification, a chamber in the Jerusalem temple, itself stands as a symbol for much of what this group professes to reject. Oftentimes in the biblical poetic imagination the temple is the permanent built dwelling par excellence, one which boasts of the ultimate resident:

For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his habitation:
This is my resting place forever;
here I will reside, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless its provisions;
I will satisfy its poor with bread. (Ps 132:13-15)

This enigmatic group may thus be interpreted as representing an implicit threat to the authoritative status quo enshrined in the very space to which they are granted privileged entry by Jeremiah.
8.1. The Rechabites

Little is known about the Rechabites. They appear as if from nowhere into the narrative, disappearing just as suddenly once their brief interaction with Jeremiah is complete. They have not been successfully historicised. A short segment at the end of a genealogical passage in 1 Chron 2 links them with a tribal group, the Kennites: ‘…the Kennites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab’ (1 Chron 2:55). The name Rechab is linked etymologically to chariots and chariots.343 A chariot is also an interesting feature in the brief appearance (2 Kgs 10) of Jonadab b. Rechab, the eponymous ancestor, whose precepts this group appeal to in their statement of identity in Jer 35:6:

And when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab b. Rechab coming to meet him; and he greeted him, and said to him, ‘Is your heart true to my heart as mine is to yours?’ And Jehonadab answered, ‘it is.’ Jehu said, ‘If it is, give me your hand.’ So, he gave him his hand. And Jehu took him up with him into the chariot. And he said, ‘Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.’ So, he had him ride in his chariot. (2 Kgs 10:15-16)

The most obvious way to interpret the role of the Rechabites in Jer 35 is that their adherence to ancestral law is admirable, a model to be emulated, in contrast to the apostasy and disloyalty of Judah. Judah will now be punished for its disobedience, while the Rechabites will be rewarded for their loyalty to their ancestral law:

...because ye hearkened to the commandment of Jonadab your father and ye kept all of his commandments and ye did all that he commanded ye. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel, no man of Jonadab b. Rechab shall be cut off from standing before me for all the days. (Jer 35:18-19)

The Rechabites’ refusal to comply with Jeremiah’s invitation to drink wine is not treated in the text as any kind of egregious disobedience, however it is keenly illustrative of their long-standing refusal to be inscribed within a conventional, agriculturally productive, sedentary lifestyle, incorporating the hallmarks of domestic settlement establishment. In contrast with the recurring motif of building and planting encountered at various points in Jeremiah and reflecting a similar theme in Deut 20 and 28, the Rechabites emphatically do neither. Their definitive statement of identity embodies a rejection of these fundamental precepts of the symbolic code.

The Rechabites’ inverse relationship with these elements of the symbolic code serves to reinforce the code’s core message of fruitful agricultural participation, sedentary domestic establishment, and accommodation of imperial economic policy. The symbolic code consistently privileges that which the Rechabites reject. Their nomadism, their eschewing of permanent dwellings and agricultural activity, with the attendant economic function of such domestic settlement, is threatening to the sedentary status quo from which the symbolic code draws so many of its constituent elements. Empire demands a labour force that exercises mobility only subject to the needs of its own economic goals, a situation evident in the mass deportation of subject populations discussed in relation to Jer 29. The inherent communal autonomy implied by the Rechabites’ self-conscious ‘sojourner’ status serves to undermine this aspect of imperial hegemony.

They lack the things that either interest or threaten imperial power…the Rechabite’s rejection of settled existence enables them to live counter-imperially…their life practices lack several features of social organization that the book of Jeremiah places upon the Judeans and the Babylonians, such as monarchy or temple…the resistance that landlessness poses to empire. Landlessness or nomadism stands not simply as a rejection of sedentary cultures, but rather as a rejection of the accumulative actions of empire…Their withdrawal from constructing houses and vineyards represents in essence a departure from the tributary mode of production that formed the basis of the ancient economy in service to empire.

Other enough to stand as a threatening subversion of the sedentary agricultural ideal, the Rechabites must then be disciplined, known, catalogued and commodified, and thereby neutralised. In terms of cultural hegemony then the treatment of the Rechabites is illustrative. Here we have an example of a group which has not been successfully incorporated into the system, overtly declining to participate in and cooperate with the power structure promoted via the symbolic code. While not overtly stigmatised in the text, their othering may serve as form of ostracization in order to offset and nullify their inherent anti-imperial potential.

The historical reality, or lack thereof, of a Rechabite clan or kinship group is not essential to discerning the primary function of their characterisation in Jer 35. It is rather how this group is exoticized in this episode, their distinctive statement of identity being thereby instrumentalised, which best illustrates the symbolic code, as an instrument of cultural hegemony, at work in the text. Setting aside questions of the

group’s historicity, it becomes obvious that the text is offering them here as a fictionalised proximate other, similar enough that a mainstream sedentary Judean audience might identify with them in their subjection to the hardships and dislocation brought about by the Neo-Babylonian siege, yet thoroughly alien in their idiosyncratic lifeways.\textsuperscript{345} The Rechabites delineation as the proximate other ensures their use as an illustrative object lesson in the overall discourse of this episode. Hence the closing words of commendation in Jer 35:18-19, applauding the Rechabites singular devotion to these traditional nomoi, eulogizing and simultaneously instrumentalising their distinctive mode of life is a prime example of the colonising tool of idealisation:

As Anaand notes, the process of debasing evacuates the non-Western other of language, agency, and history and the process of negation rewrites the image of the indigene with that of the colonial image. Processes like idealization on which exoticization is based merely form the reverse side of the same coin.\textsuperscript{346}

Their quaint lifestyle, with its rejection of the markers of settled living, frames them as natural and more original, reflecting an aboriginal past long since dead but still desirable. The innocence of that idealized past represents that which is desired. Invoking that past in the figure of the exotic makes no call to undo progress and civilization to return to a more ‘natural’ way of life. While the figure of the exotic is domesticated enough to exist in the dominant culture, it cannot be so subversive as to change that culture.\textsuperscript{347}

The heart of the Rechabites’ subversive potential lies in the fact that their distinctive lifeways directly undermine the foundational principles enshrined in the symbolic code, building and planting. Consequently, this episode works to domesticate them, to neutralise their potential for disruption. The politics of space plays a significant role in how this literary domestication is achieved.

### 8.2. Space in Jer 35

The Rechabite relationship with the spaces they temporarily and insecurely occupy does not conform to the covenant ideal. The words of Jonadab b. Rechab expressed in Jer 35:7 characterise their presence in the land as a state of permanent sojourning; ‘in order that ye will live many days on the face of the land upon which ye


\textsuperscript{346} Davidson, ‘Exoticizing the Otter,’ p. 193.

\textsuperscript{347} Davidson, ‘Exoticizing the Otter,’ pp. 197-98.
there sojourn (גרים). The Rechabites therefore do not partake in the divinely ordained inheritance of Israel. Consequently, the Rechabite example is offered in Jer 35 not as a positive example for the contemporary Judean audience to emulate but as a foil against which to measure their own compliance with the repeated commands to build-plant-marry. Even the language of covenant which informs the statement of promise to the Rechabites in the closing verses of Jer 35 appears to be conditional upon their absorption into the sedentary norm:

Should the divine rewards of vv. 18-19 take effect, then the Rechabites' life practices will cease to exist as they did before. Of course, the Rechabites as a model of obedience would be incorporated into the Judean society as an artefact to Judean devotion or the lack thereof. All other possible potentials to transform Judean society, particularly the subversive lifestyle of stateless living, remain muted in Jeremiah’s rhetoric.348

This serves to neutralise the presence of the Rechabites in the text, effectively domesticating them in compliance with the similar accommodationist demands placed on the communities addressed in Jer 29 and 40, who, whether exiled or remnant, must adapt to and comply with the newly imposed realities of Neo-Babylonian domination. In order to survive, all must build and plant.

The setting for Jeremiah’s interlocution with the Rechabites serves to further alienate this group from the norms of domestic establishment. This people group, known for their refusal to build houses, sow seeds, plant vineyards, or drink wine are summoned to the pinnacle of built dwellings, and are there called upon to repudiate these ancestral precepts. The invitation to drink wine is not unalloyed hospitality but a summons to endorse the domestic establishment norms of the symbolic code, behind which the symbolic weight of the temple setting is arrayed as a further persuasive force towards compliance. The exercise of cultural hegemony enforces a particular ‘Representation of Space’ in the Lefebvrian sense, rendering the Rechabites as an incongruous element incompatible with the spatial setting in which they have been placed. The rhetoric of the passage then serves to idealize and consequently domesticate the Rechabites, rendering this episode an object lesson in the primacy of the values enshrined in the symbolic code.

348 Davidson, ‘Exoticizing the Otter,’ p. 198.
8.3. Hospitality in Jer 35

In this incident in Jer 35, and later again at Jer 41, we witness certain subversions of the precepts of hospitality which establish both episodes as sites of significant symbolic weight. In each episode conventional norms of welcome and the ideal roles of host and guest are disrupted. Read as an occasion for hospitality, with the chamber within the temple occupied by Jeremiah standing for the prophet’s own domain, and interpreted within the parameters of the concept of hospitality, this episode portrays elements of a power relationship and reveals both Jeremiah and the Rechabites as mutually deficient in their performances of the roles of host and guest respectively.

In terms of fulfilling their obligations as guests, the Rechabites start well; by responding positively to Jeremiah’s summons and coming to the temple as invited. This implies a certain fealty and compliance on their part, an initial acceptance of Jeremiah’s hospitality.

To occupy one’s assigned seat and participate in the meal realizes and communicates one’s place in the hierarchy of status; in effect, the courtier states through his presence and his participation that he is loyal to his overlord, the king, and accepts his position in the status hierarchy of the court. Ultimately, however, the Rechabites must refuse the wine offered to them, thereby failing to meet the obligation of a guest to preserve the host’s honour by accepting that which is offered, in this case the ancestrally forbidden wine.

In what should be conducted as a scenario of reciprocal transaction Jeremiah is also deficient in the role of host. As host Jeremiah fails to guarantee the inviolate dignity of his guests. The imperative command to the Rechabites to drink wine, albeit on divine instruction, places them in the position of either having to refuse or actively participate in the erasure of their own group identity. As a result, the potential for the realisation of hospitality, the central transaction of honour, is unrealised. Jeremiah’s erstwhile guests are reduced to exhibition pieces, forcibly neutralised through their exoticization.

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9. Chapter 4: The Site of Tell en-Naṣbeh

In chapters 40 and 41 of the Masoretic Text of Jeremiah we are presented with the story of Gedaliah b. Ahikam and a body of Judeans, survivors of the Babylonian assault, assembled at the town of Mizpah. This ‘remnant’ is an admixture of military commanders and their battalions returned from open warfare and civilians who had fled to nearby territories. Over these two chapters a narrative arc unfolds which covers events from Jeremiah being granted permission to join Gedaliah at Mizpah, to the aftermath of Gedaliah’s assassination, and the eventual flight of a body of Judean survivors to Egypt under the leadership of Johanan b. Kareah. The reference in Jer 40:10 to towns captured and to the places outside of the land of Judah that some of the people are now returning from indicates a period of turbulent border fluidity and uncertainty. It may be that the captured towns of Jer 40:10 are allotted to these Judeans by the Neo-Babylonians or are newly captured lands from other kingdoms which, like Judah, suffered from extreme instability across the region. An interesting analogue to Tell en-Naṣbeh (Mizpah) may also be found in Lipschits’ study of contemporaneous settlements in Ammon.

In the following chapter it will be important to determine to what extent the textual characterisation of Gedaliah’s regime at Mizpah reflects elements of past reality. Through examining the archaeological evidence, we can get a better idea of the reality from which the symbolic code was drawn; the context which supplies this code with semantic potency. Addressing the nature of the settlement at Mizpah during the Late Iron Age and into the Persian period necessitates a full exploration of the archaeological evidence. By treating Tell en-Naṣbeh, the site of biblical Mizpah, as the initial focal point, we postpone questions regarding the characterisation of Gedaliah in the Jeremiah narrative, his function or origins in a historical personality. Such a course is pursued in anticipation that a fuller understanding of Mizpah, foremost as a historical location with its own archaeology, geography, agricultural and economic profile will subsequently enhance the following chapter’s analysis of the character of Gedaliah and the events surrounding him, through which the symbolic code is broadcast. By constructing a profile of the location within which the literary episodes of Jer 40 and 41 are set, this study will provide insights into the historical realia upon which the symbolic code depends for its successful functioning.
9.1. **Historical Location of biblical Mizpah:**

In order to later relate any archaeological data from Tell en-Našbeh to our study of Mizpah as presented in Jer 40-41, it is essential to make a firm decision on the identification of the site. Throughout the earlier twentieth century there was some debate as to whether Tell en-Našbeh or Nebi Samwil was the more likely candidate for a positive identification as biblical Mizpah. Arguments were largely based on references to the location in the biblical text. Over time a consensus in favour of Tell en-Našbeh developed for several reasons: the geographical location of Tell en-Našbeh, its proximity to the Judah-Israel boundary, and the extensive fortifications found at the site.

The name Mizpah itself means ‘lookout point’ or ‘watchtower’ from the Hebrew root צפר meaning ‘to look out, spy, keep watch.’ Tell en-Našbeh is at an elevation of around 848m above sea level on a broad natural plateau at the top of a ridge. The site commands an excellent view of the surrounding countryside with parts of the Old City of Jerusalem visible to the south. Tell en-Našbeh also offers the strategic advantage of overlooking the main north-south road, the ‘way of the patriarchs’ or ‘ridge route’ from Hebron to Megiddo.

Nebi Samwil however, is further away from this significant thoroughfare, at over 4km from the nearest point on the road. While Nebi Samwil is at a higher elevation than Tell en-Našbeh this location would not have afforded occupants the same commanding view. Furthermore, Tell en-Našbeh has the additional strategic advantage of being located on or very near the boundary which existed between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, a fact that would have contributed to the site’s economic prosperity during peace time.

Identification of Tell en-Našbeh as Mizpah gains further support from some, though certainly not all, biblical references to the town. The reference to king Asa of  

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Judah’s building of significant fortifications at Mizpah after the conflict with king Baasha of Israel is particularly noteworthy:

Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none was exempt, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Ba’asha had been building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. (1 Kgs 15:22 // 2 Chr 16:6)

The fortifications of the Iron Age stratum at Tell en-Naṣbeh are one of the most striking features of the site’s archaeological profile. Zorn has identified three stages of cumulative development in the site’s transformation from a walled settlement to a fortified border town in Stratum 3 (Iron II). These walls were built around 4m thick and included ten watch towers, reminiscent of the town’s name, built on projections over 6m thick, and the occasional moat. This is one of the most impressive Iron Age defensive structures in either Israel or Judah and continued in use into Stratum 2 which Zorn identifies as the period of Babylonian dominion.\(^{354}\) Finally, it is worth noting the lack of either Iron I or sixth century BCE material identified in excavations at Nebi Samwil, in support of the broad scholarly consensus in favour of Tell en-Naṣbeh’s identification as biblical Mizpah.\(^{355}\) This, however, with the caveat that sixth century BCE material, particularly pottery, is notoriously difficult to identify, and even harder to divide into chronological sub-categories.\(^{356}\) The consensus position in favour of Tell en-Naṣbeh will be followed throughout this study.

9.2. Zorn’s New Stratigraphy

In 1993 Jeffrey Zorn produced an extensive reassessment of the archaeological data from Tell en-Naṣbeh, based on the excavation reports produced under the direction of W. F. Badè in 1947. Zorn’s thesis forms the basis for the following observations about the settlement at Mizpah at the time of the Neo-Babylonian siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and its immediate aftermath. One key characteristic across all the archaeological data treated by Zorn is the sense of continuity from the previous settlement period, Iron II Stratum 3a to the Stratum 2 settlement of the time of Nebuchadnezzar.\(^{357}\) In addition to extensive reporting of the various archaeological, architectural, geographic, demographic, and agricultural

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\(^{355}\) Zorn, ‘Problem of the Material Culture,’ p. 413 n. 1.
aspects of the settlement, Zorn concluded that a key feature for understanding Mizpah at this time in its history was this relationship between the end of Stratum 3 and the beginning of Stratum 2.

In Zorn’s revised stratigraphy for the site Stratum 3 is an Iron II site lasting from approximately 1000 BCE to 586 BCE, with three substrata; 3c, 3b, and 3a. The final substratum, 3a, dates from roughly 850 BCE to 586 BCE. Zorn dates stratum 3’s terminus ad quem to the year of the Neo-Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The much shorter period of Stratum 2 is thus dated from 586BCE to between 450 and 400 BCE. This stratum is the late Iron Age settlement at Mizpah under Babylonian domination, lasting up to the Persian period. According to Zorn stratum 2 likely represents the newly constructed capital of the Babylonian province of Judah ruled initially by Gedaliah, and which later was an administrative centre of the early Persian period. The reason for its demise is unknown.

As shall be discussed in greater detail later, the image Zorn constructs of a provincial ‘capital’ that was ‘ruled’ by Gedaliah as governor may be an overstatement of the scale and significance of Mizpah within the Neo-Babylonian imperial administration. However, his model of the change in function at the site c.a. 586 BCE is compelling. Between the end of stratum 3 and the beginning of stratum 2 there is a complete lack of any burnt destruction layer and there is a marked absence of in situ restorable pottery. The buildings of Stratum 2 do not follow the orientation of earlier developments, dictated by the topography of the ridge on which the settlement is founded. In fact, the Stratum 2 buildings use the debris of the Stratum 3 buildings as a levelled surface, facilitating a new settlement layout with significantly larger and more widely spaced buildings. All of this points to a peaceful and orderly evacuation and redevelopment at Mizpah, contemporary with the beginning of Neo-Babylonian domination in the region.

…this deliberate and peaceful destruction of Stratum 3, followed by its replacement with buildings of similar types, but of larger and finer construction, and laid out in a completely different settlement plan, represents the Babylonian’s transformation of Mizpah from a fortified

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town on Judah’s northern border into a new administrative centre. Form follows function. \(^{363}\)

In agreement with Zorn’s reassessment of the stratigraphic evidence from Tell en-Naşbeh, then, it is obvious that this site can offer us several details from which to rebuild the wider context within which the Jer 40-41 narrative section is set. Taking a closer look at the evidence from late Iron Age Mizpah, along with an awareness of the longer-term significance of this settlement within biblical tradition, offers us a lens through which to assess the profile of a Neo-Babylonian imperial administration briefly represented in these chapters, and the wider relationship between this literary representation and the recurring themes and ideological perspectives enforced by the symbolic code discernible across a selection of narrative episodes in Jeremiah.

9.3. Archaeological Profile of Tell en-Naşbeh:

Thanks to the detailed nature of the original 1947 excavation report, Zorn’s meticulous synthesis of this information, along with more recent studies and several textual insights from various examinations of the biblical references to Mizpah, it is possible to construct a relatively detailed profile of the site of Tell en-Naşbeh around the time of the setting of the Jer 40-41 narrative section. The main elements of this profile are an examination of the redesign and reorientation of the site in the transition from Stratum 3a to Stratum 2; an estimate of the population at the site during this period; a profile of the site’s dry storage, water storage, and crop processing facilities; an assessment of the site’s capacity for agricultural production; and profiles of key material remains, particularly stamped jar handles.

9.3.1. Redesign

The redesign and reorientation of the site which took place at the beginning of Stratum 2 contains several key architectural features which point to a change in the site’s function and perhaps a moderate increase in prominence within the ‘administrative hierarchy.’\(^{364}\) More stable, and far more costly, monolithic carved stone pillars, completely replace the earlier mix of monolithic and rough-hewn column pillars.

\(^{363}\) Zorn, ‘Problem of the Material Culture,’ p. 419. 
drums. Similarly there is an increase in the frequency of more expensive stone flooring. The Stratum 2 building 74.01 is exemplary of this trend across the site at this time. What remains visible of 74.01 is over two-and-a-half times the size of any Stratum 3 building. It is built with double-stone-wide walls and a large central space features cobblestone paving, which is replicated in at least one of the surrounding rooms. Architecturally, 74.01 replicates the Mesopotamian 'open-court' building style, similar to building 736 of Megiddo Stratum 1. All of this earns for building 74.01 potential interpretation as a 'small palace.' While it is not possible to definitively identify 74.01 as the residence of a high-status individual, the building itself is exemplary of the greater structural investment, new style, and layout of the Stratum 2 settlement, compared to the more densely packed smaller buildings of Stratum 3.

These reorientation and redesign trends are also evident in a number of other Stratum 2 buildings, most notably in the vicinity of the settlement’s gate complex which also underwent redevelopment at this time. Buildings 110.01, 125.01, 145.02, and 160.10 are all built at an orientation which cuts across the remains of the previous Stratum 3 constructions, and all feature the distinctive ‘mixed building’ technique Zorn identified with Stratum 2 constructions. Building 110.01 is a four-room building which also yielded significant in situ and ‘primary deposit’ ceramic evidence in rooms 376 and 380a. Building 110.01 is in the vicinity of the settlement’s gate complex to which it has been deliberately oriented, with its floor at approximately the same level as that of the gate. The building’s deliberate construction in proximity to the gate, along with significant pottery finds suggest a dual purpose dwelling and storage building, perhaps occupied by an individual engaged in activities customary to gate areas, perhaps a type of ‘customs office.’ The gate complex itself features a plaza which is the only public paved area discovered at Tell en-Naṣbeh, this plaza space also features benches. These developments again point to the reorientation and redesign phenomenon at the site in the transition from Stratum 3 to Stratum 2.

A key feature of architectural developments during Stratum 3 was the construction of significant defensive fortifications at Substratum 3b c.a. 900 to 850

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BCE. This includes a 660m offset-inset wall, at most points 4m thick, increasing to 6m thick at the ten points where the watchtowers feature. This wall is occasionally also accompanied by a moat and is one of the strongest Iron Age fortifications so far discovered in either Israel or Judah. The wall is often associated with biblical references to King Asa of Judah’s building projects at the northern border. The wall continues in use during Stratum 2 but the Substratum 3b outer-inner gate complex is reduced to the, albeit still impressively fortified, outer gate in Stratum 2. The fact that defensive features appear to have been of slightly higher priority in Stratum 3 than in Stratum 2 may indicate a shift in the site’s function from a heavily walled border fortress to an imperial outpost with marginally less need for such significant defences. No building in either Stratum 3 or Stratum 2 has been identified as a barracks and there is no archaeological indication of the stationing of a garrison at the site, either Judean or Neo-Babylonian.

9.3.2. Population estimate

Zorn provides a cogent rationale for using the data of Stratum 3 to construct a model of the population levels and predominantly agricultural activities of the Stratum 2 population. This is based on two major aspects, the greater availability of Stratum 3 data compared to Stratum 2, and the reasonable hypothesis that those features of the Stratum 3 town not obscured and rendered defunct by the Substratum 3b wall development and subsequent Stratum 2 constructions, would most likely have continued in use down through the Stratum 2 period of the site’s continuous occupation. Hence, while the majority of the storage features, water and crop processing installations at Tell en-Naṣbeh date to periods earlier than the advent of Neo-Babylonian control of the region, a sizeable portion of them would have been in ongoing use by the Stratum 2 population.

Zorn also makes a persuasive defence of his assertion that there would not have been any sizeable difference between the population levels of Stratum 3 and Stratum 2, in the region of 900 persons, give or take a hundred. This calculation of the population at the settlement of approximately 900 persons arises from Zorn’s calculations of an average water consumption of 9 litres per person per day. If the estimated 110 cisterns of Stratum 3 were at 70 percent capacity by the beginning of the

dry season in April each year then the needs of 938 people could be supported, while in a 'wet' year with the cisterns at full capacity there would have been sufficient water stored to support a population of 1,340. Furthermore, Zorn’s estimate of 900 people lies reasonably close to estimates made by Finkelstein, based on a formula of between four and five individuals per household yielding a figure of 792-990, and Marfoe’s estimate based on a coefficient of one person per 10 square metres of floor space, yielding a minimum of 891 people.  

9.3.3. Agricultural Activity

In contrast to the complete reorientation and redesign of the site at the beginning of Stratum 2, there is significant continuity in the utilisation of storage facilities. A total of 201 silos carved from the limestone rock of the ridge and 61 circular storage bins were excavated. This likely does not represent the full extent of these types of storage features which existed at the site. The Stratum 2 building 160.10, another example of that stratum’s typically larger constructions, is the most likely candidate for a storage building. In smaller scale domestic storage settings baskets of less durability and smaller than the ceramic evidence, would have been sufficient storage vessels for the needs of a single household.

It is worth noting the massive scale of some of the ceramic evidence found in the stratum 2 buildings. In building 110.01, which was associated with the settlement’s gate complex, eighteen jars of types 311, 312 and 313 were found across rooms 376 and 380. These three types are categorised as ‘jars’ in Wampler’s original report of the Tell en-Naṣbeh ceramic finds. With a height range of 30 to 70cm, these storage vessels were too large for domestic use.

In the stratum 2 building 125.01, three large sack-shaped, hole-mouth pithoi of types 89 and 90 were found in states of relatively good preservation. These ceramic types are described in the original excavation report using the Arabic term ‘zir’. These pithoi are extremely large; type 89 for example is 1.15m tall with an aperture of 14cm at its narrowest point, regularly moving them would have been highly impractical.\(^{382}\) Therefore, Zorn is likely correct in his assertion that they would have remained in place once positioned and survived the lifetime of the building in which they were found.\(^{383}\) The original excavation report estimated a dating for pithoi types 89 and 90 to the period 700-500 BCE.\(^{384}\)

The capacity of the settlement to store agricultural products, along with the fact that much of this storage capacity resides in purpose-built Stratum 2 facilities, particularly centred around the redeveloped gate complex, is significant in any discussion of the site’s ability to produce an agricultural surplus, to store and subsequently trade that surplus, or surrender it as tribute. These are pertinent aspects of any discussion of an imperial regime under the stewardship of Gedaliah as appears to be indicated in Jer 40-41.

Natural water sources at Tell en-Naṣbeh are limited. The site is flanked by two wadis, with seasonally flooded channels, Wadi Jilyan to the east and Wadi Duweit to the west.\(^{385}\) There is also a number of springs in the vicinity, two within one kilometre of the site, extending to twenty-one within a 5km radius.\(^{386}\) None of these constitutes a perennial freshwater source. These sources alone would be insufficient to meet the estimated human, animal, and agricultural needs for Stratum 3. A number of cisterns were constructed over the lifetime of the settlement to take advantage of ample rainfall, averaging 500-600mm annually, most of it falling between November and March. The site also benefits from the lowest rate of evaporation outside the coastal areas.\(^{387}\) Eighty Stratum 3 cisterns have been identified, differentiated from silos by their narrower mouths and the occasional presence of lime-plaster waterproofing.\(^{388}\)

\(^{383}\) Zorn, ‘An Inner and Outer Gate Complex at Tell En-Nasbeh,’ p. 61.
\(^{384}\) Wampler, *Tell En-Nasbeh Volume II*, p. 3.
The presence of presses for the production of wine and olive oil, and ovens and portable stoves for processing grain, points to the participation of Tell en-Naṣbeh in the typical model of Mediterranean and Near Eastern agricultural economies; the triad of grapes, olives, and grain.\(^{389}\) The majority of occupants of Tell en-Naṣbeh throughout the settlement’s history would have been involved in agriculture. Similar to the vast majority of pre-modern populations, they would have had to strike a balance between subsistence and surplus for survival. Hence, it is perhaps not appropriate to term the array of olive and wine presses, and grain processing ovens, as industrial installations \textit{per se}. Likewise, there can be no explicit division between industrial and domestic features in the analysis of the site’s archaeology. It is highly likely that the industrial and agricultural aspects of daily life blended with domestic features throughout. Indeed, in some cases olive presses were identified in domestic spaces.

