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The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts

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The Voice and Role of a Counterfactual Memory in the Construction of Exile and Return: Considering Jeremiah 40: 7–12

EHUD BEN ZVI

Some Considerations of Counterfactual History/Thinking

Counterfactual histories are common in popular culture today.[1] To a large extent, the popularity of the genre is a function of the role of these stories in shaping and reshaping evaluations of the present.[2] Counterfactual narratives about the past[3] frequently provide a way to imagine a better, alternative past leading to a better present, though at times a dystopian past/present is advanced. In any event, these narratives tend to carry a strong component of presentism, even if on the surface they deal only with alternate pasts.[4]

From a methodological perspective, alternate histories written by professional scholars, although often attacked by members of our guild, serve important roles. For instance, they help to raise issues of historical causality, of long-term processes, and of chaos in history. Alternate

1 The bibliographic database of a main website for alternate history, Uchronia, claims to contain "over 2800 novels, stories, essays and other printed material involving the 'what ifs' of history." See http://www.uchronia.net/. A search under "Canada" retrieves more than twenty volumes, while a similar search for "Germany" retrieves, as expected, several times more.

2 See G. Rosenfeld, "Why do we ask 'What if'? Reflections on the Function of Alternate History," *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 90–103.

3 The bibliography on virtual/alternate/counterfactual history, at times called allohistory, is immense and varied. See, among others, N. Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (Papermac: London, 1998), esp. N. Ferguson, "Introduction," 1–90; A. Demandt, *History That Never Happened: A Treatise on the Question, What Would Have Happened If...?* (3d rev. ed.; Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1993); J. Bulhof, "What If? Modality and History," *History and Theory* 38 (1999), 145–68; M. Bunzl, "Counterfactual History: A User's Guide," *American Historical Review* 109 (2004): 845–58; and the forum on "Counterfactual Realities" in *Representations* 98 (2007): 51–134, that includes contributions of C. Gallagher, M. Maslan, S. Jain, P. K. Saint-Amour and A. Miller.

For a volume devoted to counterfactual history of ancient Israel, see J. Cheryl Exum, ed., *Virtual History and the Bible* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000).

4 See G. Rosenfeld, "Why do we ask 'What if?'"

histories serve to undermine deterministic narratives and metanarratives. They raise awareness of the problematic nature of reductive historical approaches, though at times indulging in it. Counterfactual historical simulations come as close as possible to arranging an "experiment" which looks at (or better, imagines) the behaviour of a system or outcomes as particular variable changes.[5] They carry the potential of contributing to the reconstruction of the world of historical agents, for the future these agents imagined and sought to bring about through their actions is by necessity a kind of an alternate history, which rarely if ever turned into "actual" history.[6]

Significantly, studies in experimental social psychology have concluded that counterfactuals are important for certain mental processes: "People often evaluate story or situation outcomes by mentally altering preceding events and simulating what impact this would have had on the outcome… [t]his mental simulation process plays an important role in cognition and emotion."[7] Similarly, counterfactuals play important roles in assessing (perceived) causality.[8] Counterfactuals are important cognitive tools, because they allow mental simulations in which some variable can be manipulated.[9] Such simulations played important roles for historical agents (i.e. human beings) in ancient times as well, contributing to their decision-making and affective response to events and to their constructions of their virtually re-lived past as they read narratives about it.

It is therefore not surprising that antiquity attests to both explicit and implicit counterfactual historical thinking.[10] Perhaps the most obvious and well-discussed case of explicit counterfactual musings is Livy's discussion of what would have happened if Rome and Alexander would have faced each other in war (*Ab Urbe Condita* 9.17–19).[11] At a deeper level, however, Kagan is correct when he states:

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5 On this type of simulations in daily life see below.

6 See D. Carr, "Place and Time: On the Interplay of Historical Points of View," *History and Theory* 40 (2001): 153–67, esp. pp. 158–67.

7 I. Gavanski and G. L. Wells, "Counterfactual Processing of Normal and Exceptional Events," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 25 (1989): 314–25 and bibliography (citation from p. 314).

8 G. L. Wells and I Gavanski, "Mental Simulation of Causality," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56 (1989): 161–169.

9 D. Kahneman and A. Tversky, "The Simulation Heuristic," in *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (eds. D. Kahneman, P. Slovic, and A. Tversky; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 201–08.

10 This holds true even if the particular genre of extensive counter-historical narrative seems to be a relatively new phenomenon.

11 On this text see R. Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression (9.17–19): Counterfactuals and Apologetics," *Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002), 62–85.

> To my mind, no one who aims to write a history rather than a chronicle can avoid discussing what might have happened; the only question is how explicitly one reveals what one is doing…Historians interpret what they recount, that is, they make judgments about it. There is no way that the historian can judge that one action or policy was wise or foolish without saying, or implying, that it was better or worse than some other that might have been employed, which is, after all, "counterfactual history."No doubt my method has been influenced by the great historian whom I have been studying for three decades, who engages in this practice very frequently and more openly than most. Let two examples suffice. In his explanation of the great length of the Greek's siege of Troy, Thucydides says: "But if they had taken with them an abundant supply of food, and…had carried the war *continuously, they would easily have prevailed in battle and taken the city*" [1.11.2]. Again in the conclusion to this summation and judgment of Pericles' career, he says: "Such abundant grounds had Pericles at that time for his own forecast that Athens might quite easily have triumphed in this war over the Peloponnesians alone" [2.65.13]. I believe that there are important advantages to such explicitness: it puts the reader on notice that that statement in question is a judgment, an interpretation, rather than a fact, and it helps avoid the excessive power of the fait accompli, making clear that what really occurred was not the inevitable outcome of superhuman forces but the result of decisions by human beings and suggesting that both the decisions and their outcomes could well have been different.[12]

To be sure, in ancient Israelite historiography and in ancient Israelite constructions of the past reflected and shaped in other literary genres such as prophetic literature, divine causality had an important role, but so did individual or collective choice and human agency. In fact, the entire didactic value of these texts was predicated on the assumption of individual and collective choice and agency, a matter duly stressed also in books such as Deuteronomy. It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate the interaction between these two types of causalities in the discourse of at least the literati of ancient Israel/Yehud, or even in a particular book or episode, no matter how central.[13] It suffices to notice that the presence of an undisputable sense of human agency in this discourse, even if balanced or informed by other ideological considerations, implies that these ancient literati almost certainly involved themselves in counterfactual thinking.