Six stone drum olive presses were identified at Tell en-Naṣbeh. These appear to have been in use before the sixth century BCE. Of the four olive presses which were found \textit{in situ}, four had an associated stone basin or vat for oil collection.\(^ {390}\) Fewer grape presses were identified, two in the excavator’s report. However, a number of other rock-cut installations could also be interpreted as grape presses at the site.\(^ {391}\) Generally, grape presses might be located outside a settlement, closer to the vineyards, in order to avoid damage to this soft fruit crop by unnecessary transportation. Clay-built ovens were found at Tell en-Naṣbeh, these would have been used, alongside smaller portable stoves, to process grain for milling or brewing.\(^ {392}\) It is presumed that a threshing floor also existed in the vicinity, though none have been identified, these features being particularly difficult to detect.\(^ {393}\)

Along with a reasonably temperate climate and higher than average rainfall levels Tell en-Naṣbeh also benefits from the presence of a variety of soil types with high agricultural potential.\(^ {394}\) This is particularly the case in the lower plain to the south and southwest.\(^ {395}\) Within a 2km radius of the site there are 12.6 square kilometres of land suitable for cultivation and grazing. Based on Zorn’s estimate of a population of

900 persons, one quarter of the land, over 3 square kilometres, would not be required for subsistence farming, and would therefore be available for the production of an agricultural surplus. At 12km north of Jerusalem, the site is just close enough for the Judean capital to have been a sizeable market for such a surplus. Considering the fact that the exploitable agricultural hinterland of the site may have extended up to a radius of 5km, perhaps farmed in common with other smaller ‘daughter’ settlements, Mizpah’s agricultural productivity levels may have been greater than this conservative 12.6 square kilometre estimate. In any case an estimation of a twenty-five percent agricultural surplus is viable.

9.3.4. Artefactual Remains

A range of material remains were uncovered in the excavation of Tell en-Naşbeḥ which further contribute to a profile of the nature and function of the site. Chief among these artefacts are a significant collection of stamped jar handles, particularly of the מ(ו)צה type. There were also eighteen ייה and six ייהד seal impression types found, stemming predominantly from the post exilic or Persian periods. In addition to the jar handles, a fragment of a bronze circlet with a cuneiform inscription, ‘bathtub style’ coffins, a bronze beaker, ‘Irano-Scythian’ style arrowheads, and the ‘Jaazaniah’ seal were also discovered and recorded.

A fragment of a circular bronze band of an approximate diameter of 50cm was found inside Cistern 166. It bears eleven cuneiform characters of a dedicatory inscription which has been translated in a variety of ways. Whether or not the inscription mentions a particular king, to which Mesopotamian deity the dedication is made, and the dating of the artefact are all largely undetermined. The presence of the inscription does however imply a degree of Mesopotamian influence at the site. For further support of the idea that there was some, relatively small, population of Neo-Babylonian administrative and/or military functionaries present at Mizpah at this time

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399 Zorn, ‘Jeremiah at Mizpah of Benjamin,’ p. 85.
400 Zorn, ‘Problem of the Material Culture,’ pp. 434-35.
we can look to the presence of ceramic ‘bathtub style’ coffins found on the tell. This indicates that Mesopotamian burial practices, including interment beneath the floors of homes, were in use, either by residents of Babylonian origin or by Judeans following Babylonian custom.\textsuperscript{402} An ostracon found in Cistern 361 bears a name written in Hebrew characters which may be of Mesopotamian origin, נמרס ורצא read as $bejn mar$-\textsuperscript{š}arri-u\textsuperscript{s}ur.\textsuperscript{403}

While these material remains serve to indicate a degree of Neo-Babylonian influence at Mizpah, in terms of speculating as to the presence of an actual garrison of Neo-Babylonian soldiers there is a lack evidence. None of the architectural remains bear traces that might signify the presence of a garrison of any size, material remains reflecting any type of weaponry are also sparse. Four bronze arrowheads of ‘Irano-Scythian’ type may be linked to the Neo-Babylonian campaigns in the Levant, however they could equally originate from later in the Persian period.\textsuperscript{404}

9.3.4.1. The Seal of Ja’azaniah

Perhaps the most well-known artefact found at Tell en-Naṣbeh is the seal of Ja’azaniah. This is an exceptionally beautiful and well-crafted seal made from black and white banded onyx, just under 2cm wide. The seal was found in Tomb 19 during excavations in 1932, embedded in clay and surrounded by small fragments of skeletal remains and broken pottery, suggesting it was originally buried with its owner.\textsuperscript{405} The face of the seal is divided into three fields, the upper and middle ones contain a Hebrew inscription which reads ‘belonging to Ja’azaniah servant of the king,’ ליאזניהו ממלך. The lower field contains a stylized image of a cockerel in a fighting stance, the first such artistic representation in the region.\textsuperscript{406}

Based on similarities between certain letters of this inscription and the Siloam tunnel inscription, particularly the aleph ($\aleph$) and ayin ($\aleph$) this seal has generally been

\textsuperscript{403} Zorn, ‘Problem of the Material Culture,’ pp. 436-37.
\textsuperscript{405} Badè, ‘The Seal of Jaazaniah,’ p. 151.
dated to the late seventh century BCE. This dating may not be entirely secure, however. Andrew Vaughn in his 1999 study of the palaeographic dating of Judean seals argued persuasively against over reliance on the Siloam tunnel inscription as a starting point for the dating of Hebrew seals. Vaughn also pointed out that the shapes of different letters change over time at different rates and the attribution of the monumental inscription from the tunnel to the reign of Hezekiah, is itself uncertain, unconfirmed by either stratigraphic or palaeographic standards.

Nevertheless, there has been speculation as to the identification of the seal holder with one of four biblical figures. Weinberg suggests that if the Ja'azaniah of this seal is identified with the Ja'azaniah b. Shaphan of Ezek 8:11 this would lend further support to arguments in favour of a connection between Gedaliah, Mizpah, and the network of Shaphanides prominent in the administration of Judah. Interestingly, Ja'azaniah b. Shaphan is presented in the vision of Ezek 8:11, one of the most obscure passages in the Hebrew Bible, in the midst of seventy elders of Israel engaging in what Ackerman has suggested may be an idolatrous marzēaḥ feast.

The most plausible identification of the seal holder with a biblical figure is usually made with Ja'azaniah the son of the Maacathite who appears both at Jer 40:8 and 2 Kgs 25:23. This Ja'azaniah is one of the Judean military officers who gathers at Mizpah after Gedaliah's appointment. The fact that this seal was discovered at Tell en-Naṣbeh, the site of biblical Mizpah, the title of a royal official present in the inscription 'servant of the king,' and the potential martial connotation of the seal's iconography, all render such an identification reasonable. However, consensus on this point is lacking, with McKane in particular considering this

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412 In the MT of 2 Kgs 25:23 the letter aleph appears in the name Ja'azaniah, as it does on the Mizpah seal, however this aleph is missing from the name in the MT of Jer 40:8.
positive identification between the seal bearer and the Ja’azaniah of Jer 40:8 and 2 Kgs 25:23 ‘unlikely’.\textsuperscript{413}

With regard to the identification of the Ja’azaniah of this seal we find ourselves in a situation similar to the case of the limited extrabiblical evidence from Hebrew seals and bullae relating to the speculative genealogy for Jeremiah constructed earlier. While an absence of conclusive evidence prevents a definitive identification with a biblical figure, the seal of Ja’azaniah found at Tell en-Naṣbeh may reflect an aspect of the administrative hierarchy in Judah at this time. Certainly, this artefact does indicate that a high ranking individual with an administrative role was probably resident, or at the very least buried at Mizpah around this time. This further bolsters the classification of this site as an administrative centre. Additionally, the fact that this seal is made from black and white banded onyx is a likely indicator of interregional trade, the likely source being either Egypt or Arabia.\textsuperscript{414}

9.3.4.2. \textit{Stamped Jar Handles as an economic indicator}

Another important indicator of economic activity at Tell en-Naṣbeh is the corpus of distinctive מ(ו)צ(ד) impressions found there.\textsuperscript{415} By the early 1990s a total of 42 provenanced examples of מ(ו)צ(ד) impressions had been discovered. Thirty of these were discovered at Tell en-Naṣbeh, accounting for seventy percent of those impressions of known provenance.\textsuperscript{416} A much smaller number of impressions were discovered at Jericho (2), Jerusalem (4), Ramat Rahel (1), Gibeon (4), and Šuba (1).\textsuperscript{417} Tell en-Naṣbeh, Ramat Rahel, Jericho, and Šuba also mark the very limits of the geographic area within which these מ(ו)צ(ד) impressions were found.\textsuperscript{418}

Two aspects of this geographic distribution are particularly significant. Firstly, finds of מ(ו)צ(ד) impressions have been confined to a circumscribed area of Judah. The

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{413} William McKane, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah Vol. 2} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 995.
\item\textsuperscript{415} William F. Badè, ‘A Jar Handle Stamp from Tell En-Naṣbeh,’ \textit{Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft}, 51 (1932), pp. 150-56, p. 89.
\item\textsuperscript{417} Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ pp. 164-65.
\item\textsuperscript{418} Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ p. 166.
\end{itemize}
geographic distribution of the impressions is in keeping with the results of neutron activation and petrographic analysis. Neutron activation analysis compared the impressions to a selection of ceramic reference sources. Results of analysis of the impressions and material from the Jerusalem reference group clustered together with clay from the Moza formation. Petrographic analysis confirmed that the clay used for the manufacture of the jars on which the impressions appear came from the upper member of the Moza clay formation, indicating their site of manufacture as somewhere in the greater Jerusalem area. Aside from the four impressions found at Jerusalem and the stamped jar handles from Jericho, all the other sites in the geographic distribution of the seals are within one kilometre of outcrops of the Moza clay formation.\textsuperscript{419}

Secondly, this geographic distribution, within an area of no more than 432 square kilometres, maps approximately onto the space within the traditional boundaries of the territory of Benjamin. As Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes assert in their 1994 study: ‘It may be that the distribution of these impressions marks the approximate limits of the territory administered by Gedaliah and his successor(\textit{s}).'\textsuperscript{420} Hence, the geographic pattern of distribution of these distinct artefacts may well be an indicator of a localised commercial network within which Mizpah was the most significant location. This likely points to Mizpah being either, the biggest market for these products, or a centralised depot through which a large proportion of the region’s liquid agricultural products travelled, in transit to further destinations:

At some point in its history Tell en-Naṣbeh was sufficiently important to have been a depot for more storage jars of a particular class than Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{421}

While the stamped jar handles are small in number by total, they constitute a significant source of information on economic activity at Tell en-Naṣbeh because they are confined to such a limited geographic area. That geographic area makes up a sizeable proportion of the area of the territory of Benjamin.\textsuperscript{422}

The stamp impression evidence from Tell en-Naṣbeh is another possible indicator of an economic and administrative shift in Judah under the Neo-Babylonians. As discussed above there are indications that, with the beginning of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[419] Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ p. 182.
\item[420] Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ p. 183.
\item[421] Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ p. 183.
\item[422] Zorn, Yellin, and Hayes, ‘The M(W)Sh Stamp Impressions,’ p. 166.
\end{footnotes}
Stratum 2, there is a transition from a heavily fortified border town to a more streamlined administrative outpost. This is most clearly seen in the larger Stratum 2 buildings, and the developments concentrated around the settlement’s gate area. While the site’s economic activity may remain at about the same level as in Stratum 3, and the population may in fact be lower, operations at Tell en-Naṣbeh appear to have become more bureaucratically streamlined. The high proportion of מ(ו)צה impressions fits with this picture of the increased importance of Tell en-Naṣbeh as an urban centre in the economic system of the region. With the siege and subsequent depopulation of Jerusalem in 586 BCE that market-centre was no longer functioning. Mizpah, while remaining significantly smaller than Jerusalem, took over as the largest market and administrative centre for the region.

What then does the מ(ו)צה stamp impression indicate? A number of competing explanations are offered. W.F. Albright held that the word appearing on the stamp impressions מ(ו)צה signified the commodity held in the jars, suggesting wine specifically designated for the celebration of the feast of Passover: ‘It is not impossible that the jars so stamped were to hold the wine which was drunk at the maṣṣah feast.’

A Judean town, Mozah, appears in a limited number of biblical and rabbinic texts, leading to a putative identification of its location as at or near the site of the village of Qaluniya west of Jerusalem. Notably a gemara in the Babylonian Talmud provides these details:

MISHNA: How was the command to take the willow fulfilled? There was a place below Jerusalem called Motza. Thither the people descended, and gathered drooping willow branches. These they brought and erected at the side of the altar, the tips inclining over it...

GEMARA: In a Boraitha it was taught: that the place where they were taken was free from taxes, and one Tana of the Mishna calls it Motza, because this word signifies exempt from taxes. (b. Sukkah 45a)

In light of the references to Motza as a toponym in the rabbinic sources, alongside Avigad’s characterisation of both Mizpah and Mozah as potential imperial administration centres, the possibility that מ(ו)צה impressions indicate a contemporaneous customs and excise system is worth consideration.

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424 Josh 18:26, m. Sukkah 4:5, b. Sukkah 45a.
If מ(ו)צה is in fact a toponym, as has long been the majority scholarly consensus, then a positive identification of the site may not yet have been achieved. While Greenhut and De Groot argue for a positive identification of the site of Tel Moza as the settlement of Mozah, Finkelstein and Gadot point to a complete absence of the מ(ו)צה seal impressions there, alongside a lack of any other kind of Babylonian or Persian period remains, as compelling reasons why Tel Moza should not be identified as the source point for the 30 מ(ו)צה stamped jar handles discovered at Tell en-Naṣbeh. Nevertheless, owing to the petrographic analysis, and the agricultural profile of the terrain west of Jerusalem, there is a consensus among scholars that the impressions would have originated somewhere in this locality and that they come from vessels which carried oil and wine probably originating on royal estates.

Finkelstein and Gadot acknowledge an increase in Mizpah’s significance within the regional economic bureaucratic system as a result of this evidence:

Most mwsh seal-impressions were found at Mizpah, the administrative center of the province, which means a change in the delivery of commodities like this after 586 BCE from Jerusalem to the new center.

A continuing customs and excise system in Judah would indicate that some royal estates, and various production centres, had not been destroyed, but were still operating after the Neo-Babylonian conquest. This is one of a number of reasons to consider Neo-Babylonian tactical nous in eschewing a policy of wholesale destruction.

9.3.4.3. Artefacts indicating possible Transjordanian Trade at Mizpah

A variety of artefacts were found in the excavation of Tell en-Naṣbeh which indicate trade between the settlement and other areas. For instance a number of shells from the Red Sea and beads in faience, volcanic glass, and in semi-precious gemstones such as carnelian, chalcedony, opaline, and quartz were excavated. Alongside the stamped jar handles discussed above, several other groups of artefacts

430 Margaret Harrison, ‘Toilet Articles, Jewellery and Other Artistic Products,’ in Tell En-Nasbeh Excavated under the Direction of the Late William Frederic Badé, Volume 1: Archaeological and Historical Results ed. by McCown, pp. 265-72, p. 267.
found at Tell en-Naṣbeh may indicate Mizpah’s place within specific trade networks. A preponderance of Greek type pottery at the site indicates strong trade links running west towards the Levantine coast and the Mediterranean trading posts there. Bronze bangles and certain distinctive pottery types point potentially to trade links to the east; with Transjordanian settlements around the time of Neo-Babylonian domination. Perhaps most intriguing for our discussion of Jer 40-41 is the evidence for trade links with Ammon, which raises the question of what the political set up in Ammon was at the time. A comparison between evidence from Tell en-Naṣbeh and the Ammonite site of Tall al-ʿUmayri is particularly revealing in this context.

Two types of pottery, identified as typically Ammonite, were found at Tell en-Naṣbeh. These types, painted ware, and black burnished ware, were found in both Stratum 3 and Stratum 2. These were easily distinguished from local Judean pottery which typically lacks any surface decoration aside from occasionally a simple red slip and burnish. Forty-two Ammonite vessels, or vessel fragments, were excavated at Tell en-Naṣbeh, of which twenty-two were found in well stratified contexts. These remains resemble similar ceramic evidence found at excavated sites in Ammon, for example in the ʿUmaryi-Hisbān region. The vast majority of these were open, unlieded, and unstopped vessels, this likely indicates that the pottery itself was the traded commodity, rather than any product contained therein. An Ammonite krater found at Jericho and dated to the seventh century BCE may indicate an east to west trading path spreading this pottery type from Ammon into Judah.431

At Tell en-Naṣbeh these items are relatively evenly distributed across the site in Stratum 3, the Iron II period. The even distribution pattern in Stratum 3 can be considered a strong indication of marketplace exchange, with the site’s inhabitants enjoying widespread access to these Ammonite ceramics. However, finds of this type are much more limited in Stratum 2, the Babylonian-Persian phase. Only five examples of Ammonite pottery were found in securely identified stratigraphic contexts for this later period. These were all clustered in two neighbouring buildings, identified as ‘elite structures,’ located close to the settlement’s gate complex.432 This serves to remind us of the speculative identification of a ‘customs house’ in this area of the settlement, mentioned above.

The marked decrease in the presence of Ammonite ware at Tell en-Naṣbeh during the Stratum 2 phase may reflect a significant falloff in interconnections with Ammon in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, and signify a decrease in wider interregional interactions between Judah and Transjordan at this time. Conversely, a higher proportion of indigenous Ammonite black-burnished pottery is found at the Ammonite site of Tall al-ʿUmayri in this same period. This is in sharp contrast with the continuous presence of Phoenician, Cypriot, and Greek pottery imports at Tell en-Naṣbeh, likely testifying to enduringly robust marketplace exchange as a result of trade to the west with emporia on the Mediterranean coast.  

A second distinctive style of pottery found at Tell en-Naṣbeh is also sometimes referenced in discussions of potential eastward oriented trade between Mizpah and the Transjordan. Wedge impressed pottery is characterized by rows, or concentric circles, of impressed wedge shapes in the clay. There is a high incidence of this style of vessel at Tell en-Naṣbeh, particularly in the southwest area of the tell, which contains extensive building remains dating to the Stratum 2 period. The finds of this pottery style at Tell en-Naṣbeh also include one complete specimen of a distinctive bowl type known from Mesopotamia as early as the third Millennium BCE. Unfortunately this artefact was discovered in what was identified as a dumping ground, a relatively insecure stratigraphic context.

While some archaeologists have interpreted the presence of this wedge-impressed pottery style as a further indicator of eastward oriented trade at Mizpah, the presence of this type of pottery may well predate the period under discussion. A study of a number of the characteristic large deep bowls, with wedge shaped impressions on the interior, similar to the single specimen found at Tell en-Naṣbeh, concluded they were local in origin. Petrographic analysis of fourteen such bowls found in the Samaria hills revealed their clay to be from nearby geological formations. Furthermore, an eminently more practical reason for the wedge shaped impressions, rather than decoration, has also been proposed. It may be the case that the wedge impressions

435 Gilad Itach, Shawn Zelig Aster, and David Ben-Shlomo, ‘The Wedge-Impressed Bowl and the Assyrian Deportation,’ Tel Aviv, 44. 1 (2017), pp. 72-97, p. 84.
436 Itach, Zelig Aster, and Ben-Shlomo, ‘The Wedge-Impressed Bowl and the Assyrian Deportation,’ pp. 76, 82.
served a food processing function, with these wide deep bowls being used to grate foodstuffs or in hulling grain. Therefore these bowls may indicate cultural influence from populations of Mesopotamian deportees transplanted by the Assyrians a century or so before the Neo-Babylonian period. This theory holds merit in no small part due to the well-documented Assyrian policy of bidirectional deportation.

Curved bands of bronze found at Tell en-Naṣbeh are commonly interpreted as bangles, generally worn on a person’s arms. Some of these items may of course have held slightly different functions, perhaps as cloth fasteners, nose-rings for livestock, or as handles on metal vessels. There is also a strong possibility that they may have functioned as a medium of exchange, a form of wearable portable wealth. The overwhelming majority of the bronze bangles found at Tell en-Naṣbeh were located in the extramural tombs; ninety-three circular bands and fifty-five fragmentary pieces. The tombs are of course not a secure stratigraphic context being very disturbed, and evidently in regular use up to the Roman-Byzantine period. Thus most of these bronze items found in burial contexts were mixed in with grave goods, personal effects, and skeletal material of varying date, typical of family tombs used over generations. Nevertheless, the identification of these items as human-worn jewellery was bolstered by fact that two of the circular bands from burial contexts were found on human arm bones.

By contrast five curved bronze bands were found in far more secure stratigraphic contexts. Four were located in room 168 and a fifth in the adjacent room 132, albeit in the North-western quadrant of Tell en-Naṣbeh which has presented the greatest difficulty in terms of phasing and dating. Dating is assisted however by the fact that the single bangle found in room 132 was located alongside the head of a

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437 Itach, Zelig Aster, and Ben-Shlomo, ‘The Wedge-Impressed Bowl and the Assyrian Deportation,’ p. 89.
440 Brody and Friedman, Bronze Bangles from Tell En-Nasbeh: Cultural and Economic Observations on an Artifact Type from the Time of the Prophets,’ pp. 98, 100.
441 Brody and Friedman, ‘Bronze Bangles from Tell En-Nasbeh: Cultural and Economic Observations on an Artifact Type from the Time of the Prophets,’ pp. 99, 100.
Judean pillar figurine of a style most typically placed in the eighth to early sixth centuries BCE.\textsuperscript{442}

Seven of the bangles from Tell en-Naṣbeh, including two from Room 168, were subjected to high energy synchrotron radiation testing in 2005. All seven were found to have been made from leaded tin bronze with a geochemical profile that suggested to the researchers that the source of this bronze was likely to have been somewhere in Transjordan. There is no evidence for any smelting works at Tell en-Naṣbeh, though the presence of a blacksmith’s workshop at the site is highly likely. The closest copper ore sources were Timna and Feinan. Brody and Friedman have identified Feinan, an Edomite mine on the eastern margin of the Wadi Arabah, as the most likely source of copper for this bronze. Their argument is based on evidence of particularly heavy exploitation of the Feinan mine during the Iron Age, and Edom’s booming metals industry at the time.\textsuperscript{443}

This leads to the conclusion that the bronze alloy was imported to Judah as a final product, perhaps in the form of long rods and then later finished into bangles and other products locally. While the presence of these bronze artefacts at Tell en-Naṣbeh is generally interpreted as another indicator of trade with Transjordan during this period, the alternative scenario that the bronze alloy was imported from either Northern Syria or Phoenicia must also be acknowledged.\textsuperscript{444}

In discussion of potential trade links between Mizpah and areas of the Transjordan region, particularly in the analysis of distinctively Ammonite pottery, a particular site in Ammon has already been mentioned, Tall al-ʿUmayri. This site in the ʿUmayri-Hisbān region of Ammon, south of the traditional Ammonite capital Rabbat-Ammon deserves specific attention in our discussion of the nature of the settlement at Mizpah and Gedaliah’s establishment there. Both locations share a number of parallel features and perhaps similar histories during the time of Neo-Babylonian domination.

\textit{9.3.5. Cultic remains}

\textsuperscript{442} Brody and Friedman, ‘Bronze Bangles from Tell En-Nasbeh: Cultural and Economic Observations on an Artifact Type from the Time of the Prophets,’ p. 102.
\textsuperscript{443} Brody and Friedman, ‘Bronze Bangles from Tell En-Nasbeh: Cultural and Economic Observations on an Artifact Type from the Time of the Prophets,’ pp. 106-08.
\textsuperscript{444} Brody and Friedman, ‘Bronze Bangles from Tell En-Nasbeh: Cultural and Economic Observations on an Artifact Type from the Time of the Prophets,’ p. 109-10.
Archaeological evidence from Tell en-Naṣbeh with regard to the question of cultic activity at Mizpah during the Iron Age is largely inconclusive. Certainly, some elements of the material culture recovered in excavation may point to some forms of religious activity, but no structures devoted to cultic practice have been identified and the site lacks any distinctive buildings comparable to the temples found at for example Dan and Arad.\footnote{Zorn, ‘Tell En-Naṣbeh: A Re-Evaluation,’ p. 360.}

Numerous enigmatic fragments found scattered across the site may belong to objects which held cultic functions. For example, fragments of cylindrical pottery stands with triangular shaped vents, a feature unique to examples from Tell en-Naṣbeh were discovered. As none exhibits signs of fire or smoke which might suggest their use as altars for burning incense these are interpreted as more likely having served as receptacles for libations. A similar ritual function may be ascribed to a flat-topped stand, shaped like small chalice with a slightly concave plate instead of a bowl. This item is one of several to be covered with a wash of white on its surface as decoration, which may indicate a ritual use.\footnote{Chester C. McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ in \textit{Tell En-Naṣbeh Excavated under the Direction of the Late William Frederic Badè, Volume 1: Archaeological and Historical Results}, ed. by McCown, pp. 233-48, pp. 233-36.} The use of chalices proper at the site is attested by the presence of thirty-five fragments scattered over the entire inhabited area. The best preserved examples of chalices came from burial contexts, and no necessarily religious use can be definitively attributed to any of them. Tomb 5 did however yield an unambiguous example of a censer.\footnote{McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ pp. 238-39.}

Four terracotta fragments, supposed to be incense altars, are of debatable identification. There are also relatively few fragments of the ‘horned altar,’ so well-known from other Palestinian archaeological sites. Those that are attested are again scattered widely over the mound and none emerge from loci known for any other unusual discoveries. A carved limestone fragment discovered in the wall between rooms 405 and 406 has been identified as a possible offering stand.\footnote{McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ pp. 236, 38, 40, 42.}

Among potential votive finds at the site, a high incidence of what the excavators labelled as ‘Astarte figurines’ is particularly striking. These can be divided into two basic categories; figurines with separately moulded heads which were then attached at the neck and figurines which were moulded entirely by hand including a head with
rudimentary features formed by pinching. Regardless of type, these all appear to have been broken at the neck, perhaps a structural weakness in the moulded head type, but certainly not of the pinch-faced type. 120 separate examples of the figurines, mostly identifiable by the head parts, were found widely distributed across the entire site, potentially indicating their ubiquitous use as household idols or statuettes with some form of apotropaic function. The excavation report speculates as to a religious function separate from any sanctuary based religious worship:

The wide distribution of figurine heads of various types throughout the city area seems to indicate that they were distinctly household icons, or amulets, to be used quite apart from, possibly even as a substitute for, the religious festivities of any sanctuary which may have existed.449

A number of these female figurines bear traces of red, yellow, black, and orange pigments. Several feature decorative collars in red, orange, and black geometric designs. The moulded-head type display various hairstyles and headdresses, turbans, and hats. Some of the pinch-faced examples feature large painted eyes with vibrant black pupils. Ostentatious colouring may further indicate the sacred or magical character of these objects.450 Many of the figurines were covered entirely in a simple whitewash, a feature shared by the chalice-like stand mentioned above and a number of other items potentially identified as votive objects, including small pottery boxes and disks with central holes, interpreted as fragments of miniature models of chariots.451 This, alongside an absence of any plausible practical use for these items, has contributed to their interpretation as cultic artefacts. Nevertheless, the possibility that some of these items, including the figurines, may in fact have been toys, cannot be dismissed.452

As acknowledged above, the excavation of Tell en-Naṣbeh did not yield any identifiable sanctuary structure such as a temple or identifiable shrine. Several loci at the site did however prompt analysis along these lines. The lead excavator of Tell en-Naṣbeh W. F. Badè, initially identified building 194.01 as a sanctuary, owing to the irregular form of the bedrock there which he termed a ‘rock of sacrifice.’ Soon afterwards however the building was reclassified as a typical domestic four-room

449 McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ p. 245.
450 McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ pp. 245-46.
451 McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ p. 244.
452 McCown, ‘Cult Remains,’ pp. 236, 47.
structure. It may be speculated that building 142.04 held some ritual significance based on the finds from two rooms there, room 616 and room 622. Room 616 contains evidence of a hearth with a human skull found in proximity, along with a pottery stand with triangular vents, an ostraca with a single character, fragments of high-footed lamp stands, and two figurines of the pinch-faced type. Nearby in room 622 fragments of two figurines were uncovered, one human and one animal respectively. Elsewhere room 406 also yielded a high proportion of figurines of various types, particularly the ‘Astarte figurines. It was also speculated that a large cigar shaped limestone pillar standing 80 cm tall, likely situated out of its original context, may have been a Maṣṣēbāh, some type of ritual or commemorative monument.

9.4. Comparison between Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al-ʿUmayri

Ammon was subjugated by the Neo-Babylonians during their westward expansion around 604 BCE, at which point this previously independent kingdom became a vassal state. Due to the constant threat from Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar II was forced to directly invest significant resources into shoring up the small vassal kingdoms in proximity to this imperial competitor. Thus, in the Neo-Babylonian campaign of 582 BCE, also the date of a third deportation from Judah, Nebuchadnezzar II took direct control of Ammon, annexing it and converting it to a province. It is around this time that Tall al-ʿUmayri replaces Rabbat-Ammon as the capital.

Tall al-ʿUmayri is located in the ʿUmayri-Hisbān region which specialized in wine and oil production, agricultural products which would be used mainly for paying taxes. Tall al-ʿUmayri itself was surrounded by many small villages and farms within a 5km radius, where a number of wine presses and other agricultural installations have been excavated. This is similar to the cases of both Tell en-Naṣbeh and el-Jib (Gibeon) in Benjamin, where many small villages and farms arose around these new administrative and economic centres, in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem. Based on the archaeological evidence there does not appear to be any break in settlement history at Tall al-ʿUmayri between the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Furthermore, continuity of material culture, including pottery types, implies the

457 Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ pp. 37, 40.
continuous presence of a local population.\textsuperscript{459} Excavation on the western side of the Tall al-ʿUmayri acropolis uncovered two large public buildings and a domestic complex dated to between 580-560 BCE.\textsuperscript{460}

Seventy-five seals and seal impressions found at Tall al-ʿUmayri also testify to the site’s administrative function. In terms of analysis of Jer 40-41 the most important of the epigraphic artefacts uncovered at Tall al-ʿUmayri is the Milkomʿûr seal impression. This was discovered on the surface of the mound at a very early stage in the excavation, in topsoil above one of the later identified public buildings. The impression is stamped into a conical piece of fired clay, perhaps a bottle stopper.\textsuperscript{461} The inscription which has been dated palaeographically to the sixth century BCE reads: ‘belonging to Milkomʿûr the servant of Baʿalyaša.’\textsuperscript{462} This Baʿalyaša has been identified with the Ammonite king Baalis mentioned as a co-conspirator of Ishmael b. Nethaniah in Jer 40:14.

The significant number of seals and seal impressions discovered indicates that Tall al-ʿUmayri probably served as an administrative centre of the hill country south of Rabbat-Ammon. The fate of the former capital, Rabbat-Ammon, itself is unclear. It may be the case that it was destroyed in the Neo-Babylonian campaign of 582BCE, as Jerusalem had been in 586 BCE. Seal evidence from both Tall al-ʿUmayri and Tell en-Našbeh probably reflect a significant level of organized economic and administrative activity within their respective provinces.\textsuperscript{463} As a lead excavator of the site observed of Tall al-ʿUmayri: ‘The settlement, although at its smallest size, seems now to have taken on a highly specialized social (political) function reflecting the activities of a centralized government.’\textsuperscript{464}

In a pattern remarkably similar to the Benjamin territory in Judah, the ʿUmayri-Hisbān territory of Ammon showed no signs of destruction at the beginning the sixth century BCE; unlike the north-western border area of Ammon and some sites close to Rabbat-Ammon which demonstrate a break in settlement for this time period.\textsuperscript{465} Thus,

\textsuperscript{459} Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 45.
\textsuperscript{460} Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 38.
\textsuperscript{461} Herr, ‘The Servant of Baalis,’ p. 169.
\textsuperscript{462} Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 38.
\textsuperscript{463} Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ pp. 38, 44.
\textsuperscript{465} Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ pp. 43, 45.
both sites; Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al-ʿUmayri, share a number of characteristics that point to them both being treated in a markedly similar manner by the Neo-Babylonians. This perhaps indicates a specific Neo-Babylonian policy towards former vassal states and their conversion to imperial provinces. This strategy appears to have involved a focused attack on the original capital. Up to the early sixth century BCE both Jerusalem and Rabbat-Ammon were considered ‘the undisputed urban, religious, economic, political and cultural centres in both kingdoms.’ Tall al-ʿUmayri and Tell en-Naṣbeh were then both selected as new administrative centres in localities not far from the old capitals. Lipschits further speculates that the governments of the newly formed imperial provinces were organized through members of a ‘local elite.’ As can be seen from the rural hinterland of both the Judean and Ammonite sites, the Neo-Babylonians appear to have had significant interest in preserving the surrounding agricultural settlements in each case. This would have served to secure continued supplies of wine, olive oil, and grain, and to ensure lasting economic and political stability.

9.5. Conclusion

In terms of reconstructing a plausible model of aspects of the cultural outlook of the residents of Tell en-Naṣbeh, based on the available archaeological evidence, we may be on much firmer ground with regard to the site’s impressive fortifications. The construction of significant defensive fortifications at Substratum 3b c.a. 900–850 BCE produced one of the strongest Iron Age fortifications ever discovered. This feature is frequently associated with the narrative of King Asa’s reinforcing the defences of Judah’s northern border in the wake of King Baasha of Israel’s incursion. Brody highlights the fact that Mizpah’s formidable walls may have functioned also as a form of national, social, psychological, and perhaps ethnic boundary for the site’s inhabitants. Certainly as the northernmost site in the territory of Benjamin, right at Judah’s border with Israel during what the biblical text presents as the era of the divided monarchy, it is likely that Mizpah would have been the site of numerous cross border incursions. This border itself, whether it demarcated a national territory or a far more circumscribed sphere of influence, would of course have shifted and fluctuated repeatedly.

466 Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 43.
467 Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 46.
468 Lipschits, ‘Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province,’ p. 44.
Based on the available archaeological data we are left with a general impression of the site of Tell en-Naṣbeh. This was a moderate sized settlement with a population of around nine hundred or so persons, which produced a healthy agricultural surplus. In the aftermath of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the settlement could no longer trade with, and also no longer had to compete economically with, the Judean capital. The site went through a significant transformation at this time, and its new, increasingly administrative, function is signified by an increase in storage facilities, larger buildings, more public space, and a slight decrease in defences; all at the Stratum 2 level. Key loci in the site which demonstrate this phenomenon are: buildings 74.01, 110.01, 125.01, 145.02, and 160.10, alongside the defensive wall and gate complex.

The Stratum 2 building 74.01 is representative of the redesign pattern across the site. It is significantly larger than any Stratum 3 building, and replicates the Mesopotamian ‘open court’ architectural style, thus signifying greater structural investment in the settlement during this period. The redevelopment of the gate complex and building 110.01 in its vicinity along with significant pottery finds suggest activities customary to gate areas, particularly trade. The defensive wall of Tell en-Naṣbeh continued in use during Stratum 2 with the outer-inner gate complex reduced. The fact that defensive features appear to have been slightly less important in Stratum 2 may indicate a shift in the site’s function from a heavily walled border fortress to an imperial outpost.

A selection of artefacts indicates potential trade links with Transjordan, with ceramic evidence signifying a possible trade relationship with the kingdom of Ammon. Comparisons between Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al-ʿUmayri also reveal some remarkable similarities, suggesting both Judah and Ammon were treated in a similar way by the Neo-Babylonians once they were converted from vassal kingdoms to provinces in the early decades of the sixth century BCE. It is tempting to suggest Mizpah was a site of cultic significance, perhaps having a central shrine prior to the Neo-Babylonian period. Such an assertion would conveniently bolster any subsequent argument that Gedaliah’s establishment there constituted the provincial capital of a new vassal kingdom. Neither the archaeological nor literary evidence supports such an overdetermination of Gedaliah’s role. Rather, the remains of biblical Mizpah present to us an image of an average sized and well-fortified town which underwent significant
remodelling at the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian period in order to equip it for a new role as a key economic and administrative centre.

These factors, including in particular the economic function of Mizpah as revealed by the archaeological analysis, are central to our exploration of the literary representation of Gedaliah’s regime in Jer 40. Such details provide vital context for an examination of Gedaliah’s exhortation, delivered to the assembled Judeans, at Jer 40:9-10, as well as a comparison of this segment of the text with the earlier message of compliant and productive agricultural and social participation propagated to the exiles in Jer 29. The traditional significance of Mizpah as a site of national assembly, ritual participation, oath making, and leadership ratification, as illustrated particularly in the episodes from Judges and 1 Samuel discussed in the following chapter, will also have some bearing on our examination of Gedaliah’s role and his murder. This will in turn lead to an examination of Gedaliah’s lineage and the question of elite families and their participation in national politics which has already been touched upon in an earlier chapter, ‘Jeremiah the Anathothite.’
10. Chapter 5: Gedaliah’s Appointment at Mizpah

The deployment of the symbolic code, throughout the narrative presentation of Gedaliah’s regime at Mizpah, offers us an ideal model of imperial participation in the land, a Judah-based analogue to the compliance encouraged among the exiles in Babylon in Jer 29. As in the case of Jer 29 the deployment of elements of the symbolic code in Jer 40 in particular point to the ideals of adaptiveness, willing agricultural productivity, and economic participation being used to further Neo-Babylonian imperial policy, reinforcing and encouraging the compliance of the people remaining in the land. Consequently, it makes sense that, post-rupture, the behaviour of that remnant (שָׁאוֹר), those Judeans that fled Mizpah for Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them, must be condemned in the strongest terms.471

We have already seen in the chapter ‘Jeremiah the Anathothite’ that within the book of Jeremiah itself there are references to Benjamin that create the impression that the territory may have been under Neo-Babylonian control at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s attempt to leave the city via the Benjamin gate, during a lull in the siege, results in an accusation of desertion. In Jer 40 Ramah, located just south of Tell en-Naṣbeh, is named as the Babylonian outpost from which Nebuzaradan releases Jeremiah.472 Mention has also already been made of a relative consensus among archaeologists that Benjamin, the geographic area stretching from Mizpah southward towards Jerusalem and from the Jordan valley westward as far as the coastal plain, did not suffer the same scale of immediate destruction at the hands of the Neo-Babylonians as the city of Jerusalem and other parts of the kingdom of Judah.473 Zorn has suggested that if the Babylonians followed the same invasion route as was followed by Sennacherib, during the Assyrian invasion of the kingdom of Israel c. 720 BCE, they would have attacked Jerusalem from the west. Zorn’s suggestion assumes that the Neo-Babylonians would have mimicked the Neo-Assyrians by marching troops via the coastal plain for ease of supply and communications, rather than attempting to traverse the rugged hill country to the north of Jerusalem. Thus, major Benjaminit settlements, including Mizpah, would not have been in Nebuchadnezzar’s warpath.474

Certainly, the archaeological evidence from the site of Tell en-Naṣbeh points to Mizpah having held significant economic and administrative importance after the destruction of Jerusalem. Mizpah’s importance as a key settlement and administrative centre is conveyed by the distinct reorientation and remodelling of the site in the Iron II period, the increase in building size, and particular key architectural features such as the ‘small palace’ building 74.01 and the ‘customs house’ building 110.01. Also, the material evidence, most importantly the מ(ו)צה stamped jar handles, points to significant economic activity at Mizpah during this period.

Were there perhaps other less tangible, cultural and historical reasons why Mizpah took on such a significance after the destruction of Jerusalem? Several of the references to Mizpah in the biblical literature seem to imply a long-term cultural significance associated with this location, particularly as a place of tribal assembly. An examination of the cultural significance of Mizpah as a location presented in the biblical literature touches upon questions of both cultic activity and tribal gatherings, particularly in terms of the popular ratification of the leaderships of both Jephthah and Saul. It is noteworthy in this regard that cultic activity and tribal assembly are by no means mutually exclusive but rather coalesce at various points throughout these narratives. Furthermore, the cultural significance of Mizpah’s impressive fortifications, situated at what was traditionally understood as the northernmost border of the kingdom of Judah, would also have contributed to the national symbolic weight of Mizpah as a setting for these events within the biblical corpus.475

10.1. References to Mizpah in the Hebrew Bible

The focus of the present chapter, the segments of Jer 40 detailing Gedaliah’s establishment of some form of governance at Mizpah, are some of the most extensive references to Mizpah in the entire Hebrew Bible. Mizpah is given as the name of a landmark pillar Gen 31:49, stemming from the toponym’s origin in the verb צפה meaning to keep watch or lookout. In the book of Hosea the house of Israel, her priests and kings, are collectively condemned by the prophet as ‘a snare at Mizpah’ (Hos 5:1). Alongside these briefer references there are several other areas of the Hebrew Bible

where Mizpah features as the location of certain activities pertinent to the present discussion of its cultural significance.

Brief reference to a locale named Mizpah, spelled alternately מִצְפָּה or מִצְפֶּה, is made in the book of Joshua. ‘The land of Mizpah’ (ארץ המִצְפָּה) is mentioned in Josh 11:3, and the town itself features in a list of Benjaminites settlements in Josh 18:

Gibeon, Ramah, Be-er′oth, Mizpeh (מִצְפֶּה), Chephi′rah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Ta′ralah, Zela, Ha-eleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath-Jearim — fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families. (Josh 18:21-27)

Notably this passage also includes Jerusalem itself as part of the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin.

Mizpah features in two distinct episodes in the book of Judges, as a place of assembly for all Israel. In Judg 10:17 Mizpah is named as the place of military assembly for the tribes of Israel in response to Ammonite aggression. It is at Mizpah that Jephthah, having been selected by the elders of Gilead as the appropriate warrior-leader to repel the Ammonite attack, declares his intention to become head of the people:

Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.’ And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, ‘The Lord will be witness between us; we will surely do as you say.’ So, Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord at Mizpah. (Judg 11:9-11)

In this narrative Mizpah is represented as Jephthah’s home base and as a staging post for his military exploits against the Ammonites.

In the episode of the Levite’s concubine, in the closing chapters of Judges, Mizpah is again represented as the point of national assembly for the tribes in response to the crime of the men of Gibeah:

Then all the people of Israel came out, from Dan to Beer-sheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah. And the chiefs of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand men on foot that drew the sword. (Judg 20:1-3)
In the following chapter further detail of this assembly of all Israel, and the penalty for failing to appear is given:

Now the men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, ‘No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.’ … And the people of Israel said, ‘Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to the Lord?’ For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah, saying, ‘He shall be put to death.’ … And they said, ‘What one is there of the tribes of Israel that did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah?’ And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-Gilead, to the assembly. (Judg 21:1-8)

Thus, Mizpah is repeatedly presented in Judges as a place of national assembly, and of both individual and communal oaths.

Again, in 1 Sam Mizpah is mentioned as a place of assembly for Israel and is associated with Samuel’s prophetic activities and several communal rituals. In 1 Sam 7 a description is given of Samuel’s activities as both prophet and judge, gathering the people of Israel together at Mizpah and praying on their behalf. The assembled Israelites are presented performing a number of rites, a water libation and fasting, which are intended to express their penitence and re-establish the covenantal relationship with YHWH:

Then Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.’ So, they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, ‘We have sinned against the Lord.’ And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. (1 Sam 7:5-6)

Soon afterwards, facing the imminent threat of Philistine aggression Samuel performs a ritual sacrifice:

So, Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, as far as below Beth-Kar. (1 Sam 7: 9-11)

In 1 Sam 7 Mizpah is the location in which Samuel’s position as Judge is cemented through cultic ritual participation, while in 1 Sam 10 Saul’s position as king is publicly ratified, again through the prophetic agency of Samuel. Mizpah also features as one of the three places on Samuel’s annual circuit as described in 1 Sam 7:16: ‘And
he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all these places.' In his role as judge Samuel is presented as basing himself at Ramah, where he is also described as having built an altar.

In 1 Sam 10, the narrative of the public proclamation of Saul as Israel’s first king, Mizpah is again presented as the location for a mass assembly of the tribes of Israel and as a locus of political ratification, as in Judg 11 and 21.

Samuel summoned the people to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them: 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.” But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses; and you have said, “No! but set a king over us.” Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans.' (1 Sam 10:17-19)

The brief reference to Mizpah in 1 Kgs 15 provides a possible hint as to the origin of the site’s impressive fortification wall. King Baasha of Israel’s attempt to cut off the lines of communication between Mizpah and Jerusalem by encamping at and fortifying Ramah is foiled by King Asa of Judah, with the help of Syrian king Ben-Hadad. This prompts Asa to repurpose the materials at Ramah, perhaps providing a literary aetiology for Tell en-Naṣbeh’s massive Iron Age walls:476

Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none was exempt, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. (1 Kgs 15:22)

In references to Mizpah in the book of Nehemiah it may be possible to ascertain some trace of the political status of the settlement and its hinterland in the early Persian period. Neh 3 mentions workers from Mizpah, restoring the walls of Jerusalem, being under the jurisdiction of a governor:

Next to them repairs were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, who were under the jurisdiction of the governor of the province Beyond the River. (Neh 3:7)

Later in the same chapter two individuals, Shallun b. Colho‘zeh and Ezer b. Jeshua, are both mentioned as holding some kind of supervisory position related to Mizpah; Shallun as ‘officer of the district of Mizpah’ and Ezer as ‘officer of Mizpah.’ These

476 Muilenburg, ‘The Literary Sources Bearing on the Question of Identification,’ p. 28.
references may indicate that control of Mizpah at this time was separated between two distinct sub-districts.\textsuperscript{477}

And Shallun son of Colho'zeh, officer of the district of Mizpah (שְׁר הַפֶלֶךְ, הרמטפ), repaired the Fountain Gate; he rebuilt it and covered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars; and he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king’s garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David...Ezer son of Jeshua, officer of Mizpah (שְׁר הַמֶּצֶפֶה), repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the Angle. (Neh 3:15-19)

Alternatively, Demsky suggests that the term פלך usually translated as ‘district,’ may in fact be the Hebrew equivalent of the Akkadian pilku, meaning ‘work duty’ or ‘tax in the form of conscripted labour,’ recalling the ilku service obligation which featured in our discussion of the Neo-Babylonian economy in an earlier chapter.\textsuperscript{478}

10.2. The cultic question

Aside from the accounts of the ritual activities of Samuel mentioned above, one reason why speculation as to the presence of a sanctuary at Mizpah persists is due to the site’s representation as a locale of national assembly. The phraseology of a mass gathering ‘before the Lord’ is sometimes interpreted as implying a communal ritual event.\textsuperscript{479} In addition to this we have the arrival of pilgrims at Mizpah immediately after the incident of Gedaliah’s assassination in Jer 41:

On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, eighty men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing cereal offerings and incense to present at the temple of the Lord. (Jer 41:4-5)

This large group could however have been en route to Jerusalem to present cereal and incense offerings at the ruins of the temple there.

All references to Mizpah in the Hebrew Bible are of course accompanied by attendant issues of dating and the question of editorial intervention. Therefore, these literary examples must be treated with a degree of scepticism, particularly in any attempt to utilise them to reconstruct any historical reality at Tell en-Naṣbeh. Muilenburg, in his contribution to the 1947 Tell en-Naṣbeh excavation report,

\textsuperscript{477} Zorn, ‘Tell En-Naṣbeh: A Re-Evaluation,’ p. 185.
considered the mentions of Mizpah in Joshua and Judges to be of dubious historical value, in particular with regard to any indication of the presence of a sanctuary at the site. He points to the fact that these references tend to appear at the beginning of the narratives, an ideal location for late editorial insertions into the text. Muilenburg also detects a certain generic uniformity in the repeated phrase 'אֵלֶיִיוֹתָא לִבְרֹש' (Judg 20:1; 21:5,8) which references tribal assembly at Mizpah, and its possible cultic associations, perhaps indicating a single source. The first sentence of Judg 20 is an excellent example to illustrate both of these concerns raised by Muilenburg:

Then all the people of Israel came out, from Dan to Beer-Sheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah. (Judge 20:1)

Certainly, these literary excerpts alone cannot prove anything definitively about Mizpah, the nature of the site, or its history. However, they do illustrate a particular set of associated ideas which are attached to Mizpah at various points in the biblical literature, namely tribal assembly, oath making, and leadership ratification and associated religious and cultic activities. It is noteworthy that in a later literary artefact, 1 Macc, reference is made to an enduring folk memory attached to Mizpah, with these exact same connotations:

But they said to one another, ‘Let us repair the destruction of our people, and fight for our people and the sanctuary.’ And the congregation assembled to be ready for battle, and to pray and ask for mercy and compassion…So they assembled and went to Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah. They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and rent their clothes. (1 Macc 3: 43-47)

Here in a clear parallel to 1 Sam 7 Mizpah is yet again the site of national assembly and the performance of a number of penitential rites, on the occasion of persecution at the hands of Antiochus.

Within the literary references discussed here there do appear to be some traces of Mizpah’s cultural and historical significance present. This may further elucidate aspects of the characterisation of Gedaliah’s establishment there in the narrative of Jer 40. The remarkable uniformity of associations which feature in representations of this locale from the book of Joshua right up to era of the Maccabees serves to indicate a cultural memory of considerable longevity. The association of Mizpah with national

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assembly, leadership ratification, and particular associated cultic activities is a key factor in examining literary patterns of appointment in the biblical text with which the narrative of Gedaliah’s establishment in Jer 40 can be compared.

10.3. Tribal Assembly, Oath Making, Leadership Ratification

As mentioned earlier, in 1 Sam 10 we are provided with an account of the public ratification of Saul’s position as the first king of Israel, at Mizpah, via the agency of Samuel.

Then Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah, and said to the children of Israel: ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.” But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, “No, set a king over us!”’ Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans’…And Saul the son of Kish was chosen… So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. And Samuel said to all the people: ‘Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?’ So all the people shouted and said, ‘Long live the king!’ Then Samuel explained to the people the behaviour of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. (1 Sam 10: 17-25)

This episode is central to an understanding of the role of Mizpah as a locus of tribal assembly, oath making, and leadership ratification, on a number of occasions. Of particular importance in such an endeavour is Zafrira Ben-Barak’s 1979 article ‘The Mizpah Covenant (1 Sam 10:25)’ where she compares components of this public ratification of Saul’s kingship with the covenants of Sinai (Exod 24) and Shechem (Josh 24). Ben-Barak identifies six key components present in all three of these examples:

In this pattern, the following six constant components can be distinguished: i) a leader, ii) an assembly of the people, iii) a document of a legal nature, iv) the public reading of this document, v) the writing of the contents, vi) the cultic act. Thus, according to Ben-Barak’s model, Samuel occupies a similar role to Moses at Sinai and Joshua at Shechem. Each leader calls the people together, performs the

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public reading and written recording of a legal document, and seals and sacralises this new contract via a cultic act. The nature of such cultic acts varies across these three examples; Moses builds an altar (Exod 24:4), Joshua sets up a ‘stone of witness,’ a standing stone beneath a tree (Josh 24:26), while Samuel deposits the book containing the record of the rights and duties of the king, ‘before the Lord,’ (יִלְפָנֶ֣י) (1 Sam 10:25). Ben-Barak also highlights the fact that in all three cases each leader may be seen ushering in a new era in the history of the people of Israel, marking the end of their own period of leadership and a turning point in Israelite history. Samuel’s time as a Judge, and the period of the Judges in general, is therefore seen to give way to the era of the monarchy beginning with Saul.

Reading Samuel’s act of depositing the book as an explicitly cultic act again raises the question of the presence of a sanctuary to YHWH at Mizpah. Samuel’s act of writing and enshrining the written text is described in this manner: ‘he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord.’ The phrase יִלְפָנֶ֣י וִנָּח translated as ‘laid it up before the Lord’ uses the verb נָח meaning to set down, lay down, or deposit, in describing Samuel’s action with the book. This verb appears in a variety of contexts where the simple meaning of to place, to set down, or to leave, is meant, for example in the book of Judges where the same Hiphil third person masculine imperfect verbal structure is used:

So, the Lord left (יִלְפָנֶ֣י) those nations, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua. (Judg 2:23)

Mundane use of this verb throughout the Hebrew Bible is significant, however, there are a number of key passages where נָח is used in a specific cultic context to describe the deposition of various items of cultic paraphernalia and votive offerings:

And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord (יִלְפָנֶ֣י), to be kept throughout your generations.’ (Exod 16:33)

And Moses deposited (לַפְנֵי יְהוָה) the rods before the Lord in the tent of the testimony. (Num 17:7)

484 BDB p. 628.
Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God (והנּיחוָלפנּיָמזבחָ י' אלהיך). (Deut 26:4)

‘Do not depart from here, I pray thee, until I come to thee, and bring out my offering (מנּחתי), and set it before you (והנּחתי לפנּיך).’ And he said, ‘I will stay till you return.’ So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes (מצות) from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them…and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. (Judg 6:18 - 21)

And there were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid (ויניחו) with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered. (Ezek 40:42)

Then he said to me, ‘the north chambers and the south chambers opposite the yard are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the Lord shall eat the most holy offerings; there they shall put (shm יניחו) the most holy offerings—the cereal offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering, for the place is holy.’ (Ezek 42:13)

Of all of these examples of uses of the verb נּוח in a context associated with cultic practice the examples from Exod 16 and Judg 6 appear to be the most explicitly sacrificial. Aaron’s deposition of the omer of manna in Exod 16, and Gideon’s burnt offering in Judg 6, each using the נּוח and לפני terminology, both contain obvious sacrificial associations. Thus, Samuel’s activity at Mizpah at 1 Sam 10:25, taking the written text and laying it up before the Lord (יִלְּפָנֶיהו יִנַּח), is a demonstrably cultic act.