12 D. Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), x–xi.

13 Cf. my "Observations on Josiah's Account in Chronicles and Implications for Reconstructing the Worldview of the Chronicler," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman* (eds. Y. Amit, E. Ben Zvi, I. Finkelstein and O. Lipschits; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 89–106.

Some Considerations of Ancient Yehudite Memory and the Concept of Exile

The methodological considerations mentioned above carry important potential for reconstructing the intellectual discourse of ancient Israel/Yehud and should be consistently pursued in the future.[14] As studies advance in this area, it would be advisable, however, to bring the term "memory" into the discussion. Although somewhat oversimplifying matters, one may say that history, at least as usually understood in contemporary discourse, tends to separate the past from the present and focus on the unique, unrepeatable character of the past or the past event,[15] whereas memory tends to construe a past that is presently alive in the community, to fuse past and present, and to shape the past in terms of a basic metanarrative/myth that is constantly reused to interpret and provide significance to a recounted past, which accordingly becomes, to some extent, both cyclical and recyclable.[16] It is memory that plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of group identity by shaping common myths, teleology, and basic structuring, which are interpretative tools to assign meaning to events, past, present and future. It is memory rather than history that counts most in the world of at least the literati of ancient Yehud. Thus, if one focuses on reconstructing their views, it is more appropriate to address the question of counterfactual memory at least as much as that of counterfactual history.

Given the theme of this volume, I will focus on a certain concept that served to generate much cyclical structure in the basic memory of the past held by the Yehudite literati, and provide significance to memories of past, present and future circumstances. The memory shaped through the main discourse of the Yehudite literati associated the return from Babylon with the Exodus from Egypt, and thus Babylonian exile with the stay in Egypt, while the latter also served as the main archetype for constructing exile in general. Within a discourse in which the opposite of exile is secure life in the land and full access to

14 To the best of my knowledge, they have not yet impacted historical studies on the intellectual world of Yehud. The only book on counterfactual history in HB studies follows, in the main, a different approach.

15 This holds true even if by necessity every past historically reconstructed is a present past, that is, a past that exists only in the present and within a present discourse. See my "Reconstructing the Intellectual Discourse of Ancient Yehud," forthcoming in *SR* 28 (2009) and bibliography there.

16 Cf. G. M. Spiegel, "Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time," *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 149–62.

the fulfilled potential of its agrarian gifts, a point usually made in prophetic literature, the Exodus/Conquest motif embodies a main story of overcoming exile and establishing the ground for non-exilic conditions. This being so, the main patriarchal stories are largely transformed into memories of "exile" (i.e., of "exilic conditions"), even when their characters were portrayed as being in the land.[17] Within this logic, monarchic Israel becomes, as it were, pregnant with exile, carries it in its midst, and eventually gives birth to it. If this is true, then postmonarchic Israel, and particularly Yehud, can be imagined as pregnant with overcoming exile, carrying it in its midst and eventually giving birth to it at some point in the far future. But this is not the entire story. The concept of secure life in the land and full access to the fulfilled potential of its agrarian gifts is ideologically associated with that of proper relationship between YHWH and Israel. Thus, exile stands for partial estrangement between the two.[18]

Of course, secure life in the land and full access to the fulfilled potential of its agrarian gifts are ideal, unrealizable conditions and therefore the image of completely overcoming exile becomes intertwined with utopian thinking, while at the same time raising and leaving open the issue of what level of control over the land may be seen as at least a partial undoing of exile and estrangement from YHWH.

Since exile was used to structure periodizations of the past, and the corresponding stories of conclusions and new beginnings, these considerations point to the suitability of this discourse to construe temporal and social boundaries and at the same time to undermine them.

It is against this background that I plan to approach the counterfactual memory regarding exile that is implied, reflected in and evoked by Jer 40:7–12, and reveal the light it sheds on the discourse of Yehudite literati.

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17 Thus one may say that Abraham (except in Genesis 14) is a kind of archetype of the exilic Israelite in the land. The concept of "exile" in the land existed also in the later Hellenistic period, see the classic M. A. Knibb, "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *HeyJ* 17 (1976): 253–72. Cf. J. R. Linville, "Rethinking the 'Exilic' Book of Kings," *JSOT* 75 (1997): 21–42.

18 The discourse of the period did not allow for a final separation/divorce between YHWH and Israel.

Some Considerations of Jeremiah 40:7–12 and its Interrelated Immediate Cotext

Although Jer 40:7–12 is illuminated and informed by its immediate cotexts in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 40:1–6 and Jer 40:13–41:18),[19] it is common to study it as a textual, literary/ideological unit or subunit.[20] This understanding of Jer 40:7–12 is already attested to in the MT sys-

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19 I wish to stress that this essay discusses the counterfactual memory of the intended and primary readers of these texts in their present compositional form, not of any, by necessity, hypothetical forerunners of these units that have been proposed in research. Although I am convinced that these texts underwent a redactional history, the intended and primary readers of the version I deal with were not asked to approach these texts and construct their memory (factual or counterfactual) on any redactional history, but rather on the basis of the world construed by the texts in their present form.

For a proposed redactional history of these and related texts and significant bibliography see O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 304–47, esp. pp. 325–34, 39–44. See also W. McKane, *Jeremiah. Volume II Commentary on Jeremiah* XXVI–LII (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 1005–1011.