It is the use of the phrase יִלְּפָנֶיהו יִנַּח in 1 Sam 10:25 that supports the idea that Samuel is placing the book in some sort of shrine. Consequently, the text might be read as presuming some form of sanctuary at Mizpah. Such a presupposition would of course not necessarily reflect reality, certainly the archaeological evidence yields no trace of a specific cultic space. Furthermore, in terms of the possibility of some form of a sanctuary at Mizpah, it is worth highlighting that the action of יִלְּפָנֶיהו יִנַּח does not necessitate a permanent cult space. Certainly, the example of Aaron’s deposition of the omer of manna in Exod 16 refers only to a temporary mobile sanctuary, and Gideon’s building of an altar at Ophrah (Judg 6:24) is presented only as happening after his
offering of slaughtered goat and unleavened cakes is consumed by heavenly fire. Equally, the possibility remains that there was a permanent built sanctuary at Mizpah and that it is simply not possible to distinguish such a feature within the archaeological remains at the site. Religious activity at Tell en-Naṣbeh is a given, this is made obvious from material remains, particularly a number of objects commonly interpreted to have had religious functions and cultic associations, particularly potential votive statuary.

In her examination of the account of the ratification of Saul’s kingship at Mizpah Ben-Barak identifies key features which point to this procedure being the prototype for a pattern of monarchic covenant replicated in the cases of a number of subsequent monarchs. There are two aspects to the monarchic covenant as identified by Ben-Barak; a politico-social aspect embodied in the agreement between king and people, and a religious aspect signalling the covenant between the monarch and YHWH. For example, in the coronation of David in 2 Sam 5:3 both the politico-social and religious aspects of the monarchic covenant are signalled in David’s contract with the elders of Israel taking place at Hebron ‘before the Lord’ (לפני יהוה). As in the case of Saul, the prophet Samuel again acts as leader and YHWH’s representative in the transaction. The key role of a representative of YHWH is taken up again in the coronation of Joash in 2 Kgs 11:12 which follows the same monarchic covenant pattern, with the priest Jehoiada acting as YHWH’s representative, crowning the boy while the assembled soldiers, in the role of the populace, acclaim him king. Ben-Barak identifies the priest Zadok in the divine representative role in the installation of Solomon as king (1 Kgs 1:39).

Taking Ben-Barak’s analysis of 1 Sam 10:25 as our starting point, more details of the cultural association of Mizpah with national assembly and leadership ratification can be revealed. This is highly pertinent to the discussion of Gedaliah’s establishment there at Jer 40. The fact that Mizpah is the location for the ratification of Saul’s rule over Israel in 1 Sam 10 is one feature which contributes to the cultural associations of the site with occasions of tribal assembly and the establishment of an individual’s authority. The example of tribal assembly at Mizpah, and the associated acclamation of Jephthah as chief in Judg 10-11, is another occasion in this same vein. Mizpah is the location for a national assembly of all the tribes of Israel at Judg 10:17, a muster to defend against the Ammonites. In Judg 11, quoted above, Jephthah and the elders of

\[\text{485} \text{ Ben-Barak, ‘The Mizpah Covenant (1 Sam 10:25) - the Source of the Israelite Monarchic Covenant,’ pp. 40-41.}\]
Gilead enter into a contract, to which YHWH is called upon to witness, this verbal undertaking is presented as having been made at Mizpah, again with a politico-social aspect embodied in this example by the contract between Jephthah and his erstwhile Gileadite kinsmen, and a religious aspect signified by the report that ‘Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord’ (לפני יהוה at Mizpah) (Judg 11:11).

10.4. The Appointment of Gedaliah

In light of how Mizpah features as a point of national assembly in the cases of both Jephthah and Saul, and how both of those narratives reflect elements of a wider leadership covenant pattern, with both politico-social and religious aspects, a comparison with the appointment of Gedaliah over the settlement at Mizpah in Jer 40 is worthwhile. This is not to suggest that Gedaliah was selected as a monarch, or that he occupied the role of a military commander. Rather, that the details of his establishment in a position of leadership share commonalities with the examples of both Saul and Jephthah, including the setting of Mizpah itself. Furthermore, it would be unreasonable to expect the occasion of Gedaliah’s establishment to follow the exact pattern of these previous examples, all of the texts under consideration have individual features not replicated elsewhere.

The establishment of Gedaliah’s leadership at Mizpah is articulated three distinct times in Jer 40. It is first stated in Nebuzaradan’s speech to Jeremiah on the occasion of his release from Ramah:

‘If it appears right in your eyes return to Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan who the king of Babylon has appointed (הפקיד) over the cities of Judah and dwell with him in the midst of the people or unto all that is right in your eyes to go, go.’ And the chief of the bodyguard gave to him a meal allowance and he released him. And Jeremiah came unto Gedaliah b. Ahikam, to Mizpah, and stayed with him in the midst of the people, those remaining in the land. (Jer 40:5-6)

The second articulation of the appointment is on the occasion of the assembly of the military commanders (שרי היהולים) at Mizpah:

And all the captains of the armies that were in the plain heard, they and their men, that the king of Babylon had appointed (הפקיד) Gedaliah b. Ahikam over the land and that he had appointed (הפקיד) him over men and women and children from the poor of the land, those who had not been exiled to Babylon. And they came unto Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan, the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah son of Tanchumeth and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah son of the Macathite, they and their men. And Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan
swore to them, and to their men saying: 'Do not fear to serve the Chaldeans, return ye to the land and serve ye the king of Babylon, and it will go well with ye. And I, behold I will stay in Mizpah to serve before the Chaldeans who came unto us and ye will collect wine and summer fruit (יִשְׂמֵךְ) and oil and place it in your vessels and dwell ye in your cities which ye have seized.' (Jer 40:7-10)

Gedaliah's appointment is then articulated for a third and final time with the influx of Judeans who had been dispersed to surrounding lands during the Neo-Babylonian assault. These verses also feature a statement of the prosperity of the settlement under Gedaliah's supervision, a bountiful harvest of wine and summer fruit:

And also all the Judeans who were in Moab, and with the sons of Ammon and in Edom, who were in all the lands, they heard that the king of Babylon had given a remnant for Judah and that he had appointed (הפקיד) over them Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan. And all the Judeans returned from all the places where they had been there dispersed, and they came to the land of Judah, unto Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and they collected wine and summer fruit, a great abundance. (Jer 40:11-12)

At first sight it would appear that most of the six identifying features of Ben-Barak's model of the Mizpah covenant are missing, with only an assembly of the people, the military commanders at v. 7, and the previously dispersed Judeans at v. 11, mirroring the pattern discernible in the appointment of Saul. There is no document of a legal nature either written up or publicly read, there is no cultic act performed to seal the contract, and it is unclear what character in this formulation might be read as carrying out the role of YHWH's representative. Indeed, on a superficial level the account of Gedaliah's appointment and the gathering of a small population of Judeans under his leadership at Mizpah might appear to be rather lacking in religious elements in general.

However, reading this part of Jer 40 in light of the symbolic code, already elucidated in the foregoing chapters, clear parallels between Gedaliah's establishment and the more overtly politico-social and religious elements of the Mizpah covenants of both Jephthah and Saul become far more obvious. Looking at 1 Sam 10:25 it is not possible to assign Gedaliah to the same category of leader as either Samuel or Saul, however some shared elements are present. In Gedaliah's undertaking to act as an intermediary between the assembled military captains and the Neo-Babylonians in vv. 9-10 the politico-social element is present. Just as Samuel, in facilitating the proclamation of Saul's kingship, effectively ushers in the end of the era of the Judges, Gedaliah can be seen as facilitating a similar turning point in national history. With the
Judean monarchy effectively ended by Nebuchadnezzar II, Gedaliah initiates a new era of Neo-Babylonian control and by his exhortation towards productivity and compliance at vv. 9-10 attempts to assure its success and prosperity via the collaboration and active economic participation of the remaining native population.

An assembly of the people is cumulatively represented by Jeremiah’s going to Mizpah at v. 6, the gathering of the military commanders at v. 7, and finally the return of the dispersed Judean civilians at v. 12. The sense of a politico-social covenant between Gedaliah and the people is transmitted through his swearing to the assembly of the captains and their men in v. 9.

Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan swore (יושבון) to them, and to their men saying: ‘Do not fear to serve the Chaldeans, return (שבו) to the land and serve (ועבדו) the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you (לכם וייטב).’ And I, behold I will stay in Mizpah to serve before the Chaldeans who came unto us and you will collect wine and summer fruit and oil and place it in your vessels (בכליכם) and dwell in your cities which you have seized (תפשׁו תם).’ (Jer 40:9-10)

Gedaliah’s statement at vv. 9-10 can therefore be read as a solemn undertaking on his part to act as a representative of the Judeans, an intermediary between them and the new imperial power which has occupied the land. The outcome of return and compliant service of the Neo-Babylonian king is advertised in very positive terms in Gedaliah’s exhortation. The assembled Judeans, represented by the military commanders and their men, can expect to benefit from the implied peace and security of a stable relationship with the imperial power, and also material prosperity, collecting harvests of wine, summer fruit, and oil in their vessels and dwelling in the cities they have seized. This scenario is portrayed as one of mutual benefit. The agricultural aspect of this foreseen positive outcome is then fulfilled in v. 12 where the returned Judean population gather a great abundance (מאדם) of wine and summer fruit.

In the case of the establishment of Gedaliah’s leadership at Mizpah a written document of the ‘rights and duties’ or ‘judgment’ (משפט) of the king such as that written, read, and deposited by Samuel at Mizpah, is notably absent. However, the formula of Gedaliah’s exhortation to the assembled captains and their men at vv. 9-10 can be interpreted as fulfilling some of the other aspects of the Mizpah covenant pattern seen in the case of Saul at 1 Sam 10:25. While some form of written legislative document is a key component of the pattern which occurs across the Sinai, Shechem, and Mizpah covenants as examined by Ben-Barak, in terms of the wider spectrum of coronation and various other leadership ratification incidents in the Hebrew Bible, such
a document is not always present. No document is mentioned in the case of Jephthah’s acclamation as a military leader in Judg 11. Indeed, there is some debate as to the nature of the ‘testimony’ (עדות) given by Jehoiada to Joash at 2 Kgs 11:12.

It has been assumed on occasion that the עדות of 2 Kgs 11:12 is a written document, perhaps a scroll of the Law as demanded by Deut 17:18, or perhaps the same document preserved since the acclamation of Saul:

If we accept the view that the ‘edût was a sanctified legal document containing the divine laws with regard to royal rule…This is an important corroboration of the existence of an ancient legal document. Since there is no allusion to any other such document than the Mizpah covenant, it is absolutely legitimate to conjecture this the authentic source. But even if we do not accept this interpretation of the ‘edût, the fact that there is no allusion at all to the actual writing of the document is decisive for the assumption that the Mizpah covenant is the legal basis of the Israelite Monarchy.486

However, a number of other interpretations of עדות have been offered, including the possibility proffered by Kimhi and Ibn Ezra that עדות has its origins in יedo, meaning jewels. This would imply that עדות refers to a royal insignia or regalia.487 Alternatively, E. R. Goodenough suggested that עדות was a possible corruption of הצעדות meaning bracelet or ankle-band.488

While a specific sanctified action or item, such as a legal document, is lacking in the case of Gedaliah, the religious elements identified as an aspect of several of the leadership establishment narratives discussed above may not be entirely missing from the example of Jer 40. There is a distinct relationship of promise and fulfilment between vv. 10 and 12 respectively. The promise of bountiful plenitude and prosperity held forth in Gedaliah’s sworn statement to the assembled military captains at v. 10 finds explicit fulfilment in v. 12. The harvest of wine and summer fruit in great abundance in v. 12 may be interpreted as signalling divine endorsement of Gedaliah’s appointment, thereby substituting the more conventionally ritualized examples of sacrifice or enshrinement.

Certainly, Jeremiah does not act as YHWH’s representative in the establishment of Gedaliah’s leadership at Mizpah to the same extent that we see figures such as Samuel and Jehoiada fulfil this role in 1 Sam 10 and 2 Kgs 11 respectively. However, it may be reasonable to suggest that Jeremiah’s decision to go to Mizpah of his own volition, on his release from Ramah, may provide an implicit religious endorsement of Gedaliah’s establishment there. Jeremiah is, after all, the only legitimate divine representative at work in the entire text. Notably, Johanan b. Kareah, the de facto leader of the community at Mizpah in the immediate aftermath of Gedaliah’s assassination, consults with Jeremiah at Jer 42:2 using almost the same words as King Zedekiah at Jer 37:3. Subsequently, in a manner strongly reminiscent of the pattern of behaviour demonstrated by Zedekiah at Jer 21, 37, and 38, and somewhat replicating Gedaliah’s refusal to heed the warning of Ishmael’s plot against him at Jer 40:13-14, Johanan b. Kareah likewise fails to heed the divine word related to him via Jeremiah’s advice and warnings.489

Taken together these elements indicate that the narrative of Gedaliah’s appointment is not a singular isolated account but exists within a wider pattern of appointment narratives in the biblical literature. The location of Mizpah holds a significance in this respect, as a setting with a particular literary pedigree and associated specifically with narratives of the establishment of a discernible leadership type, often at a watershed moment in the biblical representation of the history of Israel and frequently incorporating key religious and socio-political elements.

10.5. Gedaliah’s position and Mizpah’s status

In terms of working out what position Gedaliah is presented as being appointed to in Jer 40 the available information is gleaned almost entirely from the biblical literature. Indeed, there is no extrabiblical verification of the existence of an individual named Gedaliah b. Ahikam in a leadership position at Mizpah, or indeed anywhere in Judah for the late monarchical or early Neo-Babylonian periods. A bulla, CWSSS 405, found in 1935 by the British Wellcome-Marston expedition at Lachish, bore the inscription ‘belonging to Gedaliah who is over the house’ (לידלאיהו א[ו]ר על הבית[ות]). While of known provenance, this item was discovered in an unstratified context. Access to the artefact is currently via photographic records only as the item itself appears to have regrettably gone missing. The script used on the inscription has been dated,

paleographically, to around 600 BCE. Two other bullae, both bearing the inscription ‘belonging to Gedaliah servant of the king’ (לגדליהו עבד המלך) are unprovenanced items belonging to private collections, sometimes cited as potential further evidence for the elevated administrative position of Gedaliah b. Ahikam as narrated in Jer 40.

Due to the fact that only the item from Lachish, CWSSS 405, is of known provenance only this artefact need be considered in the present analysis. Discussion of the meaning of ‘over the house’ in both biblical and epigraphic contexts has produced various interpretations including ‘minister of royal property,’ ‘steward of the palace,’ and ‘majordomo.’ While the exact role and rank cannot be determined precisely, this position implies supervisory authority. However, nothing about CWSSS 405 positively indicates a relationship with the biblical character Gedaliah b. Ahikam, and the inscription text is lacking any patronym. The location of the find, Lachish, was certainly a key Judean military outpost during the Iron Age right up to the time of the Neo-Babylonian conquest, as evidenced from the communications contained in the Lachish Letters, and this impression from a personal seal does point to an individual named Gedaliah playing a significant supervisory role. However, there are no details which might clarify whether being ‘over the house’ was a pre- or post-destruction administrative role. Furthermore, Gedaliah is a relatively common name between the eighth and fifth centuries BCE.

The discovery in Jerusalem of a bulla with the text ‘belonging to Gedaliah b. Passhur,’ (לגדליהוָבןָפשׁ חור), which the excavator Eilat Mazar links to the individual of the same name mentioned in Jer 38, is interpreted alongside another Jerusalem bulla, discovered in 2005, bearing the name Yehucal b. Shelemiyahu b. Shovi, as extrabiblical evidence for the relative historicity of certain sections of the book of Jeremiah; particularly those episodes which reference Jeremiah’s fractious dealings with named members of the Jerusalem establishment. However, none of this brings us any closer to verifying Gedaliah b. Ahikam’s status and position at Mizpah as presented in Jer 40-41. Thus, we are confined to a literary interpretation of Gedaliah’s

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494 Mazar and Ben-Arie, ‘Hebrew and Non-Indicative Bullae,’ pp. 299, 301, 07, 11.
establishment at Mizpah and its narrative characterization, reliant on internal textual
details unverified elsewhere.

In order to more fully discuss Gedaliah’s appointment to a leadership role in Jer
40 it is necessary to revisit the speculative genealogy constructed earlier. Based
predominantly on details gleaned from the biblical text and only a very small number of
extrabiblical epigraphic artefacts this genealogy identifies Gedaliah b. Ahikam b.
Shaphan as a member of an extended family of high ranking non-royal Judeans.
Considering the significant number of official roles fulfilled by members of this extended
family (scribes, priests, and royal envoys), Gedaliah’s selection for a colonial
appointment within the new imperial regime would be quite logical. His appointment to
a leadership position in Mizpah, the largest administrative outpost in the region, would
be simply another facet of what Ritzema has described as ‘the almost
clausrophobically small circle of competing, and often interrelated, politicians in the
Jeremian narrative.’

Gedaliah is an ideal appointee to a colonial role, mirroring the well attested
phenomenon where an imperial power appoints members of a native aristocracy to
govern a subject territory, thus taking full advantage of their local knowledge combined
with a tendency towards cosmopolitanism:

In addition, the elite—the royal family, the Shaphanids, the other
powerful families of Jerusalem and the countryside—would have had
more in common with each other than with the peasantry of any
particular part of Judah... It also seems likely that the aristocracy of
Judah was cosmopolitan in outlook, having more in common with the
aristocracies of the Transjordanian states (and perhaps
Mesopotamian and Egyptian elites) than with the Judahite
peasantry... Gedaliah’s cooperation with the Babylonian authorities,
and Ishmael’s with Baalis (Jer. 40.14), are examples of this...

Gedaliah’s appointment may then be read as an indication of the compatibility of his
familial and social origins with the task of developing and maintaining cultural
hegemony. Gedaliah himself being cast as the literary mouthpiece of the succinct
expression of the symbolic code we encounter at Jer 40:10 should therefore come as
no surprise, rather it is the ideal role for one of the family of the sons of Meshullam.

495 John Ritzema, ‘After Zedekiah: Who and What Was Gedaliah Ben Ahikam?’ Journal for the Study of
the Old Testament, 42. 1 (2017), pp. 73-91, p. 79.
As discussed above, certain features in the articulations of Gedaliah’s appointment at Jer 40: 5-6, 7-10, and 11-12 share similarities with other incidents of leadership ratification in the biblical literature particularly a pattern of monarchic covenant illustrated in the example of Saul at Mizpah in 1 Sam 10. Also, as Joel Weinberg points out, the initial articulation of Gedaliah’s appointment at Jer 40:5, the same details of which are then repeated at Jer 40:7, and variants of which appear in 2 Kgs 25:22-23, all replicate a standard appointment formula which occurs repeatedly throughout the Hebrew Bible. This formula invariably includes the title of the person or institution making the appointment, the verb denoting this act, the name of the appointee, a designation of the appointee’s realm of authority, and the appointee’s residence.

…Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan who the king of Babylon has appointed (הפקיד) over the cities of Judah…And Jeremiah came unto Gedaliah b. Ahikam, to Mizpah…(Jer 40: 5-6)

…that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah b. Ahikam over the land and that he had appointed (פקד) him over men and women and children from the poor of the land…And they came unto Gedaliah, to Mizpah… (Jer 40: 7-8)

The king of Babylon…He appointed (פקד) Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had left. Now when all the captains of the forces and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed (פקד) Gedaliah, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah… (2 Kgs 25: 22-23)

While the formulaic aspects of these statements create a distinct impression of Gedaliah’s appointment being an official act on the part of Nebuchadnezzar II himself, no specifics of Gedaliah’s exact title or position are given. It appears that the nature of Gedaliah’s position at Mizpah is to be deduced from the verb of appointment itself, פקד. The verb פקד is used, in the Hiphil form,פקד, in all of the three successive articulations of Gedaliah’s appointment at Jer 40: 5-6 ,7-10, and 11-12. This formulation conveys the meaning of an appointment or installation as a superior, and is parallel to the Akkadian paqādu, which articulates an official appointment of someone to a high post.497 Miller and Hayes, and more recently Joseph Blenkinsopp, identify Gedaliah’s position as that of ‘client king.’498 From Lipschits’ perspective, Gedaliah is

497 Weinberg, ‘Gedaliah, the Son of Ahikam in Mizpah: His Status and Role, Supporters and Opponents,’ p. 359.
an official appointee invested with the authority to distribute land and houses to this remnant Judean population, ensure their opportunities for a livelihood, and to act as a mediator between them and the Neo-Babylonian rulers. In this sense then Gedaliah should be understood as occupying a role akin to a governor of what Ritzema labels a ‘demilitarized tributary state.’

In such a scenario the task of the governor would have been to ensure the continuing agricultural and economic productivity of the region. The exploration of the archaeological evidence for Mizpah’s economic and agricultural capacity in the previous chapter has provided details which appear to confirm the centrality of the site and its agricultural output in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem. The present analysis therefore reads Gedaliah as a Neo-Babylonian appointed governor, an intermediary figure tasked with marshalling continued productivity and facilitating the extractive imperial economic model in place at Mizpah. As such it is apt to consider Gedaliah’s leadership at Mizpah in Jer 40 in terms of Keith Branigan’s ‘Governed Colony Model.’

I propose the term ‘governed colonies’ for existing settlements which have a foreign administration or government imposed upon them by force. Such force would normally be military in nature, although it could conceivably be economic. The settlement is then governed for, and in the interests of, the foreign state. Such colonies do not require the permanent re-settlement of large numbers of ‘colonists’; only a ‘governor’ (whatever his title), perhaps a small administrative staff, and some sort of garrison to ensure the security of the ‘governor’ and the adherence of the colony.

…the mass of the population will live much as before and use locally made products. The social and spatial distribution of imports from the homeland will be distinctly uneven. Ancient examples which are testified historically might include the city-states of Palestine in the time of the New Kingdom, since though the ‘governors’ were often local rather than Egyptian, they were certainly supported by resident Egyptian garrisons in many cases.

While Branigan’s governed colony model is only applied to Palestine during the period of Egyptian New Kingdom dominance, certain aspects of this organizational theory are relevant to the present discussion of Mizpah in the sixth century BCE. The

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governed colony system requires only minimal direct intervention on the part of the imperial power, perhaps extending to the presence of a small garrison. In this model the position of governor is one ideally filled by a member of a native aristocracy, charged with assuring stability and continuity of local production, thereby preserving elements of a pre-existing status quo which bolsters the power of their own social class. Such a model, with minimal direct intervention by the powers of the imperial centre also sits well with the overall impression of relative autonomy at the local government level in the Neo-Babylonian empire already discussed in the foregoing analysis of aspects of Jer 29.

As discussed earlier, the character of the economic system at work in the Neo-Babylonian heartland can be considered essentially extractive in nature. A surge in economic and infrastructural growth in Babylonia at the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian era, particularly during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, is attributable to a combination of factors, not least of which was an aggressive policy of imperial expansion and domination. The Mesopotamian urban centres became the foci of increased consumption; absorbing produce and resources from an increasingly dominated rural network of village-based agricultural settlements via the mechanism of taxation.501 In the context of Mizpah, external to the imperial homeland, the plunder regime employs the mechanism of tribute to extract resources from the subject territory. Such a scenario requires a tractable population within this governed colony willing to participate in the settled and productive mode of life necessary for the creation of the material wealth of empire.

Oded Lipschits’ comparison of the evidence from Tell en-Naṣbeh and Tall al-ʿUmayri in Ammon likewise demonstrates features of an expropriative economic system, which appears to have been the common Neo-Babylonian policy in both regions. The similarities in the agricultural-industrial profiles of each region result in what appear to have been relatively similar systems of Neo-Babylonian rule and exploitation.502 Again, as with Benjamin, the ʿUmayri region likewise demonstrates no signs of wholesale destruction at the beginning of the sixth century BCE. Tall al-ʿUmayri is likewise surrounded by smaller rural settlements within an approximate 5km sphere of influence where, just as at Tell en-Naṣbeh and el-Jib, remains of wine presses have been excavated.

501 Adams, Heartland of Cities, p. 250; Boer, Sacred Economy, pp. 150-51.
Here in Jer 40, as in several of the narrative episodes already discussed, the exercise of cultural hegemony discernible in the text seeks to promote a model of economic participation which primarily benefits the Neo-Babylonian imperial centre. Gedaliah’s exhortation to the assembled Judeans at Jer 40:9-10 to return, dwell, and harvest, is a succinct expression of the motifs of domestic establishment and agricultural productivity upheld within and perpetuated by the symbolic code.

10.6. Exhortation and Fulfilment in Jer 40:10-12

As for me, I am staying at Mizpah to represent you before the Chaldeans who come to us; but as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and live in the towns that you have taken over... then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been scattered and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah; and they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance. (Jer 40:10-12)

In the literary representation of the governed colony at Mizpah key components of the symbolic code, particularly the ideas of fruit and harvest, are presented as essential markers of stability and prosperity. Gedaliah’s call upon the assembled Judeans at Mizpah to return, dwell, and harvest, falls into a similar category as that of the advice to the exiles in Babylonia found at Jer 29:5-7. The Judeans at Mizpah are counselled to adapt readily to the Neo-Babylonian domination of Judah, and to facilitate the continued agricultural productivity of the settlement, in a relationship mediated via Gedaliah as their representative. This is proposed to them as an arrangement materially beneficial to their own circumstances, with nearby, recently seized, towns to dwell in, and a profusion of wine, summer fruit, and oil, to collect in their own vessels. As the exiles of Jer 29 are directed to ‘pray for the welfare of the city,’ the Judeans at Mizpah are offered reassurance, and directed not to ‘fear to serve.’ Jer 40 utilises the same elements of the symbolic code; agricultural productivity, including the potent signifier of fruit harvest, and the establishment of households in secure dwellings, to transmit the same demand for compliance, offering the Judeans security and prosperity as active and willing participants in a wider imperial economic system, a system reliant for its survival and success on a compliant populace persuaded they will profit by it.

The enjoinder of Jer 40:10 to collect wine, summer fruit, and oil is partially replicated at v. 12: ‘and they collected wine and summer fruit, a great abundance.’
Rather than an individual appeal to the assembled population which goes unanswered, Gedaliah’s words take the form of a sworn vow, elements of which are soon reinforced by their realisation. Thus, in the third and final expression of the establishment of Gedaliah’s leadership, the account of the return of the dispersed civilians from surrounding lands, the idyllic future offered in v.10 is indisputably fulfilled in ‘great abundance.’ While an explicitly cultic element, as part of Ben-Barak’s leadership ratification schema discussed earlier, is absent, the obedient participation of the people and the resultant agricultural plenitude may be read as a fulfilment of divine promise. The fulfilment of Gedaliah’s exhortation found at v. 12 can be read as divine endorsement of his leadership which also echoes the same reoccurring promissory motifs of building and planting encountered at various points in Jeremiah and expressed in very similar terms at Jer 29:5-7.\(^\text{503}\)

The word קיץ which appears in vv. 10 and 12, commonly translated as ‘summer fruit,’ carries a number of potential connotations. Drawing on the term ידה כֵּן appearing in line 7 of the Gezer Calendar where it denotes a month of summer ingathering, קיץ can also be read as ‘harvest,’ thus Niditch’s translation of the קציף כלב of Amos 8: 1-2 as ‘harvest basket.’\(^\text{504}\) The term קית also appears in what Niditch identifies as an example of ‘symbolic parallelism’ with the term קציר meaning ‘harvest’ or ‘crop,’ in Jer 8:20.\(^\text{505}\) If the translation of ‘summer fruit’ is retained for vv. 10 and 12 of Jer 40, there is no certain indication of what variety of fruit this term may refer to. However, there appears to be some association with figs in particular, with the Aramaic Targum translating קית as דבלי (‘fig cake’), an interpretation which is perpetuated by Rashi in his commentary on the text. Kimḥi’s medieval commentary explains קית as ‘dried fruit.’\(^\text{506}\)

The possibility that קית in Jer 40: 10, 12 refers to a processed product, preserved dried fruit, rather than a fresh crop, is compatible with William McKane’s reading of an alternative scenario. McKane highlights that mention is made not of raw produce but processed agricultural products in v. 10, wine (יין) and oil (שׁמן), rather than grapes and olives. This may therefore be interpreted as a situation of expropriation with the assembled Judeans seizing, perhaps recently abandoned,

\(^{506}\) McKane, *Jeremiah Vol. 2*, p. 1002.
settlements and taking possession of stores of processed commodities, placing these in their own vessels. McKane, implementing a nuanced understanding of the phrase ‘in your vessels’ (בכליים) and highlighting its appearance in the context of alleged theft in Gen 44, thus maintains that the references in vv. 10 and 12 are not to harvesting operations but to the seizure of produce which has already been harvested.\(^{507}\) Certainly the use of the verb תפשׁ meaning ‘to seize or capture’ in Gedaliah’s exhortation at v. 10 where the military commanders are encouraged to ‘dwell in your cities which you have seized (תפשׁ תם)’ is in keeping with this proposed expropriative plunder scenario.\(^{508}\) In terms of the relevance of the wider surroundings of Tell en-Naṣbeh and possible ‘daughter settlements’ dotted around the site’s agricultural hinterland it is worth noting again the probability of the sphere of economic activity at Mizpah extending to a radius of at least 5km.

Furthermore, the long-term nature of the cultivation of all three crops which produce the wine, oil, and summer fruit of Jer 40:10 and 12 must also be noted. In order for any harvest, or indeed seizure, of these commodities, to take place, continuity of cultivation and production would have been vital. Hence, these operations were unlikely to have been significantly disrupted by the Neo-Babylonian invasion, a situation already indicated by the lack of any archaeological evidence for wholesale destruction in the Benjamin territory. Vines, olive trees, and most fruit bearing plants, require some kind of medium to long term land and labour investment before yielding an economically viable crop. Thus, continuity of the economic status quo, the key message of Gedaliah’s exhortation to the assembled Judeans, served the aims of Neo-Babylonian imperial policy in Benjamin to a significant degree.

As discussed earlier the command of Jer 29:5-7 to Judeans living in Babylon demonstrates the spatial politics at work in the text, encouraging the Secondspace replication of imperial Firstspace configurations. Gedaliah’s exhortation here in Jer 40 can be interpreted as a further instance of this Secondspace mimicry. Unlike the divine command of Jer 29:5-7 the exhortation of Jer 40:10 is mediated via the figure of Gedaliah himself, thereby taking on the specific associations of his background and position. His appointment can be viewed as a Firstspace configuration of imperial territory while the exhortation he is presented as delivering is an occasion of Secondspace mimicry, where the concrete actions of the imperial power imposed on

\(^{507}\) McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 2, pp. 1002-03.
\(^{508}\) BDB p. 1074.
Mizpah and the surrounding region as newly occupied territory, are translated into an idyllic representation of life at Mizpah under the new regime as secure, prosperous, and mutually beneficial. Hence the call to return, dwell, and harvest in v.10 and its realisation in v.12 operate on a discursive level to transmit a specific ideology which facilitates the subject population’s imaginary relationship with their lived reality.

10.7. Conclusion

The account of Gedaliah’s appointment at Mizpah in Jer 40 seeks to promote the ideals of adaptiveness, willing agricultural productivity, and economic participation, key facets of the symbolic code as encountered elsewhere in Jeremiah. The locale of Mizpah as the site of the establishment of Gedaliah’s leadership has specific cultural historical associations. Several references to Mizpah in the Hebrew Bible represent the site as a place of tribal mass assembly and leadership ratification, in particular the narratives concerning Jephthah in Judg 11, and Saul in 1 Sam 10. Ben-Barak identifies the ratification of Saul’s kingship in 1 Sam 10:25 as part of a wider literary pattern of monarchical covenant formation. Several aspects of the representation of Gedaliah’s appointment and his speech to the assembled Judean military captains in Jer 40:9-10 reflect this same pattern.

The sense of a politico-social covenant between Gedaliah and the people is transmitted through his sworn statement at Jer 40:9-10 where he enjoins upon the assembled Judeans, represented by the military commanders and their men, to collect harvests of wine, oil, and summer fruits, and to dwell in surrounding seized settlements. In this manner the life under the new regime which he represents is presented to the people as a scenario of mutual benefit. Gedaliah’s words then find their fulfilment in v. 12 where a harvest of wine and summer fruit is gathered in great abundance.

In terms of a plausible reconstruction of Gedaliah’s background and the exact nature of his official position at Mizpah we are confined to a literary interpretation. The speculative genealogy formulated earlier, which is based primarily on details gleaned from other parts of Jeremiah, and a number of references in the books of Kings and Chronicles, indicates that Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan was a member of an extended family on non-royal Judean elites, a significant number of whom held high-ranking official positions within the apparatus of the Judean monarchical state prior to its
collapse. Gedaliah’s selection by the Neo-Babylonian authorities for a colonial appointment over Mizpah, as the largest administrative outpost in the region, would therefore be quite logical. Such social and family origins would make him particularly compatible with a role which appears to be that of a governor.

With the statement in Jer 40:9-10 it Gedaliah is presented as an official appointee invested with the power to distribute land and houses as part of his efforts to ensure continuing agricultural and economic productivity in the region. He operates as an intermediary figure marshalling the activities of the native Judean population on the one hand while also acting as mediator between them and the Neo-Babylonian authorities. This scenario marks Mizpah as a likely candidate for identification as a ‘governed colony;’ an existing settlement which has foreign rule imposed on it by force, which is then governed in the interests of the foreign power by an official appointee often selected from within the native aristocracy. The governor of the colony is charged with maintaining stability and continuity of local production. This form of colonial rule operates in the interests of the foreign state and would require only minimal direct intervention on the part of that imperial power.

In a manner highly reminiscent of Jer 29:5-7 Jer 40:9-10, and 12 utilise the same elements of the symbolic code; the establishment of households in built dwellings, agricultural productivity, and the potent signifier of fruit harvest, to transmit the hegemonic expectation and encouragement of compliance consistently made across all occurrences of the symbolic code. The potent signifier of the location itself, Mizpah as a site redolent with connotations of regime establishment and covenant-making within the Israelite cultural memory, is deployed as part of a network of signifiers designed to elicit the ‘spontaneous consent’ of the governed.\(^509\) Again, as in Jer 29, the subject population is offered security and prosperity as active and willing participants in the wider imperial economic system. Gedaliah’s call on the Judeans at Mizpah to return, dwell, and harvest also mirrors Jer 29:5-7 in being a further example of Secondspace mimicry. Gedaliah’s words translate the concrete actions of his imperial masters into the ideological discourse of cultural hegemony.

11. Chapter 6: Murder at Table in Jer 41

And in the seventh month Ishmael b. Nethaniah b. Elishama of the royal house, one of the king’s captains, and ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah b. Ahikam at Mizpah and they ate bread together there at Mizpah. And Ishmael b. Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him rose and struck Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan with the sword and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. (Jer 41:1-2)

The murder of Gedaliah in the opening verses of Jer 41 is a clear breach of the largely unspoken rules of biblical and indeed contemporary hospitality. It goes without saying that houseguests should not attack and murder their hosts. Such a commonplace assumption however has deeply rooted concepts supporting it, largely stemming from the inherent instability present in all hospitality settings. The act of welcoming a stranger into one’s private domestic sphere and sharing resources with them has attendant risks and rewards. Gudme highlights how the occasion of hospitality presents a potential for the creation of social capital, the forging of alliances, describing it as ‘a high-risk, high-gain type of social practice because it renders both the guest and the host vulnerable to aggression and violence.’

This relatively brief section will explore the idea of murder at table as a literary trope in the Hebrew Bible and analyse how the murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael in Jer 41 operates as a breach of those conventions of hospitality which form part of the wider symbolic code at work. This will include an examination of how occasions of commensality, and particularly feasting, perform a vital function in the development of biblical ideas of monarchy, leadership, and power.

11.1. Murder at Table

The episode of Gedaliah’s murder at the hands of Ishmael and his men is partially reminiscent of that episode in Judges so expertly analysed by Mieke Bal, the murder of Sisera by Jael. The similarity between these two narratives lies in the fact that the murder takes place in a context of hospitality, in the case of Sisera it is the guest who suffers violence, while in Jer 41 it is the host, Gedaliah, who is killed. There are a number of other biblical accounts of death and destruction as incongruous

intrusions into the assumed peace and security of domestic spaces in the contexts of hospitality, eating, and drinking. For the purposes of the present analysis these have been gathered under the rubric of *murder at table*, in an effort to identify the incident of Jer 41:1-2 as part of a wider literary trope in the Hebrew Bible.

Incidents from the Hebrew Bible which may be seen to conform to the parameters of *murder at table* therefore include:

the murder of Eglon in Judg 3,

Jael’s assassination of Sisera in Judg 4,

the murder of Amnon in 2 Sam 13,

Zimri’s murder of Elah in the house of Arza in 1 Kgs 16,

the murder of Ishbosheth, asleep in his own bedchamber, in 2 Sam 4,

Jezebel, thrown from the window of her own dwelling, in 2 Kgs 9,

All of these examples share the common element of a rupture of presumed safety and security, and the consequent demise of either guest or householder. Notably the portrayal of each of these incidents is not uniformly negative, indeed in the case of Jezebel a poetic sense of just deserts may be implied, while Jael is often read as a heroine.

Another feature common to all these incidents is the political dimension of every single one of the above killings. This is evident for example in 2 Sam 13 as part of the Davidic dynasty’s bloody succession narrative. Here Amnon is murdered by his brother Absalom immediately after a meal while ‘his heart is merry with wine.’

The completion of sheep-shearing, celebrated with feasting, meets the requirements to be described as a work-party hosted by Absalom, who, by eliminating the crown-prince Amnon, makes himself the presumptive heir of their father David. Ishbosheth’s status

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511 Gudme, ‘Invitation to Murder,’ pp. 7-8, 17 n. 24; Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 159 n. 75. It is noteworthy that while the MT lacks any specific description of the meal that Absalom has prepared the LXX contains the description ‘meal fit for a king.’

as a surviving heir of Saul marks him as a target for execution while he sleeps, while Zimri's slaughter of Elah has all the hallmarks of a military coup. While not each of these episodes necessarily involves an actual feast per se several of them contain details of eating and drinking; Elah is killed after having drank himself to intoxication, Sisera's death occurs while he is also asleep, killed at the hand of a woman, having just drank milk. Eglon's proclivity for greed is his downfall. It is the newly ascendant Jehu who eats and drinks within Jezebel's chambers after her violent death, a meal grotesquely mimicked by the dogs who feast on her remains outside. The victims of each of these politically significant killings have their presumed safety and security in a domestic or hospitable setting violated, a severe rupture of the social status quo.

Acts of violence in a commensal context, causing a disruption in the social fabric, are central to Nathan MacDonald's analysis of several episodes in the book of Judges. MacDonald highlights how 'the four domains of warfare, food, sacrifice and sex...increasingly collapse into one another.' The story of Ehud's deliverance of Israel from the oppression of King Eglon of Moab in Judg 3:12-25 plays on a number of ambiguities. The term used for the tribute offering to Eglon, whose own name is perhaps a play on the idea of a fatted calf, carries with it the association of cultic sacrifice. The description of the corpulent Eglon's death by Ehud's sword bears both sexual and scatological associations. While Eglon is not killed in the act of dining he is nevertheless characterised as a consummate consumer. After receiving the people of Israel's agricultural tribute, Eglon appears greedy for more, enticed to his doom by Ehud's proffering of a 'secret item.' The characterisation of Eglon as a ravenous gourmand is further cemented by the assumption of his bodyguards that he is simply 'relieving himself' on the toilet, when he is in fact already lying dead, his girth having swallowed his assailant's sword beyond the hilt. Thus Judg 3 plays on an ambiguity of relations between food, sacrifice, animal, and human.

A key text with regard to the subversion of the customary norms of hospitality is Jael's murder of the unsuspecting Sisera. In this narrative a number of the principles of hospitality are contravened with ultimately deadly consequences. Much of the social

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513 MacDonald, Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament, p. 110.
515 MacDonald, Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament, p. 113.
disruption in this tale stems from Jael’s contravention of the traditional female-gender roles ascribed to her. According to Victor H. Matthews’ assertion that Jael’s invitation to Sisera robs her husband Heber of ‘his rights as head of the household to offer hospitality and to represent his household and its authority before a stranger.’ There is also an interplay between both sexual and maternal imagery in Jael’s treatment of Sisera once he enters her domain:

This danger, this enemy, is represented by the woman. The man who was once so powerful in the superiority of his chariots must now ask for water, the minimal element of survival, from a woman. He gets more than he asks for: he is nourished. What Jael offers him are the basic attributes of maternity: protection, rest, and milk. These attributes, which have the power to restore, mark the bottom line to which Sisera has descended. He can go no farther; the door is closed upon his public life, upon that existence where honor and the level of civilization counted. The roles are reversed: here, it is the woman who controls, who gives - and who kills. She gives life and she takes it back.

Many of the same features appear in Gedaliah’s murder at the hands of his guest Ishmael. This is a politically significant killing, the assassination of the governor officially appointed by the Neo-Babylonian authorities. The murderous act, taking place during a shared meal in Gedaliah’s own domain of authority explicitly violates the presumption of domestic security and the fundamental principles of hospitality. This episode in Jer 41 relates a deep rupture of the domestic establishment values enshrined in the symbolic code, with this killing also resulting in the figurative death of the remnant community of Judeans at Mizpah. The text takes care to note that it is at a moment of explicit companionship, literal bread-sharing, that Ishmael and his band strike; an inversion of the typical ideals of hospitality and commensality exemplified by Abraham’s behaviour towards his guests in Genesis 18 and again by Lot in Genesis 19. Just as Jael’s actions in Judges 4 subvert the traditional role of host, so too does Ishmael’s killing of Gedaliah subvert the traditional role of a guest.

11.2. Meals and the Assertion of Power

In hospitality scenarios both guest and host are inherently vulnerable to either insult or attack. The guest as stranger or outsider represents a threat to the stability of the established community to which they definitively do not belong. The instance of

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516 Matthews, ‘Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4,’ p. 15.
517 Bal, Murder and Difference, p. 121.
hospitality, specifically commensality, i.e. meal-sharing, serves to postpone or temporarily neutralise this potential for violence.\textsuperscript{518} As such the status of a guest is sacred, allied with the ineffable presence of an omniscient deity:

\ldots the association between the God and the stranger appears generic, and the sacredness of hospitality and the honor which it confers derive not from any functional consequence of the belief but from the fact that the meeting with the stranger is a confrontation between the known world and the realms of mystery.\textsuperscript{519}

Similarly, we find in sacrificial worship contexts the idea of sharing a meal with a deity as an expression of the social relationship, and mutual obligations, of god and devotee:

\ldots the very act of eating and drinking with a man was a symbol and a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligations. The one thing directly expressed in the sacrificial meal is that the god and his worshippers are \textit{commensals}, but every other point in their mutual relations is included in what this involves.\textsuperscript{520}

The occasion of hospitality is a demonstration of hierarchical difference. The participants, guest and host, are never on an equal footing. In this scenario of reciprocal transactions we see that the sacred dignity of the guest is inviolate, and simultaneously that the guest has an obligation to preserve the host’s honour, by neither taking what is not offered nor refusing what is.\textsuperscript{521} Meanwhile the host acts as guarantor of the guest’s security while in the host’s domain, a power that ends once the guest has crossed back over the host’s threshold and returned to the outside world.

The roles of host and guest have territorial limitations. A host is host only on the territory over which on a particular occasion he claims authority. Outside it he cannot maintain the role. A guest cannot be guest on ground where he has rights and responsibilities. So it is that the courtesy of showing a guest to the door or the gate both underlines a concern in his welfare as long as he is a guest, but it also defines precisely the point at which he ceases to be so, when the host is quit of his responsibility.\textsuperscript{522}

In the role of host, an individual also has an opportunity to showcase their power and command of resources. This is central to McDonald’s exploration of the role of communal feasting in the development of monarchical society in Israel, and those

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\textsuperscript{521} Gudme, ‘Invitation to Murder,’ p. 4.
\end{flushleft}
elements of meals and consumption which surround representations of the rise and fall of dynasties in the Hebrew Bible.

McDonald’s exploration of feasting as a central component in the development of the concept of kingship in the biblical context relies upon a social model of the development of monarchy in Ancient Israel devised by F. S. Frick as its point of departure. Frick identifies the transition from subsistence agriculture to surplus production as a key impetus, alongside warfare, behind the development of a more highly developed political hierarchy:

...an organizing principle based on hierarchical partitioning of society emerged and the chiefdom appeared. The chief and his clients organized and directed energy exchanges between the different segments of the society.523

In this transition of ancient Israelite society, through the stages of tribe, then chiefdom, to monarchic state, feasting thus becomes a mechanism by which a chief or an individual with ambitions to become one, demonstrates their control of surplus resources, redistributing them and thereby amassing political power. 524 The term ‘surplus’ as used in this context should be understood in a modest sense. Rather than implying wholesale prosperity and abundance at every level of society, these surplus resources are produced in agricultural economies operating at a near subsistence level. The production of surplus resources under the control of a chief or later on centrally gathered to an urban centre constituting the seat of power of a reigning monarch, would have involved significant hardship and deprivation on the part of communities of rural producers.

Elite control of the production and distribution of certain commodities, particularly alcohol, has been highlighted by Joffe as part of the discernible politics of feasting, as both a cause and a symptom of increasing social stratification in the ancient world. Commenting on alcohol production in Mesopotamia, Joffe states: ‘The strategies used to attract followers, create alliances, and support nascent specialists may have included feasts and redistribution of transformed food products.’525 It is worth also noting the central role of the production and distribution of alcohol in the

organisation of so-called work parties, to mobilize labour to specific infrastructural ends.\textsuperscript{526} The inherent inequality in the host-guest power dynamic is thus reified via a ‘binding commensal link between unequal partners.’\textsuperscript{527}

Thus a small number of more powerful individuals control the vast bulk of commodities, produced in the type of relatively stable setting that enables the production of an agricultural surplus and facilitates its exchange.\textsuperscript{528} Occasions like feasts and work parties thereby serve a number of functions, not only the redistribution of resources, but also the mobilisation of labour, the transformation of that surplus into political power through securing the allegiance of the populace, and also as a vehicle for social and cultural change, encouraging further agricultural technological advances.\textsuperscript{529} Israel Finkelstein identifies Shiloh as the locus of such a phenomenon in the development of the early monarchic state, while McDonald identifies feasting as one of the most likely mechanisms through which such resource redistribution at Shiloh took place.\textsuperscript{530} On a smaller scale several biblical examples of the provision of meal allowances can also be read as a sign of the benevolence (and implicit power) of rulers. McDonald cites the receipt of sustenance by Mephiboshet (2 Sam 9:7) and Jehoiakin (2 Kgs 25:29) as examples of this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{531} The generosity of Neo-Babylonian suzerainty as represented in the granting of a similar allowance to Jeremiah by Nebuzaradan (Jer 40:5) might also be considered in this light. This prevailing condition, where leadership is bound up in the successful control of surplus resource distribution, also provides further context for our understanding of Gedaliah’s exhortation to agricultural productivity in Jer 40. The production and control of the resources of Mizpah represent Gedaliah’s sole method of maintaining authority and the central task of his role as a Neo-Babylonian colonial appointee. In line with the characterisation of Mizpah under Gedaliah as a form of ‘governed colony,’ resource production and control constitute the mechanism by which Gedaliah’s position can be maintained.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{527} Dietler, ‘Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy: Food Power and Status in Prehistoric Europe,’ p. 97.
\item \textsuperscript{528} MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, p. 150.
\item \textsuperscript{529} MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, pp. 144-45.
\item \textsuperscript{530} Israel Finkelstein, ‘The History and Archaeology of Shilo from the Middle Bronze Age II to Iron Age II,’ in \textit{Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site}, ed. by Israel Finkelstein, Shelomoh Bunimovits, and Zvi Lederman (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1993), pp. 371-89, p. 387; MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, p. 153.
\item \textsuperscript{531} MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, p. 176.
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Michael Dietler expands on the characterisation of feasting as a means of resource distribution in nascent hierarchical political systems by highlighting their particular importance in non-hereditary power contexts:

In societies where institutionalized political roles or formal status distinctions exist, but without fixed hereditary rules for determining who may fill them, competitive feasting is often the means by which individuals assume and hold these roles and statuses. In all cases, this kind of power is continually being renegotiated and tested.\textsuperscript{532}

In the encounter between Gedaliah and Ishmael in Jer 41 we may then discern a clash between two different power systems. Ishmael may represent the previous hereditary system characterised in his being described as ‘of the king’s household’ while Gedaliah, as an imperial appointee cannot appeal to any such dynastic power claim.

While Dietler observes the role of competitive feasting in determining power structures outside of fixed modes of dynastic succession, MacDonald highlights the figurative role of the feast in biblical accounts of regime change. In the Hebrew Bible a meal, distinguished from everyday occasions of consumption, frequently marks the beginning or end of a ruling dynasty, the ratification of a new leader or of a treaty or indeed a covenant.\textsuperscript{533} MacDonald thereby credits the social development towards a monarchical system for the emergence of certain literary motifs, namely incidents of consumption, particularly meals and feasts, as loci for leadership establishment, judgment, vindication, and no small amount of violence.

11.3. Ishmael’s murder of Gedaliah

The act of hosting a feast implies authority, with obedient attendance on the part of invitees signifying loyalty to the existing power dynamic and an endorsement of the feast-giver’s position. An example of this may be found in Saul’s interpretation of enmity on the part of David failing to appear on the second day of his feast in celebration of the new moon in 1 Sam 20. In Ps 23:5 the Lord, in the role of host, arrays a table for a guest who enjoys ultimate security and vindication in the sight of their enemies.\textsuperscript{534} It is little wonder then that the occasion of Gedaliah and Ishmael’s

\textsuperscript{532} Dietler, ‘Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy: Food Power and Status in Prehistoric Europe,’ pp. 92-93.

\textsuperscript{533} MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, pp. 73-74, 143, 59, 93-94.

\textsuperscript{534} MacDonald, \textit{Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament}, pp. 178-79, 90.
shared meal at the opening of Jer 41 can be interpreted along political lines, before any violence even occurs.

In the narrative of the final moments of Gedaliah’s leadership he acts as Ishmael’s host at Mizpah, despite having been warned of Ishmael’s intention to kill him at the behest of Baalis of Ammon, intelligence Gedaliah is presented as refusing to accept. As such the occasion of their dining together, while certainly not a feast in the sense of a celebratory meal, would have carried the assumption of a temporary postponement of hostilities at the very least. The two parties would have had to have been on reasonably intimate terms in order to share a meal. Hostility towards Gedaliah is in some ways understandable, particularly when we consider the colonial nature of his position and that his message of ready compliance and productivity is part of an imperial exercise in cultural hegemony. Gedaliah might well be considered a traitor to Judah. Several commentators have seen fit to interpret Ishmael and his supporters as Davidic nationalists who viewed Gedaliah and the community he governed as pro-imperial collaborationists.535

The incident of Ishmael’s murder of Gedaliah is a wholesale breach of the customs associated with hospitality and serves to fundamentally disrupt the prosperous idyll of Mizpah under Gedaliah’s control. Thus, in Jer 41 we are presented with an egregious rupture of the stability and domestic security which has been consistently promoted in the symbolic code throughout previous narrative episodes, most recently in Jer 40 with the presentation of the stable prosperity to be gained through the action of return, dwell and harvest. Ishmael’s treacherous breach of convention in violating the assumed peace and security of the commensal occasion is given an almost sacrilegious undertone when his assassination of Gedaliah is immediately followed in the narrative report by the callous slaughter of eighty pilgrims from the former Israelite political and religious centres of Shiloh, Shechem, and Samaria. With the appearance of these northern pilgrims, their beards shaven, clothes torn, and bodies gashed, presumably en route to offer mournful grain and incense sacrifices at the remains of the Jerusalem temple, the destruction of Gedaliah’s establishment at Mizpah is thus framed in the wider context of national demise. In this way religious mores and national cultural memory, part of the ideological discourse of the ruling party which infiltrates the outlook of the subject population as ‘common sense’ via the dialectical mechanism of hegemony, are deployed against Ishmael and those facets of resistance he stands for.

535 Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, p. 243; Bright, Jeremiah, p. 256.
Gedaliah is subject to *character assassination* at the hands of the symbolic code. His breach of the norms of hospitality, and the further representation of his engaging in a sacrilegious slaughter of pilgrims, are elements in the stigmatisation of any and all resistance to the hegemonic project. As the Rechabites were neutralised by their othering, Ishmael and the potential for native rebellion he and his band of killers represent in the narrative are neutralised by a condemnation which utilises potent cultural ideals of sacred norms.

Gedaliah’s murder at table precipitates the disintegration of the community of Judeans at Mizpah. The remnant who subsequently elect to flee to Egypt, ignoring all divine warning and entreaty, effectively remove themselves from participation in the Neo-Babylonian imperial economy, thereby escaping the clutches of cultural hegemony as promoted in the text. Once the setting shifts to Egypt several norms of the symbolic code meet resistance and reframing.
12. Chapter 7: Queen of Heaven: Resistance, Reversal, and Reframing in Jer 44

In Jer 44 the norms enshrined within the symbolic code encounter resistance, reversal, and reframing. In their response to the prophet's criticism the Queen of Heaven worshippers employ a consistent logic centred in their understanding of their own belief system that forces the readership to consider their alternative viewpoint. Significant attention is paid in the present analysis to the nature of the worship the assembled Judeans, particularly women, are presented engaging in. This appears to be a form of worship which was well established across Mesopotamia, the Levant, and throughout the Eastern Mediterranean around this time.

While there is no reason to define the women’s worship in Jer 44 as some kind of foreign innovation, simultaneously attention must be paid to evidence of a Mesopotamian linguistic influence at work. Considerable focus will be placed on the extrabiblical evidence for the form of worship practice being carried out by the Judeans in Egypt in this episode. This particular avenue will be pursued with a view to establishing a clearer picture of the nature of the worship practice that not only stands as a target for the prophet’s condemnation but also successfully subverts key components of the symbolic code which has so heavily dominated the selected narrative episodes previously examined in this thesis.