As is well known, the present compositional form of these units is attested in two main versions the MT and LXX. In this study I investigate the voice and role of a counterfactual memory evoked among intended and primary readers by and through rereading MT Jer 40:7–12 in a way informed by its cotexts in that book (i.e., MT Jeremiah), but when relevant, notes concerning the LXX are included. To be sure, a similar study could have focused on the counterfactual memories evoked by and through the rereading of the LXX version. Although some differences between these two studies are bound to come up concerning particular details and in one case on matters of potentially connoted versus explicitly stated (and magnified) portrayals, I doubt that a study similar to this one but focused on the LXX text would reach conclusions substantially different from the present one.

I take for granted in this essay that the basic social group who read and reread the texts discussed here consisted of literati in Persian period Yehud who shared a Jerusalem-centered ideology, but if the precise form of the texts discussed here belongs to the early Hellenistic period, it would not affect the argument in any major way. To date these passages to the monarchic, neo-Babylonian, Hasmonean (/late Hellenistic) or Roman periods is either difficult or impossible.

It may be mentioned at this point that texts of Jeremiah close to the MT (i.e. protomasoretic) are clearly attested in Qumran (see E. Tov, "Jeremiah," in *Qumran Cave 4 X The Prophets* [eds. E. Ulrich et. al.; DJD XV; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 145–70, 171–76, 177–201, 202–5). 4Q Jer[a], which is usually dated to the late third or the early second century, attests to a text close to the MT not only in general, but also in orthography (see E. Tov, "Jeremiah," 150). 4Q Jer[c] is also close to the MT and even its paragraphing is comparable to the latter (even if not identical, see E. Tov, "Jeremiah," 181). 4Q Jer[d] is not only similar in orthography but seems to reflect the MT version of Jer 43:5 (E. Tov, "Jeremiah," 203–4).

20 E.g., R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 703–5; L. Stulman, *Jeremiah* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 323–24; W. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26–52: To Build, To Plant* (ITC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 163–67.

tem of unit delimitation that explicitly separates Jer 40:7–12 from the previous and following subunits in the book by two *setumah* divisions. This traditional delimitation of the subunit reflects an awareness of, and a reading that highlights some thematic and ideological concerns that strongly characterize and set it apart, due to their divergence from commonly attested concepts and images of the exile,[21] as well as from the usual constructions of the situation in Judah following the fall of Jerusalem in biblical literature.[22]

But what makes Jer 40:7–12 so different? To begin with, it portrays a brief, hope-charged age and a polity: Gedaliah's governorship.[23]

21 Cf. R. Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 6.

22 A point stressed, among others, in R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 705.
I would like to stress that I am not advancing a claim that the only possible structure of this section of the book of Jeremiah is one in which Jer 40:7–12 is understood as a separate unit. Prophetic books are texts to be read and reread and as such, they tend to show multiple, complementary reading structures that encouraged and allowed the intended and primary rereaders to develop an understanding of the text in which meanings abstracted from one perceived structure of a text inform those of another structure. Within this system, it is most reasonable to assume that there existed readings of this section of the book of Jeremiah in which Jer 40:7–12 was understood as a prophetic reading within a set of prophetic readings. It can be read as a prophetic reading in its own, but at the same time it is clearly marked as interrelated with its immediate cotexts in the book, as is often the case with many prophetic readings. For the general positions concerning prophetic books that underlie this paragraph, see, for instance, my *Hosea*, (FOTL 21A, part 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) and "The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 276–97.

23 Whether Gedaliah was appointed as governor or to a higher or lower office has been a matter of some debate in recent research. For the proposal that Gedaliahu "was not a governor … but only an officially installed representative of the Jewish 'remnant' before the Babylonian authorities in Judah" see J. Weinberg, "Gedaliah, the Son of Ahikam in Mizpah: His Status and Role, Supporters and Opponents," *ZAW* 119 (2007): 356–68 (360). For the proposal that Gedaliah was crowned as king of Judah see J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 423, 445. The 2d rev. ed. of the work (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) is less assertive on the issue (see p. 483, and cf. p. 445 in the original ed. with p. 510 in the 2d rev. ed.), but has not abandoned the proposal. In any event, Hayes is not alone. See H. Niehr, "Religio-Historical Aspects of the 'Early Post-Exilic' Period," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (eds. B. Becking, M. Korpel, C. A. Marjo; Oudtestamentische Studiën 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 228–44 (230). I tend to think that it is more likely that Judah did not remain as a vassal kingdom, albeit with a king who was not a member of the previous ruling dynasty, and that it became a province after 586 with Gedaliah as its governor. See O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 88–92 and bibliography. One should mention, however, that although the Babylonian policy towards Judah was very similar to that against Ammon after its rebellion was quashed, it is unclear whether the Babylonians ended the monarchy in

Moreover, the intended and primary rereaders of vv. 11–12 could have hardly missed that the language of these verses is evocative of an image of a return of the exiles from all lands. At first the text refers to Judahites who found refuge among Judah's eastern neighbors, but it immediately adds a reference to Judahites אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת, "in all the (other) lands" (v. 11a), which allows and perhaps encourages the intended and primary rereaders to imagine a larger scenario. The point is clearly developed as the prophetic reading moves into a climactic bipartite conclusion in v. 12: וַיָּשֻׁבוּ כָל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִכָּל־הַמְּקֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ־יְהוּדָ "*all* the *Judahites* returned from *all* the places to which they had been scattered and came to the *land of Judah* (v. 12).[24] This wording most likely was meant to evoke, and actually did evoke among the primary and intended rereaders of this unit, an image of overcoming exile, of return. Such a reading is supported by the back reference to the returnees in Jer 43:5: אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבוּ מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה "who have returned from all the nations to which they have scattered to live in the land of Judah." One may also note that the wording of Jer 40:12 not only communicated the matter by itself, but was reminiscent of divine promises such as those in Jer 16:15; 23:3, 8; 29:14, and a reversal of the situation portrayed in Jer 24:9.[25]

Ammon at that time. See O. Lipschits, "Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province," *BASOR* 335 (2004): 37–52, and notice the comment on p. 44.

In any event, it is not the historical Gedaliah/Gedaliah's community that stands at the center of the investigation here, but their ideological representation in Jer 40:7–12.

24 J. G. Janzen has proposed that the Hebrew *Vorlage* attested by the LXX had ארץ in the singular, and that the text read בכל הארץ. See J. G. Janzen, *Studies*, 208. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 271, follows Janzen, but see W. McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 1003. Pietersma and Saunders translate the relevant section of the verse in the LXX as follows: "and all the Judeans, those in Moab, who were in Moab, and those among the sons of Ammon and those in Idumea and those in any other land, heard that the king of Babylon …and they came to Godolias." See A. Pietersma and M. Saunders, *Ieremias*, (NETS; Oxford University Press, 2007), http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/34-ieremias-nets.pdf.

25 Jer 43:5 plays on the reminiscent power of this language for rhetorical purposes, namely to emphasize the failure of such elevated hopes. On this issue, see below.

A word about the LXX is in order at this point. As is well known, the text in Jer LXX 47 (40):12 lacks a counterpart for וַיָּשֻׁבוּ כָל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִכָּל־הַמְּקֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם and for the related expression in MT Jer 43:5 (LXX Jer 50:5). The phrase מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם "from all the nations to which they have scattered" in Jer 43:5 is not attested in LXX Jer 50 (43):5. The latter may be translated as "…all those remaining from Iouda who had returned to settle in the land." See A. Pietersma and M. Saunders, *Ieremias*. The relevant phrase seems to be reflected in 4QJer[d]; see E. Tov, "Jeremiah," (DJD XV), 203–4. For another potential difference see previous note. Whether the LXX here reflects a Hebrew *Vorlage* earlier than the one represented by MT (as probably is the

An elevated image of the return (at least by connotation) and of the returning community of Gedaliah is also conveyed, though in a different way, by the second part of the conclusion of the prophetic reading in v 12.[26] As Stulman, among others, maintains, the text here portrayed a state of prosperity that carried an idyllic quality,[27] and was reminiscent of the promise in Jer 31:11–12 (cf. Jer 32:5).[28] The implied and the

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case) or not, the latter is still worth studying. Moreover, the MT may well reflect an ancient reading of an earlier text in which the return referred to in vv. 11–12 was understood, at least at a connotative level, as more extensive and partially in mythical terms. Janzen correctly noted that "the sentence [missing in the LXX] refers to the dispersion proper" elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah (with the exception of 43:5, see below). But then he stated, "the occurrences in 40:12 and 43:5 are out of place, for here the reference is only to those who temporarily took refuge in the hills when danger struck, and who filtered back when the fighting was over" (see J. G. Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], 53; cf. W. McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 1003). There is no doubt that the sentence would be out of place for readers who understood it in the "historical" way Janzen, McKane or W. L. Holladay (*Jeremiah 2* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 271, 295–96) do. But the fact that the sentence appears in the MT, whether "originally" or "redactionally added" indicates that at least some ancient literati did not share his reading of the text. Surely, Janzen's reading is far more likely to reflect the historical reality of Gedaliah's community than any expansive, mythic-laced reading, but this text was in the main not about historical reality—however one understands "historical reality" today—but about stirring images in the readers, about causing them to virtually relive and partake in the past community they construe through their readings, and as they do so, to involve themselves in a didactic and ideologically-oriented thinking. Of course, even if one were to maintain that the MT drastically innovated here and departed from any previous denoted or connoted possible understanding of the verse in ancient Israel, it would still be worthy of study for the present purposes; after all, it had its own intended and primary rereaders.

Significantly, it is always the book *as reread*, i.e., as understood by a community that was part and parcel of the community's authoritative written tradition, immaterial of whether such a reading was considered "proper" or "mistaken" by any other community. On these matters cf. Bill Shuter, "Tradition as Rereading," in *Second Thoughts: A Focus on Rereading* (ed. D. Galef; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 74–112. With Shutter, I have reservations on the usual dichotomy of *traditum* (i.e. the content of the tradition) and *traditio* (i.e. the process of transmission), because transmission not only makes whatever is transmitted "tradition" but also contributes much to the shaping of its meaning (through processes involving contingent "reading competence," see below) for a particular group. Cf. and partially contrast with the now classic, M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), passim.

26 The text here is essentially shared by the LXX and the MT. Both project an elevated image.

27 See L. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 323.

28 Cf. Isa 43:5–6; see K. R. Baltzer, "Das Ende des Staates Juda und die Messias-Frage," in *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferunge* (eds. R. Rendtorff and K. Koch; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 33–43 (33–37); idem, *Deutero-Isaiah*

primary readers most likely understood such a state as connoting divine blessing.[29]

The text surely acknowledges exile (see the conclusion of v. 7[30] and Jer 40:1–6, which informs the present text; see below), but balances this acknowledgment with an elevated description of Gedaliah's community. The community is a שְׁאֵרִית, that is, a remnant, but one that carries much hope, and one which, from the perspective of a rereading community of the prophetic literature that is well aware of signposts for readings informing each other, not only called to mind the שְׁאֵרִית in Jer 31:7, but also and particularly the one in Jer 23:3, given the use of the phrases מִכָּל־הַמְּקֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם "from all the places where they had been scattered there" in 40:12 and מִכֹּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר־הִדַּחְתִּי אֹתָם שָׁם "from of all the lands where I have driven them there in 23:3, and the fact that the exchange between כָּל־הַמְּקֹמוֹת "from all the places" and כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת "from all the lands" existed already in Jer 40:11–12. In other words, Gedaliah's community is skillfully portrayed as co-existing and to a large extent a result of exile, but at the same time as bearing the potential to overcome exile, at least a form of it, for the "remnant" of Judah, in Judah.[31]

An additional, positive feature of the construction of Gedaliah's community and his governorship is worth mentioning at this point. It appears as an aside in the following subunit, but it could hardly have been ignored when the rereaders of Jeremiah imagined and virtually revisited Gedaliah's community through their rereadings of the books. According to Jer 41:5, eighty people from Samaria, Shechem and Shilo came to the House of the Lord bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of YHWH. To be sure, they came with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, but come they did. This image carried both an acknowledgment of the calamity that preceded the establishment of Gedaliah's polity, but also construed Gedaliah's governorship as one in which people from the main centers

(Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 160. For a very different position of the characterization of the period see W. McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 1002–3.