In a similar vein to the narrative episodes already examined, in Jer 44 there is an abundance of detail. The chapter opens with references to named locations in Egypt and references to a number of Judean diaspora populations, ‘all the Judeans dwelling in the Land of Egypt, in Migdol and in Tahpanhes and in Noph and in the land of Pathros’ (Jer 44:1). The prophet’s condemnation centres around the figure of a well known type of Near Eastern female deity and her associated worship practices. Within this worship there is a sense of communal hospitality, in particular the commensal aspects of the worship itself, involving the making of cakes and offering of libations. Indeed, the ritualised domestic practices of the women’s worship may form part of a locus of resistance within the text. There are a number of factors present in Jer 44:9ff that appear to counteract and oppose the conventional norms enshrined within and expounded by the symbolic code in the episodes already examined. The central action taking place in Jer 44 stands in stark contrast with the patterns established in some of the other episodes under consideration. The activity taking place, which Jeremiah
condemns, is represented as being orchestrated by female agents and occurring in the public sphere. There is repeated reference to open public urban spaces, ‘in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem,’ transitional spaces within the cityscape rather than the private households we might expect women to be confined to within the social norms promoted by the symbolic code.

There is an absence of any kind of built environment within which the subversive worship practice might be confined or restricted, instead the worship is represented as occurring in the open air, as a public communal event not dependent on the construction of private dwellings or the associated household power dynamic that accompanies them. The worship practice itself is non-productive, the making of cakes, and the offering of libations and incense are acts of consumption, utilising material goods such as grain and possibly wine, beer or milk, all of which are products of the agricultural activity so heavily encouraged elsewhere by the symbolic code. Jer 44 also includes instances of the conventional associations of marriage being overturned. The manner in which the wives answer for their husbands’ silent acquiescence in Jer 44:19 demonstrates an absence of the traditional authority associated with male heads of households. The husbands are complicit in an activity the impetus for which is very much feminine in origin, practice, and focus. Indeed, the shift of this population from Judah to Egypt may be represented in a decay of previously secure institutions, no longer able to withstand an assault against traditional expectations. This scene in Jer 44 of course recalls Jer 7 where a similar worship practice is described in poetic terms:

The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. (Jer 7:18)

Here the active agents and products of marriage, husbands and children, are put to service of the Queen of Heaven, who herself is being worshipped both in Jer 7 and Jer 44 individually, not in any kind of consort relationship with a male deity.

At no point in the preceding narrative episodes, where the central Build-Plant-Marry values of the symbolic code were endorsed and promoted has there been any call for any kind for ritualized worship and offerings in service of YHWH. It may be argued that the central pillars of the symbolic code, promoting ready acquiescence to the new imperial norm and active participation in agricultural productivity are themselves offered as divinely mandated behaviours devoid of any continuing cultic participation. Compliance has been commended up to this point in order to ensure
stability and productivity as part of the Neo Babylonian Empire either in Judah or in divinely sanctioned exile in Babylon. In fleeing to Egypt, a reverse-Exodus, this body of Judeans has refused to comply with those demands for compliance. In Egypt this group are now outside the reach of that empire and it appears also less susceptible to the influence of the symbolic code so heavily present in the exhortations of both Jeremiah and Gedaliah in Jer 29 and Jer 40 respectively.

These issues are further complicated by the conflation within Jer 44 of the condemnation of Queen of Heaven worship, with a condemnation of Yahwistic worship in Egypt:

Therefore listen ye to the word of YHWH, all of Judah, dwelling in the land of Egypt; ‘Behold, I swear by my great name’ says YHWH, ‘If ever again my name is called in the mouth of any man of Judah, saying “By the life of my lord YHWH!” in all of the land of Egypt.’ (Jer 44:26)

This verse is commonly interpreted as an attempt to delegitimize cases of sustained Judean communal life in Egypt, something that a number of Persian and Hellenistic period examples point towards, particularly the well-known evidence for a community of Judean soldiers at Elephantine.

12.1. The MT of the Queen of Heaven Episode

The episode of Jeremiah’s confrontation with a community of Judeans engaged in worship of the Queen of Heaven in Jer 44 can be read as an example of apostasy par excellence. Jeremiah encounters the women’s stubbornness as an exemplar of the exact behaviour he has vilified at various points throughout the preceding chapters. This incident is an extremely rare occasion where active female characters are represented as speaking and are quoted directly:

And when we were sacrificing to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out to her drink offerings, was it apart from our husbands, that we made cakes to model her and poured out to her drink offerings? (Jer 44:19)

The complaint of the worshippers, that the cessation of Queen of Heaven worship has brought about disaster, also insists on the willing participation of those classic figures of patriarchal authority; kings, princes, and husbands. This phrasing also echoes the subversive domestic tableau of Jer 7:
The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. (Jer 7:18)

Just like Jer 44, Jer 7 also functions as an execration of apostasy prompting a credible suggestion from McKane, in keeping with his rolling corpus and reservoir theories:

There is something starkly odd about this chapter and the question should be asked whether it is not a very late and artificial exploitation of the theme of idolatry and its stereotypes which has been attached to Judaeans in Egypt and the prophet Jeremiah, perhaps triggered by Jer 7.18. In the behaviour of the Judean women in Egypt, and their open conflict with Jeremiah we encounter an example of households not being put to the service of the build-plant-marry norm of the symbolic code. This non-conformity elicits a vehement condemnation.

The individual verses of the Masoretic Text of Jer 44 which hold the greatest relevance to the present discussion are:

v. 9: Discerning what individuals and groups are being blamed for perceived incorrect worship practices.

v. 15: Whether קהל should be amended to קהל.

v. 17: Possible readings of מלכת השמים

v. 19: What party responds directly to Jeremiah.

v. 25a: What party Jeremiah addresses.

v. 25b: Jeremiah’s introduction of the language of vow-making and fulfilment.

v. 26: The declaration of the removal of the capacity to swear by the life of and via the name of YHWH.

536 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 2, p. 1089.
12.1.1. 44:9 Who is to blame?

Across the different text versions of Jer 44:9 there are various intimations as to who is to blame, by their behaviour, for Judah’s present calamity. The Codex Leningradensis provides, alongside condemnation of ‘the evils of your fathers and the evils of the kings of Judah,’ referring to a past king, or possibly several kings, of Judah, and רעות נשים (the evil of your wives), meaning the wives of the men of Judah now in Egypt being addressed by the prophet. Most English translations follow the BHS and offer נשים (their wives) as a solution to the problem posed by the third person plural ending of רעות נשים. The LXX however has τῶν ἀρχόντων ὑμῶν ‘the evil of your officials’ instead of ‘his wives.’ The Syriac Peshitta version lacks ‘the evil of your wives.’

In the MT there is a concerted effort to lay blame on women; in their capacity as the wives of Judah’s past king or kings, and as the wives of men in general. The worship behaviour is characterised as deviance on the part of נשים ‘your wives,’ not just the wives of royals or elites. This concern to blame all wives is not present to the same degree in the Greek and Syriac versions.

12.1.2. 44:15 ...a large group...

The commentaries of Carroll, Keown et al. and McKane, all preserve ‘a great assembly,’ while the critical apparatus of the BHS suggests that the קָהָל of Jer 44:15 should be read rather as קוֹל, this suggestion has not been followed in the present study. Duhm, likewise reading קוֹל вообще דָּוִד suggests a cry of surprise or fright raised by the women when Jeremiah catches them unawares at their illicit activity:

Die Weiber erheben ein grosses Geschrei, wie der Jahweprophet ihnen in den Weg tritt.

[The wives raise a great shriek, as the Yahweh-prophet steps into their path.] This alternative reading on the part of the editors of BHS and Duhm, among others, is perhaps an example of conservatism among interpreters, mistakenly reading in this verse a guilty admission of deviance on the part of the female participants. A

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537 BHS 8 p. 870.
539 BHS 8 p. 871.
reluctance to read the consonantal text, קהל, as an assembly, gathering or crowd, in accordance with the pointing of the text in Codex Leningradensia, may rest in a discomfort with the possibility that such an assembly presents the communal activities of the worshippers performed in a public open space, and involving a significant number of adherents.

**12.1.3. 44:17...to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven...**

The מלכת השׁ מים of verse 17 in the Codex Leningradensis, appears in many Hebrew manuscripts as מלאכת. It is translated here, in keeping with the majority of commentaries as ‘Queen of Heaven,’ rather than ‘host of heaven.’ The א present in several manuscript versions, though not in the Leningradensis, is most likely part of Gordon’s proposed aleph apologeticum editorial strategy. Gordon suggests this strategy is evident in manuscripts where the א has been inserted, or in cases where the pointing of the consonantal text may be manipulated so that it is vocalised as though present. Such an insertion encourages a reading of the word as ‘host’ or ‘works’ and serves to obscure any record of Judeans worshipping a female sovereign deity. The LXX version of 44.17 (LXX 51:17) has βασιλίσσῃ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (Queen of Heaven) which further supports the consensus of reading מלכת as ‘queen’ in this instance in the MT.

**12.1.4. 44:19 The Response to Jeremiah**

In the case of verse 19 of the Masoretic Text it is an absence which proves most intriguing. The MT here lacks the phrase ‘And the women said.’ Conversely, the words καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες εἶπον (and the women said), appears in the Lucianic (Antiochan) recension of LXX, while w’hannāšīm 'āmrū w’kī (and the women said when) is present in Syriac Peshitta version. It is tempting to suggest then that these Greek and Syriac incidences are preservations of an earlier tradition of the women responding for themselves directly to Jeremiah’s criticism. We might also consider how such a phrase would make narrative sense at this juncture. It is not anathema to the flow of the passage, as a report of the prophet’s interaction with the assembled group, particularly when read in conjunction with the rhetorical question המ buiten אנס וני (‘was it apart

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from our husbands?') earlier on in this same verse. However, there is no solid evidence of any Hebrew Vorlage to either the MT or LXX holding such a phrase.

12.1.5. 44:25a Jeremiah addresses the men (MT)/ the women (LXX)

The question which arises as to what party Jeremiah's comments are addressed to at Jer 44:25a is related to the discussion of both v. 9 as to who exactly is to blame for the deviant worship forms of Judah's past, and v.19 as to whether the women speak directly in response to Jeremiah. Again, the MT and LXX texts differ here at Jer 44:25a. Where the MT has אֲתֵם וָנָשִׂים (‘you and your wives), LXX 51:25a states ὑμεῖς γυναῖκες (‘you women’). As with v. 19 above, the Greek text of v. 25a again offers another example of the interlocution between prophet and people involving these women directly, in an unmediated dialogue.

It may be the case that the MT version of Jer 44:25a attempts to present a scenario where the women are subject to the will of their husbands, with husbands taking ultimate responsibility for the behaviour and vows of their wives. Support for this interpretation can be found in the legislation regarding vows made by any woman while under the authority of a male head of household in Numbers: 544

...no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself, shall stand; and the Lord will forgive her, because her father opposed her. And if she is married to a husband, while under her vows or any thoughtless utterance of her lips by which she has bound herself, and her husband hears of it, and says nothing to her on the day that he hears; then her vows shall stand, and her pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if, on the day that her husband comes to hear of it, he expresses disapproval, then he shall make void her vow which was on her, and the thoughtless utterance of her lips, by which she bound herself; and the Lord will forgive her. (Num 30:5-8)

It is very difficult to say with any certainty which version of Jeremiah may be closer in form to the original context of composition. What remains clear is that there are discrepancies between the Hebrew and Greek versions of this story, with the role of the women in responding to the prophet given greater prominence in the Greek version. However, the MT version, even though it lacks the female focus of the variant Greek examples, is still very clear in presenting the issue as one of worship of a female


247
deity, in whose cult women are understood to have traditionally played a prominent role.

12.1.6. 44.25b the language of vows

...speak by your mouths and with your hands do them, saying 'we will certainly do our vows (אשׁר נדרנו) to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out to her drink offerings' certainly raise your vows (נדיכם), and certainly do your vows (נדריכם). (Jer 44:25b)

Several manuscripts have נסכיכם 'your libations' instead of the final נדריכם present in the Leningradensis. However, the apparatus of BHS\(^8\) suggests that this קריכים should probably be emended to דבריכם meaning 'your words/deeds.'\(^{545}\) The קריכים has been retained here, and נסכיכם should be considered as a more logical alternative to that suggested by BHS\(^8\). There are two principle ways in which Jeremiah’s utterance, ‘certainly raise your vows, and certainly do your vows,’ can be read. Either Jeremiah is referring to vows to YHWH that he assumes will go unheeded, or he is offering a sarcastic encouragement to the assembled worshippers to carry out their vows to the Queen of Heaven.

It is interesting that the reported speech of the people recounted by the prophet in v. 25b is markedly different from the language used in the direct speech of the worshippers themselves in verse 17; ‘for we shall certainly do all the deeds which have gone out from our mouths.’ Their declared intention to do something does not carry the same formalised and solemn weight as the fulfilment of a vow. This contrast between the statement of the worshippers in v. 17 and the prophet’s in v. 25b is further emphasised due to the emphatic imperative use of the verb חוק (surely) in the prophet’s exclamation to the people; חוק תקימנה (‘surely perform your vows’). Hence it is in Jeremiah’s report of the speech of the Queen of Heaven worshipers that the specific terminology of vow-making and vow-fulfilment is introduced, an element which deserves further attention.

12.1.7. 44.26 ‘If ever again my name is called’

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\(^{545}\) Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, p. 262; BHS 8 p. 872.
Jer 44:26 is particularly interesting as it is an oath formulation about the use of an oath formulation. YHWH declares a determination that the established custom of swearing by the life of YHWH is now removed from the Judeans living in Egypt. חי אדני is a variation on the frequently attested oath formula חי י which occurs at numerous points in the preceding text of Jeremiah, (Jer 4:2; 5:22; 12:16; 16:14-15; 27:7-8; 38:16). The oath formula is likewise attested, in a truncated form, among the Lachish Letters. In line 9 of letter 3 is found the expression ‘as YHWH liveth no one hath ever undertaken to call a scribe for me…’

The verses of the MT of Jer 44 discussed above are particularly worthy of investigation because of the questions they raise about the text’s representation of the worship practices, and beliefs, of the assembled Judeans. We must consider what external and historical factors may have influenced the shaping of this narrative passage as it now stands. The brief analysis here has concentrated on the debate surrounding which persons are being addressed in the direct speech of the prophet and has taken note of variants where the emphasis on female participation in these worship activities appears to a greater or lesser degree. Recognising the clear discrepancy between the terminology used by the people in their determination to worship, עשׁה and דבר, and that used by Jeremiah in his paraphrase of their words, נדר and קום, has opened up this study to engage with the different possible interpretations of vv. 25 and 26. In Jer 44.25 the concept of vow-making and fulfilment appears immediately before the declaration of the removal of the facility of the traditional oath formula from Judeans dwelling in Egypt in Jer 44.26. Our next task is to examine the format of the worship of the Queen of Heaven as presented in Jeremiah 44. In building a fuller picture of the historical form this type of worship may have taken we can gain a greater understanding of the concern of vv. 25 and 26 with votive practice.

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12.2. Building a picture of Queen of Heaven Worship

There are several characteristics of Queen of Heaven worship identifiable in the text. The verses of direct speech spoken by the people in response to Jeremiah in Jer 44:16-19 mention elements of this worship and point to certain perceptions about this deity on the part of her adherents about her divine function, and their relationship with her. With Jeremiah's condemnation in Jer 44:25 there is a reiteration of several of these elements. It is possible to glean several essential features. The female deity held the title 'Queen of Heaven.' This of course may have been one of several epithets, or proper names, associated with the deity, however it is the only one given in the present context. This title appears only in two episodes in the Hebrew Bible, both occurring in the book of Jeremiah, at Jer 7 and Jer 44.

Two forms of oblation are made to the Queen of Heaven, libations and burnt sacrifice. The present study renders the verb קטר simply as 'to sacrifice' understanding this to be a burnt sacrifice, this is contrary to the trend in most translations to render this verb as 'to burn incense,' the specific sacrifice of incense is only present in v. 21 where the corresponding noun and article occur. A third devotional activity is mentioned in Jer 44:19, that of making cakes (כותנים). The worshippers assert that this is done 'to model her,' (להעצבה), that is, either to model her form, or alternatively to mirror her creative role in the cosmos.548

The people justify their worship by asserting the Queen of Heaven’s influence over their prosperity and wellbeing, associating worship of her with the result of having enough, perhaps even a surplus of, bread (נשׁ בע־לחם). The people’s understanding of their worship relationship with the Queen of Heaven is one of reciprocal benefit. This is further played out in their expression of the idea of commitments or vows. In v.17 the people declare their determination to ‘certainly do the word that has gone out from our mouths.’ Later in v. 25b, the words of the prophet himself also acknowledge this spoken commitment to the deity, perhaps even further emphasising this element of legitimate worship by using the specific terminology of vow making and fulfilment.

In being described as a deity unto whom vows are made, and should be kept, the Queen of Heaven can potentially be read as a deity with responsive power, capable of blessing and rewarding her devotees. This is an important element of the discussion

surrounding possible consort relationships. In their speech the worshippers also point out the well established nature of these practices, declaring that worship of the Queen of Heaven took place 'in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem,' involving the participation of, not just a group of wayward wives, but all sectors of society including their fathers, kings, and officials.

The earlier appearance of the Queen of Heaven in Jer 7:17-18, also provides a glimpse of certain aspects of this worship, while also reflecting many of the elements present in Jer 44:

Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven and they pour out drink-offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. (Jer 7:17-18)

Here, less distinctly separated from the general accusation of worship of other gods, there is mention again of this worship taking place in 'the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem.' Participation of kings and officials is absent, but there are also additional details which do not feature in Jer 44. Particularly striking are the activities of the children gathering wood, the fathers lighting fires, and the women kneading dough. In a less condemnatory context one might be tempted to read these details as a pleasant tableau of the same social order valorised within the symbolic code at other points in the book. The activity of making cakes features here, just as in Jer 44:19 but without the enigmatic phrase 'to model her,' (להעצבה). Drink offerings are mentioned in Jer 7:18 in the more general sense of being poured out to other gods.

It is not difficult to detect an intertextual relationship between, or perhaps a 'common core' to both Jer 7:17-18 and Jer 44:15-25. These two passages share a number of key elements aside from being the sole instances of the title 'Queen of Heaven' in the Hebrew Bible. Both sections share certain textual elements; the formulaic phrase 'cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem,' and the cakes (ﻕﻭシリ) of Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:19, a probable Akkadian loanword unattested elsewhere in the biblical corpus. Consequently, it is not practical to treat Jer 44:17-19 and Jer 7:18 as two separate episodes mentioning the Queen of Heaven, but rather both are different descriptions of the same form of heterodox worship practice.

551 McKane, Jeremiah Vol. 1, p. 171.
Combined together these elements of chapters 7 and 44 provide an overall picture of the deity which contains the following principle elements:

- She holds the title ‘Queen of Heaven’

- Worship entails burnt sacrifices and libations, both of unspecified substances.

- Worshippers also make cakes, offering as a rationale the activity of ‘לָהֳעִצֵּבה’.

- The Queen of Heaven is understood by her adherents to have influence over their wellbeing and prosperity, particularly in the provision of plentiful stores of food and the avoidance of scarcity, war, and famine.

- Verbal commitments are made to her with the intention of their being honoured. This implies the Queen of Heaven’s divine power as an independent agent of blessing.

- Activities entailed in this worship tend to be communal in nature involving all members of the family unit, with a more pronounced participation of women in certain ritual aspects.

By concentrating on these aspects of Queen of Heaven worship encountered in Jeremiah, a fuller picture of the possible cultural context of worship of this type in sixth century Judah may be constructed. This in turn may help us to understand the context of this highly detailed and arguably non-conformist episode in Jeremiah, surrounded by pages of text which appear to condemn such practices outright.

12.2.1. The Title ‘Queen of Heaven’

There are a number of examples of the title ‘Queen of Heaven’ or equivalents such as ‘Lady of Heaven’ being used of female deities throughout the regions of Egypt, the Levant, and the Mediterranean spanning at least from the end of the second millennium BCE up to the beginning of the Persian period. In Mesopotamia, the title can be found associated with Inanna and Ishtar-Astarte much earlier. In his study of a Sumerian drinking song, which features later in the present analysis, Assyriologist Miguel Civil points out that the title ‘Queen of Heaven’ and the divine name Inanna are
practically synonymous across different dialects of Sumerian. The association of both Inanna and Ishtar-Astarte with this title also continues well after the end of Babylonian suzerainty in the Ancient Near East.

Dated to c.1000 BCE we have evidence from the northern Temple of Rameses III at Beth Shan pointing to worship of a ‘Queen of Heaven,’ identified in a stela there with the goddess Āntīt. The stela which features Āntīt dressed as, and therefore identified with Ashtoreth, includes a hieroglyphic dedicatory inscription from one Hesi-Nekht, or possibly ‘the singer’ Nekht, which includes in its lower lines the phrase; ‘Āntīt the Queen of Heaven, the mistress of all the gods.’ Both Hermopolis Letter 4 and the Kition tariff inscription are evidence for the title ‘Queen of Heaven’ being used in areas which had contact with Judah and the Levant throughout the Iron Age. In the opening lines of Hermopolis Letter 4, written in Aramaic, a temple or house of the Queen of Heaven is included in the greeting formula:

1. שלם (ל)בית ביתהול)בית מלכות שמים. אלה אחיקי נניאhem
2.национаחיכי ננושה. ברכתיך לפתח שיראני פניך בשלם

1. Greetings to the Temple of Bethel and the Temple of the Queen of Heaven. To my sister Nanaihem
2. From your brother Nabusha. I have blessed you by Ptah that he may let me behold your face in peace.

The Hermopolis letters have been dated palaeographically to between 550 and 500 BCE, hence roughly contemporaneous with the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine. The authors of the initial publication of the documents asserted that the language of this letter places it somewhat later than the Elephantine documents. The polytheistic milieu represented in the letters, along with an absence of Yahwistic names has swayed many scholars away from the original, rather anachronistic, categorisation of

the ethnic makeup of the writing community as ‘Jewish.’\textsuperscript{556} Based on comparisons with individuals with Egyptian names designated ‘Aramean of Syene’ in loan documents from Elephantine, along with certain morphological and orthographical peculiarities, Porten and Greenfield held it was reasonable to assume rather an Aramean ethnic group composing Hermopolis Letter 4 and sending it from Memphis to a temple of Anat at Syene.\textsuperscript{557}

12.2.2. Cakes

The tariff inscription found at Kition in Cyprus in 1879, in the remains of the ancient harbour, mentions worship of a ‘Holy Queen’ as part of the monthly expenditure of a temple there.\textsuperscript{558} A later excavation under the direction of Vassos Karageorghis uncovered the temple structure itself in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{559} The Phoenician inscription appears on one side of a limestone tablet, written in black ink. While readings of the text vary in parts, there is general agreement on the contents of lines 5 to 10. Peckham’s 1968 translation of these lines reads as follows:

5. For the builders who built the temple of Astarte of Kition 2 qr.
6. For the 20 marshals and the men who stood guard on the route [  
7. For the singers in the town where the holy queen had her dwelling on this day [  
8. for the 2 servants 2 qp.  
9. For the sacrificers 1 qr.  
10. For the 2 bakers who baked the basket of cakes for the queen.\textsuperscript{560}

Healey, in 1974, translated the lines thus:

\textsuperscript{560} Brian Peckham, ‘Notes on a Fifth-Century Phoenician Inscription from Kition, Cyprus (Cis 86),’ \textit{Orientalia} 37. 3 (1968), pp. 304-24, p. 306.
5. For the builders who built the temple of Astarte of Kition, qr //

6. For the marchers and the men who watched by the gate, a portion;

7. For the singers from the citadel, performing for the queen, the holy lady, on this day, q ( )

8. For the pages //, qp //

9. For the sacrificers //, qr //

10. For the bakers //, who baked choice food, loaves for the queen

This list of cultic outgoings offers an insight into the logistics of the monthly new moon celebrations. The key Phoenician terms relevant to our exploration of the worship practices described in Jer 7 and Jer 44 are, ‘temple of Astarte’ (בֵית עַשְׁרֵת) in line 5, ‘to the holy queen’ (לְמֶלְכַּת קְדֻשָּׁת) in line 7, and the functionaries (אפם/אָשֶׁם and their activity in line 10, identified by both Peckham and Healey as bakers making cakes or loaves.

A logical conclusion, based on the reference in line 5 to Astarte, is that the ‘holy queen’ mentioned in line 7 is also a reference to worship of Astarte and that the baking of cakes formed part of this worship, with a queen being mentioned as the recipient of the baked items in line 10. Corpus Inscriptionem Semiticarum identified the first four letters of line 10 as אָפֵם translating the word as ‘men.’ Peckham, using a different set of photographs, and having inspected the tablet himself in the British Museum, argued that there was not enough space available for the third letter to be ש and offered the tentative transcription אָפֵא instead. Peckham offers אָפֵא as an otherwise unattested Phoenician verb root for ‘to bake,’ based on the Hebrew root אָפָא. For the second word, Peckham offers אָפֶּה again from the same verbal root implying the activity of baking. The text becomes increasingly illegible around the middle, however for the antepenultimate word in the sequence Peckham suggests תָּנָא (תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּנָא תָּn) a term for cake which, with the exception of 2 Sam 6:19, appears only in priestly type texts. Healey largely follows Peckham’s transliteration

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562 Peckham, ‘Notes on a Fifth-Century Phoenician Inscription from Kition, Cyprus (Cis 86),’ pp. 304-5, 13.
563 Peckham, ‘Notes on a Fifth-Century Phoenician Inscription from Kition, Cyprus (Cis 86),’ pp. 314-5.
of line 10, however he renders the antepenultimate word as מֵתָסֶפַּה indicating ‘choice portion.’

Peckham and Healey identified חלות as the word for cakes in line 10 of the Kition tariff inscription. In the Hebrew Bible this term is used for flat, possibly perforated, sacrificial breads used in cultic ritual or as peace offerings:

>You shall take choice flour and bake twelve loaves/cakes (חלות) of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf/cake (חלה). (Lev 24:5)

Then he gave a loaf (חלה) of bread, a portion of dates and one of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes. (2 Sam 6:19)

The word translated as ‘cakes’ in Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:19 however is כורות. The majority of scholarship on this term asserts that it appears in the MT via the Akkadian term kamānu and the same course will be followed here. Vriezen however has suggested that the כורים of Jeremiah comes from the Hebrew root כון describing an item which stands upright, thereby potentially connecting these cakes to the pillar figurines found across the Iron Age archaeological record in the region. While the possibility of כורים taking the form of statuette loaves is not considered in any great detail here, it is worth noting the versatility of dough as a pliable medium for figurative representation. Upright conical and tapered loaves are known to have been made in Egypt either formed by hand, or with the use of moulds. Breads baked with the use of moulds are usually formed from quite slack dough mixtures, and are more likely to be yeasted, thus necessitating the use of a mould to control the resulting loaf shape. In the case of the כורים a firmer dough, robust enough to be flattened and cooked over an open fire, is supposed.