29 See R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, vol. 1 (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 242; idem, *Israel in Exile*, 6.

30 וּמִדַּלַּת הָאָרֶץ מֵאֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָגְלוּ בָּבֶלָה ... "those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon."

31 One may wonder also whether the exile of the elite that supported the rebellion against Babylon was not construed as particularly conducive to the creation of a remnant/polity with the potential to be pious, and blessed by YHWH. Cf. the sentiment in Zeph 3:11–13. See below.

of northern Israel/Samaria came to YHWH's house[32] in Judah, such as in the days of Josiah, or, according to Chronicles, Hezekiah and Asa.[33] This construction of Gedaliah's polity skillfully balanced a sense of mourning with an idyllic scenario of an at least embryonic cultic reunification during his governorship.

It is worth noting that when a similar acknowledgment of the supremacy of Jerusalem appears in Zech 7:1–7—the delegation is from Bethel in this text—there is not only an allusion to the community of Gedaliah, but also a reference to a continuous remembering of this community and its fall (v. 5).[34] This being the case, one may conclude that the literati responsible for Zech 7:5, who likely also lived in the Persian period, and their intended readers, had a highly elevated image of Gedaliah and his community, to the point that their loss was construed as worth of leading to a remembrance similar to that of the loss of the Temple and Jerusalem.[35]

It is also worth mentioning that Jer 40:10–12 communicates an understanding of "(the land of) Judah" that obviously includes Benjamin (see the references to Mizpah as its new center), and thus of "Benjaminites" who are construed as Judahites. Given the tensions between Benjamin and Judah/Jerusalem in at least the early Persian period, such an integrative world represents a fulfillment, retrojected into the past, of

32 The reference to בית יהוה in this context was most likely understood by the Jerusalem-centered literati responsible for the book(s) of Jeremiah as pointing to the place of the Jerusalemite temple. In any event, it is difficult to imagine that such a reading of the text would not have arisen within the process of continuous rereading of the book. For a different position see J. Weinberg, "Gedaliah."

33 Also cf. 2 Chr 11:13–17. For the position of Chronicles concerning Northern Israel see H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* (2d rev. ed.; BEATAJ 9; Frankfurt a. M.: P. Lang, 1997); E. Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2006).

34 I assume here that the reference to fasting and lamentation in the seventh month was understood as pointing to and constituted acts of remembering the assassination of Gedaliah (see Jer 41:1–3; 2 Kgs 25:25). This is a widely held position, and for good reason. For a recent treatment, see M. A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, vol. 2 (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 639–41. On these acts of remembrance (and the association with Gedaliah's murder) see also Y. Hoffman, "The Fasts in the Book of Zechariah and the Fashioning of National Remembrance," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (eds. O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 169–218. Cf. R. Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 1, 242.

35 See the reference to the fast and mourning in the fifth month (Zech 7:3, 5) and cf. 2 Kgs 25:8–9//Jer 52:12–13.

the desires of Persian period, Jerusalem-centered literati.[36] Again, there is something idyllic about such a construction of the community of Gedaliah.

As indicated above, the meaning of Jer 40:7–12 is strongly informed by its links to the preceding unit, namely Jer 40:1–6. The repetition of the motif of the appointment of Gedaliah by the Babylonian king (vv. 5, 7, 11) using consistently similar language, and not incidentally always followed in the narrative by a report about a positive Judahite response, bound the two subunits together. The reference to Mizpah (vv. 6, 10, 12) contributed to this sense of textual coherence. Moreover, the presence of a continuous series of *wyqtol* sentences across the boundary between the two units provided an unmistakable textually inscribed marker linking the two. All these features indicated to the intended and primary rereaders that they should see read, or at least include among their rereading, the text of vv. 7–12 as the continuation of vv. 1–6.

What issues emerged as consequence of this reading? First, the *wyqtol* sequence served now to alert the readers to continuity at the levels of plot and ideology. Thus the text moves seamlessly from the report about Jeremiah's choice to join the community and settling in it (v. 6),[37] to a report about a similar action taken by military leaders (vv. 7–8) and then by the general population. Thus, the text moves from prophetic to military leadership to general population, just in an order consistent with a hierarchy of legitimization.

To be sure, Jeremiah is not explicitly mentioned in vv. 7–12, or in Jer 40:13–41:18, for that matter. Although the lack of explicit reference to the prophet links the latter two units (see below), the rhetorical purposes of the lacking references are different. The text in vv. 7–12 is about Gedaliah's, not Jeremiah's, community. The prophet's choice legitimizes the polity and its leader (v. 6), just as YHWH indirectly does so by means of prosperity and ingathering (vv. 11–12). Direct, human,

36 The point is strengthened by the association of the leader of the polity with Mizpah, that is, even the center in Mizpah/Benjamin acknowledges and internalizes this world.

37 Of course, the book of Jeremiah contains another report about the release of Jeremiah by Nebuzaradan; see Jer 39:11–14. It is worth noting that, despite the differences between the account, and the fact that they asked their readers to visit different virtual sites of memory, both of them are consistent with the position that it was Jeremiah's choice to remain with Gedaliah (see Jer 39:11–12). The presence of different accounts/constructions of the same event is not peculiar to the book of Jeremiah, but a relatively common feature that appears also in ancient Israelite historiographical works (e.g. Judges and Samuel). Jeremiah's choice is consistent to a large extent with the portrayal of his "political" ideas in the book. "Gedaliah's modest, moderate regime seems to give concrete political embodiment to Jeremiah's expectations" (W. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 166).

political agency, which is at the center of the narrative here, however, belongs to Gedaliah and so he takes all the initiatives. At the same time, although neither Jeremiah nor YHWH are directly mentioned in vv. 7–12, their positive presence is implied and construed as consistent with the actions taken by Gedaliah. In fact, one may describe Gedaliah in vv. 7–12 as a Jeremianic character insofar as his positions reflect closely those advocated by Jeremiah's attitude. Moreover, these positions are construed as a representation of YHWH's word and thus, Gedaliah—like Jeremiah—is characterized as a godly personage associated and aligned with the deity.[38] In sum, the absence of explicit references to YHWH and Jeremiah in vv. 7–12 concerns a rhetorical foregrounding of the central political figure and its positive characterization and a corresponding backgrounding of the legitimizing characters in these promising, dreamy times.

Since the prophet, the military/social leadership, and the people all rally around Gedaliah, and so seems to do YHWH, and since Gedaliah is not only portrayed as the mediator between the king of Babylon and the people (v. 10), but also explicitly and emphatically characterized as the person whom the king of Babylon appointed and whose authority as governor derives from that of the Babylonian king, an ideological/rhetorical need to present these two central aspects of Gedaliah's characterization as not merely compatible, but supporting each other, arises. The matter demanded particular explanation since the empowering powers (the king of Babylon and his main representative, Nebuzaradan) were also directly associated in the minds of the rereaders with the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple.[39]

The text in Jer 40 addresses the issue in two ways. First, there is the emphatic and consistent repetition of the sequence of a reference to Gedaliah's appointment followed by a report about a positive Judahite response. In fact, this sequence is one of the features that bind Jer 40:1–6 and Jer 40:7–12. Second, and more importantly, the text found a way to portray the foreign king who provided the legitimacy and authorization for the governorship of Gedaliah in a positive way. As in the case of the destruction of Jerusalem/Temple or the implementation of the exile, the king is represented by Nebuzaradan.[40] Like the virtuous foreign kings of Chronicles,[41] Nebuzaradan is explicitly characterized as a

38 Cf. D. R. Jones, *Jeremiah* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 469–70. Jones maintains that Gedaliah appears as an *alter ego* of Jeremiah.

39 2 Kgs 25:8–9//Jer 52:12–13.

40 2 Kgs 25:8–9 and Jer 52:12–13; 2 Kgs 25:11–12; Jer 39:9–10.

41 See E. Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, 270–88; previously published as "When a Foreign Monarch Speaks," in *The Chronicler as Author:*

pious foreigner leader, who not only acknowledge YHWH's power and justice, but also thinks and talks like a pious Israelite/Judahite/Yehudite. In fact, according to Jer 40:2–3, Nebuzaradan thought and talked as a godly disciple of the prophet Jeremiah would have thought and talked.[42]

Thus within the discourse represented in the text, Jeremiah provides legitimacy to Gedaliah directly by choosing to settle in his community; but also indirectly, because Nebuzaradan—and therefore the king of Babylon as well—is imagined as a Jeremianic figure. Not accidentally, their Jeremianic character is communicated to the literati in Yehud through an instance of YHWH's word to Jeremiah (see 40:1), which in turn is available to them in a prophetic book associated with Jeremiah (i.e. the book of Jeremiah). Thus, the text textures a chain of links binding together in multiple ways the characters of YHWH, Jeremiah, Nebuzaradan, and Nebuchadnezzar…and all of them, in an empowering, authorizing way to Gedaliah.[43] All of this is consistent with an ideology in which the ultimate source of authority and legitimacy cannot be Jeremiah, Gedaliah, Nebuzaradan, or Nebuchadnezzar,

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Studies in Text and Texture (eds. M. P. Graham and S. L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 263; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 209–28.

42 "The author wants to persuade us that Nebuzaradan was a pupil of Jeremiah (40:2–3)." See Klaas A. D. Smelik, "The Function of Jeremiah 50 and 51 in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (ed. M. Kessler; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 87–98 (citation from p. 97). Compare also Jer 40:2 with Jer 32:23.

The question of how likely (or unlikely) it is that the historical Nebuzaradan would have uttered such a speech has bearing only on the historical reconstruction of the fall of Jerusalem, but not to any study of the world that the intended and primary rereaders of the book of Jeremiah, many years later after the events, were asked to and likely imagined through their reading and rereading of the book. From their perspective, it would have been unthinkable to imagine an unreliable narrator or a deceitful implied author in a text presented as YHWH's word, accepted as such by them, and included in the book of Jeremiah.

43 It is worth stressing that the characterization of Nebuzaradan (and indirectly, Nebuchadnezzar) in Jer 40:2–3, 12 is different from the elevated figure of Nebuchadnezzar in other sections of the book of Jeremiah (e.g. Jer 25:1–14 and ch. 27), even if Nebuchadnezzar is explicitly referred to as YHWH's servant (Jer 25:9; 27:6). In none of these texts is Nebuchadnezzar portrayed as a Jeremianic figure. On these elevated (but not Jeremianic) characterizations of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Jeremiah, see J. Hill, "'Your Exile Will Be Long': The Book of Jeremiah and the Unended Exile," in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (ed. M. Kessler; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 149–61 (152–56); and esp. J. Hill, *Friend or Foe? The Figure of Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah MT* (BibInt Series; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 103–10, 130–39, 198–99, 203–5.

but a deity whose “word” is available to the literati through the book of Jeremiah and similar books.[44]