If we are to follow the majority consensus and read כורות as an Akkadian loan word this links the cakes of the Queen of Heaven worshippers in Jeremiah strongly to the worship of the principle female deities of Mesopotamia across this period of time, Inanna and Ištar. The figure of Ištar linguistically morphs to Astarte during these

centuries also. Some primary texts signifying the role of cakes in Ištar worship are reproduced below.

O Ištar, merciful goddess, I have come to visit you,
I have prepared for you an offering, pure milk, a pure cake baked in ashes (kamān tumri)
I stood up for you a vessel for libations, hear me and act favourably
Toward me!\(^{567}\)

In line 57 of the first tablet of the Erra epic we find praise for these ash-baked cakes:

However toothsome city bread, it holds nothing to the campfire loaf (ka-man tumri),
However sweet fine beer, it holds nothing to water from a skin.\(^{568}\)
The word kamān makes a notable appearance in the Epic of Gilgamesh in describing a flour-cake baked by the wife of Utnapishtim while Gilgamesh sleeps.

She baked his daily rounds of bread, she lined them up by his head,
and on the wall noted for him the days that he slept.
His first round of bread was dried up,
the second was leathery, the third was soggy;
his fourth flour-cake had turned white. (4-tum ip-te-ṣi ka-man-šū)\(^{569}\)

The kamān tumri, the ash-baked cake, or campfire loaf, of the hymn to Ištar and the Erra epic are most likely flat rounded cakes cooked over an open fire. This immediately calls to mind the almost idyllic scene of family involvement in communal

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\(^{568}\)Benjamin R. Foster, From Distant Days: Myths, Tales and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1995), p. 136. CAD K p. 110 offers an alternative translation of line 57: ‘abundant city bread does not measure up to kamān tumri baked in ashes.’

worship as found in Jer 7:18. Baking bread in this manner is of course well known across the Ancient Near East and is practiced worldwide up to the present day. The kamān tumri, needs neither an oven nor any specially designed equipment such as a mould. The kamān tumri is thus likely the Akkadian originator of the חוסף found in Jeremiah. The facility with which these simple baked goods can be produced consequently raises a further issue in the scholarship surrounding worship of this female deity.

12.2.3. Cake Moulds at Mari?

Repeatedly in studies on the possible identification of the Queen of Heaven, scholars such as Dever, Malamat, and King and Stager, have pointed to certain archaeological artefacts as specimens of so called ‘cake moulds,’ particularly at the palace and temple complex of Mari. A closer examination of the excavation reports for Mari, published by Parrot in 1959 makes such assuredness appear misplaced. There is no certain identification of such female deity moulds by the original excavation team. The initial conclusion of the excavators was that these terracotta moulds, all of which were decorated in some manner, were used in the production of pastries, milk based dishes, and cheeses. There were three moulds found portraying nude women wearing headdresses (M.1044, M.1121, and M.1122). M.1044 is a mould showing a naked female figure wearing a turban style headdress and neck rings, holding both breasts, which Abraham Malamat captioned as ‘mold for cakes representing a goddess,’ thus giving rise to the long-term association of so-called ‘cake moulds’ with the offering of baked goods to the Queen of Heaven.

These three (M.1044, M.1121, and M.1122) were vastly outnumbered in the archaeological report from Mari by moulds bearing zoomorphic forms, depictions of deer, bulls, lions, dogs, birds, and fish, along with several others that bore simple geometric patterns of concentric circles or rosettes. To the three female representations in terracotta we may add one fragmentary mould in pink limestone

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573 Malamat, ‘Mari,’ p. 21 fig. 9.

which has a female face with a braided hairstyle and crescent moon shaped ear ornaments.\textsuperscript{575}

The possibility of these artefacts being used for dairy products, as raised initially by the excavators, is noteworthy. If we set aside the cake-mould assumptions of Malamat and others and entertain the possibility that these Mari moulds may have been used for dairy products this brings us to another potential facet of worship practices across the Ancient Near East. However, it should also be acknowledged that the identification of the four female forms in this collection of moulds from Mari as representations of a goddess, rather than human female forms, is questionable. Nevertheless, in light of the clear similarities between certain aspects of the eastern Semitic worship of Inanna, Ištar, and Astarte, and the type of Queen of Heaven worship detailed in Jer 7 and 44, the question of dairy products raised by the Mari investigators is compelling. Association of dairy products with a female deity in this region is worthy of further exploration.

\textit{12.2.4. Dairy Products}

Milk, cheese, wool, and weaving are all aspects of the association of the goddess Ištar with socio-economic prosperity. Weaving is one of the activities she is associated with and there is a marked correlation between these aspects of the worship of Inanna, Ištar, and Astarte, and the centrality of sheep husbandry to Mesopotamian agriculture during this time.\textsuperscript{576} In Egypt, spinning, weaving, and textile production are also represented as almost exclusively female occupations under the patronage of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys.\textsuperscript{577}

As seen above in the adoration hymn to Ištar, milk is poured out to this goddess as a libation. Dairy products also feature in divine courtship tales relating to both Ištar and her precursor Inanna. The divine courtship, or sacred-marriage, narrative of Inanna has the rivals for her hand, farmer Enkidu and shepherd Dumuzi, competing based on

\textsuperscript{575} Parrot, \textit{Mission Archéologique De Mari Volume II Le Palais Documents et Monuments}, p. 32.
their agricultural produce. Moulded cheeses are also mentioned in association with Dumuzi in a lament in his honour:

Small cheeses piled up high in heaps for him for the lad,
large cheeses were laid onto the rod for him - for the lad in the desert,
milk was whipped as by buffeting winds.

Cheese even features in a Sumerian lullaby associated with good health and healing:
I will make sweet for you the little cheeses,
Those little cheeses that are the healer of man.

Therefore, while the כנים of Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:19 are most likely ash-baked cakes, dough which is flattened and baked over the flames of an open fire, in no need of a mould, it is plausible that the נסכים (libations) referred to in Jer 44:17 may well be offerings of milk.

Aside from milk, libations offered to the Queen of Heaven could be one of a number of other liquid commodities with symbolic associations. Wine is certainly a possibility, considering its central agricultural role in the region, and the ubiquitous symbolism of viniculture in the Hebrew Bible. However, the association of a number of female deities in the Ancient Near East with brewing and beer offers a further intriguing possibility.

12.2.5. Beer

Ancient literary and artistic representations of the production of beer in the Near and Middle East show a clear association of women with brewing as a domestic task. These associations extend from representations of female brewers and tavern keepers to prayers addressed to specific patron deities of brewing. In Egypt the goddess Hathor was ‘the mistress of intoxication’ with her temple at Dendera ‘the place of drunkenness.’ Hathor was sometimes represented alongside a lesser goddess, Menqet, ‘the goddess who makes beer.’ In Mesopotamia, drinking songs and hymns

of praise to the goddess Ninkasi provide valuable insights into the process of beer production and the role of ‘beer-loaf’ baking in its manufacture.

Interpreting extant sources, alongside a comparison with the ongoing North African custom of brewing the mildly alcoholic beverage Bouza, it is clear that ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian brewing methods were largely similar, generally employing a vital baking stage. Loaves made from yeasted dough are lightly baked, crumbled and dissolved in water, the resulting mixture is then fermented in vats. Baking of the beer-loaves is only partial so as to ensure the survival of some yeast, essential for the fermentation process. The Hymn to Ninkasi is a Sumerian composition found on tablets from Nippur, Sippar, and Larsa, dating to around 1800 BCE. The goddess Ninkasi, ‘Lady of the inebriating fruit,’ resident on Mount Sâbu, the ‘mount of the taverner,’ is described in this hymn of praise carrying out the various necessary steps to produce beer:

Ninkasi, you are the one who handles dough (and)...with a big shovel,
Mixing, in a pit, the BAPPIR with sweet aromatics.
You are the one who bakes the BAPPIR in the big oven...

BAPPIR was the yeasted dough lightly baked into easily stored loaves which are then crumbled and combined with water in the next stage of the brewing process. A similar method is attested in Egyptian visual representations of the brewing process. Numerous Old and Middle Kingdom Egyptian artworks include representations of female workers grinding grain, sieving, heating conical bread moulds and rinsing the beer mash through a sieve.

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583 Hornsey, A History of Beer and Brewing, pp. 46, 49, 67, 80.
586 Civil, 'A Hymn to the Beer Goddess and a Drinking Song,' p. 72.
587 The strong conceptual association between beer and bread in ancient Sumer is also evident linguistically in the Sumerian Logogram for BAPPIR (KAŠ + NINDA) which combines KAŠ (beer jar) and NINDA (bread), thus the Sumerian word for brewer LU.KAŠ+NINDA literally meaning ‘man of the beer loaf’, Hornsey, A History of Beer and Brewing, p. 80.
The Sumerian drinking song which appears alongside the Hymn to Ninkasi in at least three separate cuneiform tablet examples celebrates the inauguration of a tavern and addresses the female tavern-keeper:

You poured a libation over the brick of destiny,
You placed the foundation in peace (and) prosperity,
May Ninkasi live together with you!

…
With joy in the heart (and) a happy liver -
While my heart full of joy,
(and) (my) happy liver I cover with a garment fit for a queen!

The heart of Inanna is happy again,
The heart of the Queen of Heaven is happy again! 589

In his 1964 translation of this song Miguel Civil asserts that the title ‘Queen of Heaven’ is the Emesal (distinct feminine speech) form of Inanna, accompanied by the divine prefix. 590

As beer and bread are so fundamentally linked with each other both in their manufacture and in their associations with female deities in examples from across the Ancient Near East it is plausible that they may be linked in the instance of worship in Jer 44 also. To this end the drink offerings made by the assembled Judeans to the Queen of Heaven could well have been beer. That is not to say that the כותבים should be confused with beer-loaves, or BAPPIR, but rather that there appears to be a logical compatibility between bread and beer, and their mutual association with a number of analogous female deities that make beer a likely candidate for libations in this context. 591

12.3. The puzzle of לוועבצה

One reason for the appeal of the theory that the כותבים baked by the worshippers of the Queen of Heaven must actually be in the shape of the goddess, or

589 Civil, ‘A Hymn to the Beer Goddess and a Drinking Song,’ p. 74.
590 Civil, ‘A Hymn to the Beer Goddess and a Drinking Song,’ p. 89 ‘Queen of heaven’ translates ga-sa-an-an-na, the Emesal form of (d)Inanna. The involvement of women in baking and brewing, alongside the divine patronage of Ninkasi is also referenced in the text of the Sumerian disputation poem ‘Contest between Lahar and Asnan.’
591 An honourable mention should also be reserved for water here. Simplicity does not preclude symbolic weight.
at the very least display an astral image, is that it offers a simple solution to a particularly troublesome verbal construction towards the end of Jer 44:19.592

And when we were sacrificing to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out to her drink offerings, was it apart from our husbands, that we made cakes to model her (לאהצבעה) and poured out to her drink offerings?

If לאהצבעה is translated as ‘in her image’ then Karel Vriezen’s assertion that these cakes may be shaped into the upright form of the goddess, and that כונים stems from the Hebrew root כור meaning to be erect is of merit. Breads shaped to stand upright, formed with the aid of moulds are known from a number of contexts, though most appear to have been simple conical loaves.593

If we consider the word כונים, which occurs exclusively in Jeremiah, to stem from the Akkadian loanword kamānu and interpret them to be simple flat cakes of dough baked over an open fire, then there is no opportunity for them to be shaped into the upright form of the goddess. This however does not preclude some rudimentary figurative decoration of the raw dough prior to baking. Therefore, the question of the unusual construction of לאהצבעה as a hapax legomenon in Jer 44:19, remains. BDB interprets לאהצבעה as the verb עצב in the Hiphil infinitive construct form. The characteristic י before the third root letter in this construction is however missing. The majority of commentaries follow the suggestion found in the medieval commentary of Kimhi, inserting a missing Mappiq in the final ה of this phrase. This ה is a third person feminine suffix referring to the Queen of Heaven. Combined, these interpretations, alongside the diacritic marks as found in The Codex Leningradensis, render the phrase thus ‘to copy/emulate/ model her’ or ‘in her image’.594 The equivalent of such a phrase is entirely lacking in the Greek and Syriac versions.

Ellis consequently reads לאהצבעה as ‘to copy her/it’, stemming from the Hebrew root עצב meaning to shape or to fashion. Hence the activity of the worshippers in baking the כונים would be an act of emulation. The worshippers in forming the dough and creating a cake are emulating the creative faculties of the female deity. Ellis’s

593 Samuel, ‘An Archaeological Study of Baking and Bread in New Kingdom Egypt,’ pp. 208, 16-17
suggestion is compelling as it relates strongly to the bountiful, nutritive, and perhaps also healing qualities highlighted in the expression of the assembled worshippers’ understanding of their relationship with the Queen of Heaven as expressed in Jer 44:18.595

And from the time that we ceased to sacrifice to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out to her drink offerings, we have lacked everything and by the sword and by famine we have been consumed.

It should be noted however that the assertion maintained here that the כונּים of Jer 44, are like the Akkadian kaman-tumri, flattened disks of dough baked over an open fire, does not preclude the incorporation of some kind of representational decoration, perhaps related to some characteristic of a female deity. Delwen Samuel has identified a number of preserved loaves from funerary contexts in New Kingdom Egypt which incorporate very simple depressions, sometimes encircled with fine holes, creating a ‘vulvar effect.’ Alongside such breads of the ‘female genitalia form’ Samuel also identifies simple representations of human forms in bread, ‘shaped like flat dolls without legs.’ Such examples of bread figurines are part of a wider tradition of explicit representation in Egypt, including rudimentary female forms fashioned in clay and embedded with cereal grains marking features such as eyes and genitalia from the 12th Dynasty.596 While based on their linguistic link with Akkadian ka ānu the כונּים of Jer 44 are unlikely to be upright goddess figurines made of bread, there is no reason why the ash-baked cakes proposed here could not also incorporate some figurative representation of the Queen of heaven, signified by להעצבה.

12.4. Vows

The repeated references to vows in Jer 44:25 raise further questions about the religious beliefs and practices of the group of Judeans represented as being in conflict with the prophet in this text. An exploration of this matter may provide some potential insight into the beliefs held about the Queen of Heaven and her adherents’ relationship with her. Jeremiah’s reference to vows in v. 25, alongside the people’s assertion that correct worship of the Queen of Heaven is performed to ensure a plentiful supply of food and peace in v. 17, may well show the condemnatory declaration of v. 26 in an entirely new light.

595 Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, p. 736.
There are a number of ways in which Jeremiah’s declarations in vv. 25-26 can be interpreted. Four possible scenarios are set out below. The first two assume that, in keeping with all other instances of vows made in the Hebrew Bible, these vows also are made to YHWH and not to any other god. The second pair posit that Jer 44:25 is unique in the biblical corpus in being the only reference made to vows to a deity other than YHWH, in this case the Queen of Heaven.

Scenario A - YHWH 1: The vows referred to in verse 25 are vows the people have made to YHWH. Jeremiah is instructing the people to make and carry them out. There is no need to assume any sarcastic or ironic inflection in the prophet’s speech. Jeremiah then follows the command of v. 25 with a divine declaration in v. 26 that the Judeans dwelling in Egypt are now excluded from or no longer permitted the practice of swearing by YHWH’s divine name, using the specific ד_LOGGER formulatation.

Scenario B - YHWH 2: The vows are made to YHWH and Jeremiah is sarcastically encouraging their fulfilment in order to emphasise that such vows will be ineffectual due to the people’s apparent apostasy in making burnt sacrifices, pouring out libations, and forming cakes to the Queen of Heaven. The futility of any vows made by these people to YHWH is then elaborated upon in the following verse where the prophet relates the divine declaration that the facility to swear by YHWH’s name has been removed from the Judeans in Egypt.

Scenario C - Queen of Heaven 1: The vows referred to are vows made by the assembled people to the Queen of Heaven. Jeremiah in frustration and anger gives this group of Judeans in Egypt up for lost, sarcastically declaring that the people should carry on making and fulfilling these futile vows. The declaration in v. 26 of the removal of the opportunity to swear by YHWH’s name using the standard ד_LOGGER formula is then a natural corollary to the stubborn apostasy of the people.

Scenario D - Queen of Heaven 2: Without assuming any inflection or tone in the character of Jeremiah’s exhortation to fulfil them, sarcastic, ironic or otherwise, the reference to vows is to the worship practices of this assembly. Jer 44:25 can then be read as a recognition of a certain validity of the worship practices. That is that in the exhortation of v. 25 where these practices are characterized as vows sincerely made and in need of fulfilment there is a tacit legitimisation of this heterodox worship practice. Jer 44:26 may then be read as an attempt to neutralise this legitimisation by declaring
the removal of the efficacy of the divine name oath formula, and by association the potency of Yahwistical worship in general, from all Judeans living in Egypt. Verse 26 in this scenario is then read not as a punishment in consequence of the presumed deviant or heterodox worship in the previous verses, but as a later insertion attempting to counteract the language of ritual legitimacy used in reference to Queen of Heaven worship in the previous verse.

12.4.1. The impact of verse 25

Many commentaries characterise Jeremiah's statement of 'fulfil your vows...' as having a certain intent, tone or inflection. While some scholars categorise the expression 'fulfil your vows' as ironic, others classify it as sarcasm.

The postscript v.25b: Keep your vows... is of course meant ironically.\(^597\)

Jeremiah responds to the women's cult of the queen of heaven with biting irony (e.g. v. 25b.)\(^598\)

"Well then," or something like it, is required to make the transition to this final irony, which is an example of epitrope.\(^599\)

Jrm does not try to argue with the women; instead he simply affirms that what they have vowed to do they have done, and then he tells them to go ahead and do it, a sarcastic word reminiscent of that in 7:21.\(^600\)

It has been widely held...and probably correctly, that the instruction issued by Jeremiah at the end of v.25 is heavy with irony: it is a recognition of compulsive behaviour, of an enslavement on which neither reason nor moral appeal can make an impact.\(^601\)

Although there is a broad scholarly consensus that Jeremiah's exhortation to the people to perform and fulfil their vows is to be read in a contemptuous and insincere tone, there are differences across the range of scholars in the manner and terms in which they express this opinion. In his discussion of Jer 44:25 and an earlier example of what he considers the same phenomenon in Jer 7:21 Lundbom uses the label epitrope.\(^602\) This is a specific rhetorical strategy:

\(^{597}\) Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, p. 333.


\(^{600}\) Holladay and Hanson, *Jeremiah 2*, p. 304.

\(^{601}\) McKane, *Jeremiah Vol. 2*, p. 1080.

Epitrope, (from Gr. ἐπιτροπή permission) is a figure of rhetoric by which a permission, either seriously or ironically, is granted to an opponent, to do what he proposes to do; as Rev. 22:11, ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.’

This more precise terminology is to be preferred. The earlier example from the text of Jeremiah which Lundbom identifies as an incidence of epitrope is Jer 7:21; ‘Increase your whole burnt-offerings on your altars and eat meat!’ Here, also in reference to a ritual practice, the prophet appears to be granting permission to the people to continue with their sacrifices to YHWH. The implication of Lundbom’s proposed epitrope is that this will not appease YHWH who instead demands behaviour in accordance with the principles of social justice.

There is no need in this instance in Jer 44:25 then to read into the prophet’s words any sarcastic intonation, the foregoing verses have clearly established that this is a case of disagreement between opposing parties. It is not necessary then to project onto the character of Jeremiah any emotions of disgust or contempt. As an epitrope, which is followed up by a declaration of negative consequences in v. 26, v. 25 functions quite well without the addition of ironical features of speech. The addition of idiomatic phrases such as ‘Well then,’ or ‘Very well, then…by all means’ to embellish the context in several commentaries is unnecessary.

12.4.2. Vows to the Queen of Heaven

If we hypothesise, in accordance with Scenario D, that these vows are made to the Queen of Heaven, independent of YHWH, then we must offer a model of the form of such vows and their fulfilment. Cartledge in his 1992 treatment of this subject offers the following definition:

...the term vow (נְדֵר) within the Old Testament environment is best defined as a conditional promise made within the context of petitionary prayer, that the individual will give to God some gift or service in return for God’s willingness to hear and answer his prayer.

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This practice is also characterised by Cartledge as ‘a commercial bargain with God’. 606

Berlinerblau largely follows Cartledge’s definition of vow-making while focusing specifically on the connections between votive practice and popular religious practice. 607 Gudme however has suggested that these definitions of votive practice should be expanded to more fully encompass gifts to gods in general, not just those made as a consequence of specifically declared vows. 608 This more flexible definition may help us to understand the greater degree of fluidity that may have been associated with these practices. Maintaining an awareness of this may also help us to reconcile the differences between the reference to vows at Jer 44:25 and the apparently rigid structure of rules surrounding the making of vows in the Torah, particularly in the book of Numbers, concerning women.

It has been suggested that the emphasis in the speech of the women in Jer 44:19 on the fact that their husbands were cognisant of, and presumably approved, their activities, is a demonstration of an awareness of the restrictions and fail-safe measures attached to a woman’s vows in Num 30:4-7. 609 The regulations governing vow-making by women in Num 30 apply to women who are subject to the authority of a male head of household, usually either their father or husband. In such cases the male head of household can, if he hears of a vow made by a woman under his authority, declare it invalid on the same day. There appears to be no question in the narrative in Jer 44 of the women’s husbands disapproving of, or invalidating, their worship practices. When we read the words ‘את-נדרינו אשׁר נדרנו,’ ‘the vows which we vowed,’ in Jer 44:25, the prophet’s paraphrasing of the people’s affirmation of their commitment to worship is delivered in a context where the legitimacy of the women’s behaviour has not been undermined by any male authority.

All other narrative incidents of vow making and fulfilment in the Hebrew Bible occur in relation to YHWH; Gen 28:20-22, Num 21:2, Judg 11:30, 1 Sam 1:11, 2 Sam 15:7-8 and Jonah 1:16. As such, from the perspective of the biblical writers, none of

609 Hadley, ‘The Queen of Heaven - Who Is She?’, p. 36.
these can be seen as examples of heterodox worship practices. The example from the book of Jonah however does involve non-Israelite participants.\footnote{Berlinerblau, \textit{The Vow and the 'Popular Religious Groups' of Ancient Israel: A Philological and Sociological Inquiry}, p. 57.}

The captain came and said to him, ‘What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.’ …So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. (Jonah 1:6-16)

A reference in Isaiah likewise points to vow-making as a form of legitimation of a deity. Just as the non-Israelite sailors of Jonah endorse the superior power of YHWH by their sacrifice and vows, an oracle in Isaiah describes a future recognition of the superior power of YHWH by the Egyptians in similar terms.\footnote{Cartledge, \textit{Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient near East}, p. 13.}

The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. (Isa 19:21)

Consequently, the acts of making and fulfilling vows can be read as an endorsement of a deity’s power.

Aside from the standard devotional practices carried out in fulfilment of vows throughout the Hebrew Bible the specific details of this episode may point to one particular votive practice. It is quite possible that the חניכים of Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:19 are made by the adherents of the Queen of Heaven as gifts, or as objects that may represent the fulfilment of a vow made to her. Such a practice would conform to many of the key criteria of gift-giving practices as highlighted by Gudme; the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between deity and devotee, inequality rather than equal exchange, the giving of items that form part of everyday life.\footnote{Gudme, ‘Barter Deal or Friend-Making Gift? A Reconsideration of the Conditional Vow in the Hebrew Bible,’ p. 193.} We can also add to this that in being a food stuff the חניכים also hold a weight of symbolic meaning. The assembled worshippers highlight the role of the Queen of Heaven in providing sustenance, declaring ‘we had enough bread’ (נשׁ בע־לחם) in Jer 44:17. Presenting the חניכים to the Queen of Heaven then may be interpreted as a token offering from the bounty of food which she is credited with ensuring. It is interesting to note that so called
‘bread loaves’ have been found in temples to Hathor in Egypt that may have symbolised a dedicatory food stuff presented to the deity.\textsuperscript{613}

Further potential evidence of vow-making in the context of worship of a female deity is the range of pillar figurines and statuettes found in Judah and the wider region across this period. There has been much speculation as to their origin and function, with the less decorated ‘Judean pillar figurine’ type particularly sparking debate.\textsuperscript{614} The sheer number and small size of these artefacts may well tempt us to posit that these were votive objects, and that some cultic sites may have functioned as workshops for their manufacture, similar to examples of faience items found in Egypt.\textsuperscript{615}

12.4.3. Vows Recognised, Oaths Forbidden

We arrive at Jer 44:26 with a recognition that there has been no explicit nullification of the vows, and by association the worship practices, of the assembled people. There is an inconsistency in the condemnatory utterance which follows. Jer 44:26 follows after not only words of self-justification on the part of the Queen of Heaven worshippers in v. 17, but also a paraphrasing and consequent reiteration of this justification by the character of the prophet himself in v. 25. The final word of condemnation from v. 26 onwards is addressed however, not to the specific activities and concerns of the people expressed in the previous verses, but to the separate issue of worship of YHWH outside of Judah. This appears to be a question far removed from the immediate framing of this narrative event and conspicuously unrelated to the worship of the Queen of Heaven which has occupied much space throughout Jer 44 up to this point.

Very often the closing part of Jer 44:26, which is then followed by an oracle of doom against Egypt generally in Jer 44:28-30, is read as an explicit condemnation of Yahwistic worship by Judeans living in Egypt. The Persian period Aramaic documents from the garrison at Elephantine which mention Yahwistic worship and the celebration of Passover in some detail are often cited as evidence for Yahwistic practices outside of Palestine:


\textsuperscript{615} Pinch, \textit{Votive Offerings to Hathor}, p. 326.
And now, this year, year 5 of Darius the king, from the king it has been sent to Arsa[mes...]...Now, you, thus count fourteen days of Nisan and on the 14th at twilight the Passover observe and from day 15 until day 21 of [Nisan, the festival of Unleavened Bread observe... 616

And when this had been done (to us), we with our wives and our children sackcloth were wearing and fasting and praying to YHW the Lord of Heaven... 617

The removal of the facility of the divine-name oath formula from the Judeans in Egypt at Jer 44:26 is then interpreted as a de-legitimation of these very kinds of cultic practices in the Judean diaspora in Egypt. With the facility to swear by YHWH removed from the Judeans in Egypt no subsequent Yahwistic temple or worship practices taking place there can be considered legitimate. Such an interpretation lends itself readily to a reading of Jer 44:26 as a later addition to the text, motivated perhaps by post-exilic inter-diasporic rivalries:

Such a blanket condemnation of the cult of Yahweh in Egypt must represent an ideological conflict between Palestine (?) and Egypt over cultic matters at some period after the fall of Jerusalem (e.g. in the second temple era? Cf. the tensions between the two areas in matters cultic as evinced by the Elephantine documents...) 618

However, it is equally important to observe that this preponderance of the language of oath swearing in Jer 44:26, appears directly after the vow making and fulfilment terminology present in the immediately preceding verse. Aside from any plausible condemnation of Yahwistic worship in Egypt we must also consider that the declaration of v. 26 is made in response to the mention of vow making and fulfilment in v. 25. This may be to further underline the futility of the observed practices of the Queen of Heaven worshippers, or perhaps to neutralise an implicit legitimation of their worship.