Before moving forward, it is necessary to deal with the fact that even according to Jer 40:1, Nebuzaradan is associated with the exile of כָּל־גָּלוּת יְרוּשָׁלַםִ וִיהוּדָה הַמֻּגְלִים בָּבֶלָה “all the exiles of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.” One may wonder, however, whether the text was not read from a perspective informed by the ideological theme of a poor, humble (and pious) remnant, which assumes the necessity of the exile/removal of sinful elites from Judah/Jerusalem and sees it as an essential requirement for life under YHWH’s blessing in the land (cf. Zeph 3:11–13). Converging evidence supporting the fact that the implied and primary rereaders were asked to approach the text here from this particular ideological perspective includes: (a) the characterization of Gedaliah’s community as including דַּלַּת הָאָרֶץ “the poorest of the land” (v 7)[45]; (b) the reference to the taking over of cities, which assumes that members of Gedaliah’s community did not have power over them before; (c) the basic fact that these readers knew that had the king remained in the land, Gedaliah could not have been appointed governor; and (d) that the community failed because people such as Ishmael son of Nethaniah, a Davide,[46] were not exiled to Babylon. In addition, the language of “remnant” (v. 11) carries in itself, by logical necessity, the notion of exile or removal of the majority. To place hope in the character of a remnant that follows YHWH, is to view exile as a necessary step. To overcome exile in the land goes, in this discourse, hand in hand with maintaining exile outside the land. This tension was imagined to be as resolvable only when a second utopia (the first concerns the pious remnant) would become reality, in the far future.

Of course, the literati who read and reread Jer 40:7–12 were well aware that Gedaliah’s community collapsed. Thus it is not surprising that Jer 40:7–12 is deeply interwoven not only with the immediately

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44 Given other constructions of the image of the Babylonian king among the literati of Yehud, it is not surprising that the book of Jeremiah includes also Jer 50–52, and in fact concludes with them in the MT version.

45 Cf. Jer 39:10.

46 מִזֶּרַע הַמְּלוּכָה “from the royal family” (Jer 41:1). The characterization of Ishmael as a Davide is important in the text; “the exploits of Ishmael-ben-Nethaniah-ben-Elishama (Jer. xl 13–xli 18) complete the picture of the House of David’s inimical opposition to Yahweh’s purposes” (J. Applegate, “The Fall of Zedekiah: Redactional Debate in the Book of Jeremiah, Part 1,” *VT* 48 (1998): 137–60 (142). For the suggestion that the story of Ishamael and Gedaliah overturns as it were the story of David and Saul, see G. E. Yates, “Ishmael’s Assassination of Gedaliah: Echoes of the Saul-David Story in Jeremiah 40:7–41:1–18,” *WTJ* 67 (2005): 103–13.

preceding unit (Jer 40:1–6), but also the following one (Jer 40:13–41:18). Explicit text markers of cohesion such as the transition in v. 12, the shared repertoire of main characters, the lack of any explicit reference to Jeremiah, and a sense of continuing plot all contributed to explicitly mark Jer 40:7–12 as deeply associated with 40:13–41:18, and communicated to the intended and primary rereaderships of Jer 40:7–12 that they should read the text in a way informed by the ensuing narrative in the book of Jeremiah.

As the ancient rereaders of Jer 40:7–12 imagined and revisited in their minds Gedaliah's polity, as they paid close attention to and rejoiced in the high hopes for stability and prosperity, they could not avoid the thought that all these great expectations were *all* dashed by the tragic collapse of Gedaliah's community. The elevated portrayal of the community in the text and the readers' imagination serves to increase the emotive impact of its fall. It is not by chance that neither Jeremiah nor YHWH are explicitly referred to in Jer 40:13–41:18. The world portrayed in 40:13–41:18 is one of shattering of dreams, of lost potential, of blood and violence. Their absence contributes a sense of divine occultation or hiddenness, of unmitigated chaos, and enhances further the emotive impact of the narrative.[47]

Back to Counterfactual Memory

Memories of past elevated hopes that not only were never fulfilled, but that led to a dystopian situation following a tragic event are the most common material for counterfactual questions. What if the tragic event might have been averted? What if the elevated hopes had been fulfilled, even if only partially? Albertz clearly engages in counterfactual thinking when he writes:

Certainly we do not know what would have become of this experiment [Gedaliah's polity] had it had time to develop longer. Possibly the social and religious history of Israel would have taken a different course… Only as a result of it [the murder of Gedaliah] did the history of Israel as a state break off completely after more than 400 years. The darkness of the exilic period fell over people and land.[48]

Albertz, however, is not alone. In fact, he is simply responding to the implied questions raised by the text. There is much reason to assume that the literati who read, continuously reread, and pondered

47 Cf. L. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 326–29.

48 R. Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 1, 242.

about the lessons to be learned from Jer 40:7–12 would have also responded to the implied invitation of the text to engage in such counterfactual thinking. In fact, it hardly seems possible that these literati virtually visited their constructed community of Gedaliah and identified with him—as the implied author asked them to do—and never engaged with "what if" questions.

Given the issues involved and the authority of the prophetic books among the ancient literati, and the considerations advanced above about counterfactual thinking, any reading of Jer 40:1–12 by these literati that was strongly informed by counterfactual motifs must have interacted and involved central aspects of their intellectual, ideological discourse. This is so, because as pointed out in section one, there exists a relationship between counterfactual historical thinking and the construction of the present by those involved in imagining alternative scenarios in the past. Moreover, one has to take into account that simulated past trajectories play a necessary, cognitive role and have important instructional bearings, and that this type of thinking cannot but raise and discuss issues of historical causality.

In fact, readings strongly informed by a counterfactual approach most likely carried important ideological implications within the discourse of the literati of Yehud. For instance, they could not have missed that had Gedaliah's community survived, it would have looked very similar to the literati's Persian period society. "Serve the king of Babylon/Persia and it will go well with you" is certainly a text that talked about their own situation. The same holds for the idea that a governor may be appointed by a foreign, imperial king, or that a foreign, imperial king may actually be associated with YHWH (see the construction of Cyrus; if a foreign king may order the rebuilding of Temple, he may certainly appoint governors).

In other words, neo-Babylonian Yehud would have been similar to a Persian Yehud. Of course, as historians we know today that such was the historical case, but from the perspective of literati who internalized a concept of Exile and Return and the related image of the empty land (see Jer 43:5–7), the only way to entertain such thoughts was through a playful, though ideologically significant, counterfactual memory.