As evidenced by their explicit rejection of Jeremiah in Jer 44:16, it is clear that the worshippers fully intend to continue what they are doing without heeding any statement of permission, sarcastic or otherwise. Consequently, if Jer 44:25 is an

instance of epitrope in order to reassert a bruised authority it is highly ineffective. The very words used in v. 25 actually do some damage to the image of the prophet Jeremiah as the supreme YHWH-alone authority across the text. This in turn signposts the possibility that the declaration of v. 26 is a later addition included in order to mitigate some of this damage. Indeed, it is noteworthy that it is only in Jeremiah’s paraphrasing of the people’s earlier assertions that the language of vows and vow fulfilment is used. When the Queen of Heaven worshippers themselves speak they do not use the word vow (נּדר) about their activities.619

12.5. Resistance, Reversal, and Reframing

Lefebvre’s third formulation of space, Representational Spaces, provides a helpful model for our examination of this public worship ritual in Jer 44. Lefebvre asserts that Representational Spaces are the spaces of lived reality, the space of inhabitants, created through the active agent’s symbolic use of a physical space and its associated objects.620 As he articulates Representational Spaces as ‘redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements,’ it is possible to understand the worshippers of the Queen of Heaven carrying out their worship in keeping with an awareness of their own history and heritage, thereby investing the public arena with meaning grounded in their devotional outlook.621 Just as the gardens of Jer 29 and the settlement of Mizpah in Jer 40 are ideologically determined via the symbolic code, here too, in the worshippers’ articulation of their self-identification outside of the parameters of that code, the cities of Judah, the streets of Jerusalem, and the present surroundings of Egypt, are invested with their own particular meaning.

Lefebvre’s fundamental assertion that the meaning attached to a space is created by human activity, with social space being produced by social forces, enables an interpretation of this action, on the part of the women of Jer 44 as the creation of Representational Space, or as in Soja’s and consequently Havrelock’s frameworks; Thirdspace. Both Boer’s study of the Representational Space of Hannah’s womb as an example of imaginative resistance in 1 Sam, and Havrelock’s articulation of Thirdspace as the local domain as a centre of female power, prompt an analysis of this episode from Jer 44 along similar lines.622 In the defiant direct speech of the assembled crowd

620 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 39.
621 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 41.
622 Boer, Marxist Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, ch. 5; Havrelock, ‘Home at Last,’ pp. 244-45.
in vv. 16-19 a number of assertions render their occupation and utilisation of physical space an act of symbolic resistance. Jer 44:15 represents this speech as emanating from both men and women. However by v. 19 in light of the presence of the rhetorical המבליוד אנשׁ ינו (‘was it apart from our husbands...?’) and the fact that both the Lucianic Greek and Syriac Peshitta recensions include the phrase ‘and the women said,’ it appears that these statements should be read as representing predominantly the point of view of the assembled women. 623 The women point to the precedent of worship of the Queen of Heaven as part of their shared history as Judeans, they justify their persisting in this course of action by contrasting the present catastrophe with past instances of prosperity and security, and they underline the locus of worship having been ‘in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem.’

While we cannot expect that our modern notions of public and private space in an urban centre will map perfectly onto the ancient reality, there does appear to have been an understanding of public versus private spaces, certainly in the classical world. Hansen, in his study of the Greek polis, points to several examples both literary and archaeological, in Athens and beyond, which indicate a conception of public space, access to and the use of which was not confined strictly to citizens.

...“public space,” often designated by the adjective δημόσιος, was landed property owned by the public, i.e. the polis, but not reserved for its citizens. Furthermore, instead of a dichotomy between public and private we sometimes meet a tripartition into sacred, public and private space, attested for Tegea in a fourth century law about public works, and stipulated for the ideal polis invented by Hippodamos of Miletos... 624

In light of the repeated references to the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem not only in Jer 44 but also in Jer 7:18 presumably this incident in Egypt takes place in an equally open and public area. The women are therefore, by their active agency inhabiting a public space, unconcealed from the disapproving gaze of the prophet, thereby rendering it as a Representational Space which functions to broadcast the beliefs, norms, and values which undergird their devotion. Their performance of the typically female domestic task of food preparation, infused with a religious significance, is the vehicle by which they inhabit the new surroundings of Egypt. Thus, in a non-confrontational manner, by their actions these women imbue the ‘cities and streets’ of

Egypt with meaning as a Representational Space compatible with the expression of the values of nutritive sustenance, peace and plenty, embodied in the Queen of Heaven to whom they direct their prayers.

The presentation of the Queen of Heaven worshippers in Jer 44, though obviously marked out as targets of the prophet’s execration, also serves to offer reversal and reframing of, several of the basic norms enshrined within the symbolic code which has dominated each of the narrative episodes already examined. In the weight of symbolism conveyed via the deceptively simple action of baking cakes for the Queen of Heaven, and in the statement of self-justification at v. 17 several of the same core principles utilised elsewhere in the furtherance of cultural hegemony are here reframed in a manner which no longer upholds the economically focussed and arguably male dominated status quo promoted in the other instances examined heretofore.

Up to this point we have seen how the symbolic code seeks to promote a norm of settlement establishment as the dutiful obligation of a male head of household. This reflects the promotion of the build-plant-marry triad in Deut 20 and 28. In Deut 20 a man should not be required to risk his life in battle if he has undertaken to build, plant, or marry, and not yet brought that exercise to fruition. These are all activities associated with the establishment of a settlement or household. In Deut 28 the fulfilment of these same activities, dwelling in one’s house, use of the fruit of one’s vineyard, and marriage consummation, all suffer a perverse inversion in the context of a passage which expounds upon the blessings of obedience and conversely the dire consequences of refusal to obey the commandments and decrees of YHWH. We have seen repeatedly in the narrative passages under examination that the symbolic code consistently seeks to promote this same build-plant-marry message, most explicitly in Jer 29:5-7. In the poetic vignette of Jer 7:17-18, and more fully here in Jer 44 the male prerogative of household establishment is eschewed in favour of a communal worship practice that takes on a specifically female centred character in Jer 44:17-19, with the active agency of the women rendered more explicit on reading the Greek and Syriac variants.

The communal nature and public setting of worship of the Queen of Heaven, as articulated in Jer 7 and 44 also runs counter to aspects of the norms of hospitality. The baking of cakes which forms part of this devotional activity implies a potential for
commensality with some of the cakes perhaps being consumed in a shared celebration. Here then is the potential for a commensal occasion realised outside the traditional confines of hospitality as an arena of power politics. In the earlier discussion of Jer 41 we have already seen how feasting, as a mechanism of resource distribution, functioned as a locus for the establishment and maintenance of political power. In the worship context portrayed in Jer 7 and 44 however we encounter a communal utilisation of resources without any attendant hierarchical power structure governing proceedings.

The concept of nutritive sustenance is reframed in Jer 44:17 as a faculty of the Queen of Heaven, inherent to her characterisation as a responsive deity in a mutually beneficial reciprocal relationship with her adherents, credited with blessing and rewarding her devotees by providing sustenance, נְשׁ בע־לחם. Thus, the act of forming and baking the כונים can be interpreted as emulating her creative power, while presentation of these same cakes may be read as an offering, representative of the abundance she is called on to provide.

12.6. Conclusion

The title ‘Queen of Heaven’ is an appellation in widespread use in Mesopotamia, across the Eastern Mediterranean and in Egypt, over an extended period of time. The appearance of a female deity referred to by this moniker in the book of Jeremiah suggests parallels with the worship of Innana and Ištar/Astarte. The worship of this female deity as described in Jer 7 and 44 entails burnt sacrifices and libations, along with the central feature of baked goods referred to in Jer 7:18 and 44:19. The activities entailed in this worship appear to have been communal in nature, involving all members of the family unit, with a more pronounced participation of women in certain ritual aspects. The production of baked goods in honour of an analogous female deity is also attested in an Eastern Mediterranean context, in the Kition tariff inscription and in a hymn to Ištar. While the Phoenician of the Kition inscription appears to use the term חלת for ‘cakes,’ there is a more obvious linguistic relationship between the kamān tumri of the hymn to Ištar and the כונים of Jer 7:18 and 44:19. כונים is a loanword unattested elsewhere in the biblical corpus, stemming from the Akkadian kamanu, variants of which also appear in The Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Erra epic. Based on this linguistic relationship with the Akkadian kamanu the
The assembled worshippers in Jer 44:19 offer the phrase לְהָעַצֶּבָה as a rationale for their activity. This has been variously translated as ‘depicting her,’ ‘bearing her image,’ ‘to form her image,’ and ‘in her image.’[^625] These translations imply a general scholarly consensus that the phrase לְהָעַצֶּבָה indicates the practice of figurative representation of the goddess via the medium of the כונּים. Ellis’s reading of this hapax legomenon as ‘to model her’ in the sense of emulating the goddess’s own creative faculties is also of merit. The assertion made here that the כונּים were cakes cooked over an open fire does not preclude the incorporation of some form of figurative representation in their design, a phenomenon attested to by preserved loaves from funerary contexts in New Kingdom Egypt.

The Queen of Heaven is understood by her adherents to have influence over their wellbeing and prosperity, particularly in the provision of peace and its associated prosperity, plentiful stores of food. Repeated references to vows in Jer 44:25, the prophet’s paraphrasing of the words of the assembled worshippers, alerts us to the likelihood that adherents of the Queen of Heaven understood themselves to be in a reciprocal beneficial relationship with her and that she was capable of granting their requests. If, as Jer 44:25 implies, verbal commitments are made to her with the intention of their being honoured, this indicates a conception of the Queen of Heaven as an independent divine agent of blessing, rather than a less powerful divine consort of YHWH. The כונּים might therefore represent the fulfilment of a vow, a token offering from the bounty of food she is credited with ensuring in Jer 44:17, this would correspond with Gudme’s definition of votive practice.

This narrative serves as an instance of resistance, reversal, and reframing in terms of the symbolic code. The assembled worshippers carry out their activities in keeping with an understanding of their own history and heritage, investing the public arena with meaning grounded in their devotional outlook. The defiant direct speech of the crowd in Jer 44:16-19 contains a number of assertions which render their occupation and utilisation of space as an act of symbolic resistance. The women in

particular take the lead by their active agency, visibly inhabiting the public space and thereby rendering it a Representational Space in the Lefebvrian sense.

The normative activities promoted by the symbolic code in the other episodes of Jeremiah analysed up to this point, often reflecting the male prerogatives of settlement establishment, are set aside in Jer 44 in favour of a communal worship practice that takes on a specifically female centred character. The communal nature and public setting of these worship practices imply a potential for commensality articulated outside the traditional confines of hospitality as an arena of hierarchical power politics. This episode therefore offers a reframing of the concept of nutritive sustenance as an aspect of the beneficence of the Queen of Heaven, as opposed to the consequence of obedient acquiescence to the conditions of inscription within the Neo-Babylonian imperial economic system. This perspective clashes with the hegemonic message promoted via the symbolic code in all the other narrative episodes examined in this research project. The women of Jer 44 seek to preserve and continue an established religious tradition, rather than adapting their activities to a new mode of imperial control. Rather than build-plant-marry, or return-dwell-harvest, these women assert their desire to both create and remember.
13. Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the presence of certain words, phrases, concepts, and recurring themes within the text of Jeremiah and explored their presence in terms of a symbolic code, deployed to the specific end of cultural hegemony. It has examined narrative episodes from Jer 29, 32, 35, 40, 41 and 44 in terms of the representation of communal settlement, socio-economic participation, and spatial dynamics. The hegemonic message promoted and reinforced via the semiotic operation of the symbolic code is one of adaptation and survival in the aftermath of the collapse of Judah as a monarchical state and its reformulation within a new encompassing Neo-Babylonian imperial system. This has necessitated the critical analysis of a variety of data from the realms of both biblical studies and archaeology.

Two distinct avenues have been explored in order to discern the operations of cultural hegemony at work in terms of the person, or more properly literary character, of the prophet Jeremiah. The activities and assertions of the prophet where he is directly referred in the narrative material, either in the first or third person, offer one avenue. The second is facilitated via an in-depth analysis of his familial, or possibly pseudo-familial connection with a clan-based network of Judean individuals populating the religio-clerical sphere of late monarchical Judah and, in the case of one putative kinsman, Gedaliah b. Ahiqam, local political operations in Mizpah in the immediate aftermath of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

The activities Jeremiah is presented as engaging in, particularly the narrative episode which recounts his participation in a redemptive land purchase, may mark him out as emblematic of aspects of the hegemonic message of the symbolic code. The narrative episode of Jer 32 can thereby be interpreted as a site of the symbolic code in action. Jeremiah’s redemptive purchase serves to inscribe him within the thematic system of agricultural productivity so central to the message of adaptivity and compliance repeatedly endorsed in the episodes under examination throughout this thesis. Jeremiah is inscribed with the symbolic code also by literary representation of certain of his statements, for instance his exhortatory message to the exiles already resident in Babylon in Jer 29 signals his support for the preservation of a lengthy, though ultimately temporary, status quo of exile.
At certain points in the text, most notably at Jer 1 and 32, the prophet Jeremiah is characterised as a member of a specific clan with links to the priestly and clerical branches of the Judean administrative class. Thus, the character of the prophet and his actions can be interpreted as a literary vehicle for aspects of the hegemonic message of normative compliance promoted by the symbolic code. The speculative genealogy offered in chapter 1 (‘Jeremiah the Anathothite’) is based on a number of references across a variety of biblical texts, alongside a small amount of epigraphic evidence. This model of a family tree portrays a priestly-clerical dynasty incorporating Jeremiah and a number of his contemporaries, most notably Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan. We see in Jer 40-41 how Gedaliah carries the administrative involvement of the Shaphanide branch of this dynasty on into the new era of Neo-Babylonian supremacy.

The genealogical model offered in chapter 6 indicates a certain consistency in the official positions and associated activities of a significant number of related individuals across several generations, demonstrating the potential impact of such a clan-based power matrix on the political landscape of Judah. Familial links both within and between cultic, political, and administrative functionaries is a social norm of the ancient world, one which arguably continues into present day statecraft. Therefore, while the definition of an ‘intellectual caste’ formulated by Antonio Gramsci was not designed to explicate the social formations of the ancient world, the present examination can confidently use Gramsci’s theoretical framework here as an interpretive tool. In parts of the book of Jeremiah we are presented with a representation of a clan-based network of active social participants who take on the mantle of the intellectual and moral leadership of civil society, thereby facilitating the enshrinement of the values and norms of a dominant power in wider society. Therefore, in considering the clerical, religious, and cultural roles of the members of this network, the character of Jeremiah himself being presented as a member, this comparison is worthwhile, and may present a valuable opportunity for future research. The longstanding geographic association of this clan-based network of literate Judean administrative and cultural professionals with the area of Benjamin, and the town of Anathoth in particular points backwards to a potential link with elements of the priestly sector of the Judean elite population of earlier centuries, and also forward to the establishment of a governed colony at Mizpah, in the same region, in the following decades of Neo-Babylonian direct rule.
The letter to the exiles in Jer 29 clearly expresses elements of the power dynamic of cultural hegemony at work in the text. Jer 29:5-7 presents a crystallisation of several elements associated with the theme of long-term settlement and agricultural productivity. The encouragement of the building of permanent dwellings and the planting of gardens, the instruction to consume the resultant fruit of those gardens and to pray for the welfare of the city, promotes an ideal of orderly, prosperous, and peaceful existence in exile. These verses stand as a clear demonstration of the symbolic weight of build-plant-marry. We see a rather different articulation of the elements of this triad in Jer 29:5-7 than we see in Deut 20 where they are deployed as tenets of a type of idealised Israelite male identity. While in Deut 20 build-plant-marry might be interpreted as the foundations of a stable and prosperous livelihood within the land, these same activities within Jeremiah’s exhortatory statement take on an implicitly hegemonic tone. Compliant, active economic participation in the wider dominant imperial extractive regime is encouraged thereby drawing the subject population of deportees in Babylon into the dialectical mechanism of hegemony, their participation serving to reproduce the conditions of their domination via their ‘spontaneous consent.’

The rhetorical strategy of Jer 29:5-7 is highly effective. The symbolic code here resonates with the intended audience in terms of their national and religious identity, promoting active compliance and neutralising any potential future resistance. These verses are particularly notable for their foregrounding of specific agricultural signifiers, the planting of gardens and the eventual consumption of their fruit. This works to promote a theme of settled domestic establishment and agricultural productivity. The potent imagery of gardens and fruit are drawn from a reality familiar to the audience in order to advertise potential avenues to security via compliance on the part of this subject population. To build, plant, and marry, is behaviour encouraged as in perfect harmony with the concept of the ‘welfare of the city,’ something to be sought, earnestly, in prayer. Thus the gardens and fruit of Jer 29 transmit the message of an interested power group, part of a web of signifiers throughout the text which indicate the operation of a power structure seeking control via cultural means.

An examination of the broader landscape of the Neo-Babylonian empire in the sixth century BCE sheds further, historical light on the houses, gardens, and city of Jer 29:5-7. Fuller awareness of the centrality of agricultural gardens, and the vital role of

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high intensity date-palm cultivation within the Neo-Babylonian economy assists in an explicitly agricultural reading of the gardens of Jer 29:5. A socio-political understanding of the precise concept of ‘the city’ in ancient Mesopotamia likewise facilitates a more nuanced reading of the demands made of the Judean deportee population. Extrabiblical evidence, particularly cuneiform tablets from the Murašû archive, from Āl-Yāḥūdu, and from a smaller number of texts from Sippar, appear to point to the involvement of Judean deportees in variations of the Neo-Babylonian land for service system, and perhaps a certain level of collective organisation along ethnic lines. These records of various commercial transactions and contracts offer some insight into the lived reality of a number of Judeans in Babylon.

The Rechabite’s distinctive statement of identity in Jer 35 is instrumentalised within the text in order to render this group as a proximate other. This kinship group’s idiosyncratic lifeways, their refusal to build, plant or drink wine, are illustrative of their longstanding refusal to be inscribed within a conventional, agriculturally productive, sedentary lifestyle, incorporating the hallmarks of domestic settlement establishment. Their definitive statement of identity thus represents a rejection of the fundamental precepts of the symbolic code, their multigenerational nomadic existence being antithetical to the demands of empire.

The Rechabites’ inverse relationship with the foundational theme of fruitful sedentary agricultural, participation in order to accommodate imperial economic policy, necessitates their neutralization. This neutralization is achieved via a strategy of exoticization and subsequent domestication; the rhetoric of the divine word of blessing for this group insists on their conforming to the covenantal ideal, the norm of secure and permanent occupation of the land. Any realisation of the promise made to the Rechabites in Jer 35:18-19 would demand the cessation of their nomadic tradition. The Rechabites therefore function in Jer 35 not as a positive example for the contemporary Judean audience to emulate, but as a foil against which to measure their own compliance with the newly imposed realities of Neo-Babylonian domination. In delineating the traces of operations of cultural hegemony within the text of Jeremiah the treatment of this distinctive group is revealing. The text provides us with an example of a group of people who have not compliantly incorporated themselves into the social system which serves the interests of the ruling power. The Rechabites decline to build or plant, thereby refusing to cooperate with the power structure promoted via the symbolic code. Their consequent othering by exoticisation then likely
serves as a type of ostracization, this being done in order to offset and nullify their inherently destabilising presence. The case of the Rechabites of Jer 35 is particularly ripe for further research specifically in terms of the potential for an intersectional approach incorporating the insights of postcolonial studies and a fuller exploration of the politics of space and culture at work in the text via a post-Marxist lens.

In the biblical literature Mizpah holds specific cultural associations which have direct bearing on our interpretation of the account of Gedaliah’s appointment as leader there as another site within the text where the hegemonic task of the symbolic code is on display. Mizpah is repeatedly represented as a place of tribal mass assembly and leadership ratification, particularly in the narratives concerning Jephthah in Judg 11, and Saul in 1 Sam 10. Aspects of Gedaliah’s appointment, in particular his speech to the assembled Judean military captains in Jer 40:9-10 reflect this pattern. Gedaliah’s sworn statement in these verses carries the sense of a politico-social covenant between him and the assembled Judeans, who he directs to collect harvests of wine, oil, and summer fruits, and to dwell in surrounding seized settlements. His exhortation thus reiterates the ideals of adaptiveness, willing agricultural productivity, and economic participation; key facets of the symbolic code as encountered elsewhere in Jeremiah. Gedaliah’s words are then presented as fulfilled in Jer 40:12 with the assembled people gathering an abundant harvest of wine and summer fruit.

The speculative genealogy formulated earlier indicates that Gedaliah b. Ahikam b. Shaphan was a member of an extended family of non-royal Judean elites, alongside a number of his kinsmen who held high-ranking official positions. Gedaliah’s selection by the Neo-Babylonian authorities to occupy an administrative role at Mizpah is in keeping with such social and family origins, making him an ideal candidate for the position of governor. This analysis of the nature of Gedaliah’s position, alongside the interpretation of the archaeological evidence, identifies Mizpah in the sixth century BCE as a form of ‘governed colony,’ administered in the interests of a foreign power by an official appointee, likely selected from within the native aristocracy. Gedaliah’s exhortation to the assembled Judeans in Jer 40 serves to distil much of the components of the symbolic code and the hegemonic demands embedded within it. In terms of the definition of a Gramscian ‘intellectual’ it is noteworthy that as a member of that clan-based network of non-royal Judean elites, the sons of Meshullam, Gedaliah as a Babylonian appointee very much meets the criterion of functioning as a deputy of the dominant group.
In the narrative presentation of Gedaliah’s regime at Mizpah we are offered an ideal model of participation in the newly imposed imperial power system in the land of Judah, a corollary to the compliance encouraged among the exiles in Babylon in Jer 29. Gedaliah’s exhortation encourages a willing agricultural productivity and compliance on the part of the people. The return-dwell-harvest message of Jer 40:9-10 mirrors Jer 29:5-7, transmitting the hegemonic expectation and encouragement of compliance consistently made across all occurrences of the symbolic code. The site of Mizpah itself functions as a signifier within the symbolic code at this point, an Israelite cultural memory of regime establishment and covenant-making within this locale in the territory of Benjamin is deployed in order to elicit that ‘spontaneous consent’ of the governed which is a hallmark of hegemony.

The assassination of Gedaliah by Ishmael b. Nethaniah in the opening verses of Jer 41 may be read as an example of murder at table, a discernible trope in the biblical literature. These particular biblical accounts invariably involve a politically motivated killing, with death and destruction intruding upon the assumed peace and security of domestic spaces in the contexts of eating, drinking, and hospitality. Such incidents clearly breach the largely unspoken rules of biblical hospitality. The political significance of the circumstances of Gedaliah’s death are further reinforced by the aspect of commensality – the fact he is killed while sharing a meal with Ishmael. Shared meals, particularly feasts, perform a vital function in the development of biblical ideas of monarchy, leadership, and power. The act of hosting such an occasion implies authority, with obedient attendance on the part of invitees signifying loyalty to the existing power dynamic.

Hence, Ishmael’s murderous act, taking place during a shared meal in Gedaliah’s own domain of authority explicitly violates the presumption of domestic security and the fundamental principles of hospitality; a deep rupture of the domestic establishment values enshrined in the symbolic code. This incident serves to fundamentally disrupt the prosperous idyll of Mizpah presented in Jer 40. The subsequent appearance of pilgrims en route to offer sacrifices at the ruins of the Jerusalem temple further reinforces a sense of national catastrophe and the figurative death of any remnant Judean population in the land. Furthermore, Gedaliah’s merciless slaughter of these pilgrims establishes him as a sacrilegious brute operating fully outside any norms of civilised behaviour from the cultural perspective of the text.
This serves to condemn Ishmael and his associates via religious mores and national cultural memory. Ishmael and those facets of resistance this literary character serves to represent is subjected to character assassination at the hands of the symbolic code. The representation of his repeated breaches of social, cultural, and religious norms serve to stigmatise any resistance to the hegemonic project. As the Rechabites were neutralised by their othering via exoticisation, Ishmael and his band of killers are neutralised by a condemnation steeped in potent cultural ideals and sacred norms.

In Jer 44 we encounter a community of Judeans active in Egypt, presumably that remnant who fled Mizpah in the aftermath of Gedaliah’s murder. In the narrative of Jeremiah’s interaction with these people and his condemnation of their worship of the Queen of Heaven several constituent norms of the symbolic code meet resistance and reframing. Analysis of two references within the book of Jeremiah, at Jer 7 and 44, alongside an examination of extrabiblical evidence for this form of worship of a female deity across Mesopotamia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Egypt, yields a distinctive profile. This worship practice appears to have been communal in nature, with a more pronounced role for, or association with, women. The production of baked goods held some significance in this regard, likely in a figurative representation of the goddess, or possibly in emulation of creative faculties associated with her. A potential votive element, with adherents understanding themselves as in a reciprocal relationship with the deity, also likely features.

The narrative episode of Jer 44, where the assembled worshippers defiantly refuse to countenance Jeremiah’s condemnation of their behaviour, can be read as a site where the dominance of the symbolic code now breaks down. The crowd’s direct speech in response to the prophet in Jer 44:16-19 asserts this worship format, and its undergirding belief system, in resistance to the assumptions of the symbolic code and its inherent hegemonic message. Women in particular take the lead by their active agency, visibly inhabiting the public space and thereby investing this arena with meaning grounded in their devotional outlook.

The concepts of building and planting, the normative activities promoted by the symbolic code in the other episodes analysed up to this point, are set aside. The baking of cakes for the Queen of Heaven and the implied commensality associated
with this communal activity, are articulated outside the traditional confines of hospitality as an arena of hierarchical power politics. The concept of nutritive sustenance, frequently transmitted elsewhere in the symbolic potency of fruit harvest, is here reframed as an aspect of the Queen of Heaven’s own beneficence. Thus, the women of Jer 44 seek to preserve and continue an established religious tradition, rather than adapting their actions to the modes of Neo-Babylonian imperial control successfully promoted by the symbolic code in the previously examined narrative episodes.

Alternatively, it could be argued that while the episode Jer 44 stands out as an unusual example where greater voice is given to those active agents operating outside the boundaries which the symbolic code has consistently sought to reinforce, that ultimately, with the condemnatory tone of verses 24-28, a type of dominance is reasserted; that the persistent idolatry of the Judean women is denounced, that the prophet quite literally has the last word. This is a valid interpretive position. However, a reading of Jer 44 in terms of resistance, reversal and reframing better illustrates the inherent instability of the power discourse of hegemony. The symbolic code is deployed throughout the narrative portions of Jeremiah under analysis here not because it is a natural, stable, state of affairs but rather because the power structure it seeks to uphold is vulnerable to collapse without constant reinforcement via cultural, and when all else fails, violent means.

In the repeated instances of the symbolic code operating as a tool of cultural hegemony at various points throughout the text of Jeremiah examined here this instability is obviated. The subject population must be repeatedly convinced to build, plant and marry, return, dwell, and harvest, to supply their ‘spontaneous consent’ and participate in the idealised social enterprise enshrined within a system which although culturally embellished and religiously adorned operates ultimately to inscribe them as active participants and producers of the mechanisms of their own oppression.
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287


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