Of course, as the literati did so, given that Gedaliah's community was imagined in idyllic terms, they could not but retroject into that past community that looked like theirs some of the expectations of their own Jerusalem-centered, Yehudite discourse–among them, a Judah that includes Benjamin, and whose cultic center is in YHWH's house in Jerusalem, a world in which people from the province of Samaria would accept the centrality of Jerusalem.

Other aspects of their ideological discourse come to light through the examination of this counterfactual, alternate memory. Had Gedaliah's community remained in the land and fulfilled its hope, to some extent they would have overcome exile, that is, they would have lived safely in the land, enjoyed YHWH's blessing and the related bounty of their land. Yet, other Judahites would have remained in Babylon. Again, the counterfactual world was construed as somewhat similar to the circumstances of the literati's times. People have returned to the land, the temple has been rebuilt, and anxiety over a potential, future, communal exile from it has vanished. Although they did not necessarily see themselves as living under YHWH's blessing or fully overcoming exile, some postexilic traits existed in Yehud and co-existed with exile in Babylon.

But what if, in at least some of their rereading, these literati took a more radical path and followed the cue of textually inscribed references such as אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת, "in all the (other) lands" (v. 11) or the following verse, וַיָּשֻׁבוּ כָל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִכָּל־הַמְּקֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ־יְהוּדָה "*all* the *Judahites* returned from *all* the places to which they had been scattered and came to the *land of Judah*" (v. 12)? What if Gedaliah's success would have involved the creation of a community much larger than the literati's and a real "return," even if some people remained in exile? After all, some were exiled with Jehoiachin, but Israel did not go into exile at the time. In addition, of course, unlike Zedekiah's polity, Gedaliah's would been pious, blessed by YHWH, and fundamentally stable, because it aligned itself with YHWH's will, both internally and in terms of foreign, vassal relations. Within this scenario, Israel/Judah would have never gone into "exile," and would have prospered under YHWH and the king to whom YHWH had given power. But if Israel/Judah never went into exile, then it could have never returned, and as a consequence, the central ideological metanarrative of exile and return would have no place in Israel's discourse. The authoritative repertoire of books and readings[49] held by the community would have had then a substantially different profile. Since the books and readings are YHWH's word, then YHWH's word had to be considered at least potentially contingent. Had it been a different history, then a different set of YHWH's words would have existed.[50]

But could a different history have occurred? As mentioned above, counterfactual historical thought brings up by necessity questions of

49 As mentioned above, it is the book *as reread* by a community that is part and parcel of the core of its sacred textual tradition.

50 Is Albertz thinking, at least in part, of this scenario, when he engages in his own counterhistorical thinking?

causality. Could have it worked for Gedaliah's group? The literati, as almost any imaginable reader of the text, could not have failed to note the presence of a strong, explicit trend in Jer 40:13–41:18 that emphasized human agency. Gedaliah is consistently portrayed as someone who made a tragic mistake and paid with his life and the life of his polity for it. Exile and catastrophe came to Israel/Judah, according to this line of thought, because of a leader's inability to believe ill of a sinner (Ishmael), recognize the true speech of a pious person (Johanan), and act accordingly (Jer 40:15–16).[51]

But was this the entire story? Did the ancient literati in Yehud understand history as only a matter of human agency? It is extremely unlikely that the literati understood historical causality only in human terms. Not only would this have been a unique instance in ancient historiography, but it would have been at odds with the literati's very understanding of the world and of their deity. Both the so-called DtrH and Chronicles balanced human agency with divine determination,[52] as in all prophetic books. Gedaliah had freedom to act and fail, but YHWH knew already that Israel will go into exile.[53]

As mentioned above, counterfactual thinking allows people to attempt to reconstruct the view of historical agents. Did the literati imagine Gedaliah as thinking that he alone decided on the course of action he has taken, or that he thought that no matter which decision he would take, it would fit somehow into some divinely established path, unbeknownst to him or any of his contemporaries? The second option is far more likely, and by itself carries also implications about their own understanding of themselves and its manifestation through their identification with Gedaliah, as they imagined him to be.

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51 The basic issue involved in the mistake is of the type often discussed in wisdom literature.

52 See my "Are There Any Bridges Out There? How Wide Was the Conceptual Gap Between the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles?" in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (eds. G. N. Knoppers and K. Ristau; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 59–86; and "Observations on Josiah's Account in Chronicles and Implications for Reconstructing the Worldview of the Chronicler," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman* (eds. Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 89–106.

53 This may be why Chronicles erased references to memories of Gedaliah in its own account. After all, the land had to "make up for its Sabbaths" (2 Chr 36:20–21) and could not have done so had Gedaliah's community been successful. It is worth noting the erasure, although it refers to Jeremiah in the relevant text, advocates a double, human/divine agency, and maintains that the exile that eventually resulted did not change a thing in what matters most, since the rules governing YHWH's relationship with Israel, and YHWH's instructions remained unchanged. Of course, these issues go beyond the limits of this essay and require a separate discussion.

In sum, the literati's exploration of an important counterfactual memory following the cue of Jer 40:1–12 led them to discuss, among many others, matters of human agency and historical/divine determinism in relation to exile, to explore the concept of exile in terms of contingency and the implications of such considerations, to reflect on the very boundaries of the concept of exile, remnant, inside and outside the land and their interrelations, and to examine aspects of their own society through the mirror of one that failed to exist in their memories, though existed to a large extent in history. The analysis of counterfactual memories in ancient Israel provides a powerful tool that can help us to reconstruct aspects of the intellectual discourse in Yehud, including its concept of exile.[54]

54 This is only one illustration of the potential that studies on counterfactual memory in ancient Israel have for the reconstruction of the intellectual history in particular and for that of the history of ancient Israel in general. I hope more studies of this type will be developed in the coming years.