Chronicling the Chronicler

The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography

Edited by

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To Our Children

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and

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*Remembering the Catastrophe of
Monarchic Judah / (Ideological) Israel
and Exile through Reading Chronicles in Late Yehud*

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This essay and its companion, "Chronicles and Its Reshaping of Memories of Monarchic Period Prophets: Some Observations,"[1] address the potential contribution of Chronicles to a process of balancing the relative mindshare of different memories and sets of memories about monarchic events and figures in the late-Persian (or early-Hellenistic) Yehudite community in which its primary readership was located. As revealed by its title, this paper deals with remembering through reading and rereading. This remembering becomes memorable through the acts of mental imagination involved in re-creating and vicariously living the imagined past that was evoked by the text being read. Since reading evokes and activates memory within the community, within a text-centered community such as (at least) the literati in Yehud, texts to be read and reread affected mindshare. The more the community read (and reread) about a certain event, character, situation, the stronger the tendency to remember them. Conversely, the less something in the (construed) past of the community was mentioned in its authoritative repertoire, the less (we assume) its memory was evoked and the less mindshare it held in the community.

This paper is devoted in particular to what reading Chronicles, in the discursive context of the community within which and for which it emerged, may have contributed to its social memory about the exile, its significance, and the significance of closely associated clusters of social memories around the catastrophe at the end of the monarchic period, of which the exile was the outcome. The approach taken here has, at least, the potential to shed additional light on these social memories and the roles they played within the intellectual discourse that characterized the community, and more light on what the reading of Chronicles may have "done" to the community.[2]

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1. Published in another collection of works emerging from this seminar—namely, M. J. Boda and L. M. Wray Beal (eds.), *Prophets and Prophecy in Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 167–88.

2. It is common in our field that new light on texts and ancient intellectual discourses is shed, not through the discovery of "new evidence," but by asking new questions and looking at the "old evidence" from new perspectives.

Contemporary historical studies on how Chronicles dealt with the concept of the exile have tended to focus on relatively few common issues.[3] An excellent illustration is provided by Rainer Albertz, who summarized the matter as follows:

> Except for the statement that the exiles became the servants or slaves of Nebuchadnezzar and his sons, the Chronicler does not find any concrete historical information concerning the period of the exile worth reporting. Instead, he embeds his meager account of the exilic period in a complex of theological interpretations. First, the exile is the fulfillment of a prophecy spoken by Jeremiah; second, it served as a Sabbath of rest for the land; third it had to last seventy years.[4]

The three central issues mentioned in the quotation arise from a very brief note in 2 Chr 36:20–21. As expected in our field, each one of the three has been the subject of some significant debate. For instance, among the many explicit or implicit research questions that have been raised and addressed in various ways, one may mention: (1) Does the reference to Jeremiah's prophecy point to the beginning or to the end of the exile, or to both?[5] (2) How does one understand the reference to the 70 years? (3) What was the history of this seemingly chronologically odd concept?[6]

This said, there seems to be widespread agreement that Chronicles brings together Lev 26:33/34–35, 43; and Jer 29:10 (see also Jer 25:12) and by doing so creates a new text,[7] and that this new text conveys a sense of (1) the importance of the fulfillment of prophecy in history and particularly of the prophetic words associated with Moses and Jeremiah;[8] (2) the presence of the concept of

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3. With the possible exception of S. Japhet, who emphasizes also "the uninterrupted settlement in the land" (*The Ideology of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* [BEATAJ 9; 2nd ed.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997], esp. pp. 364–86). Her positions are discussed below, when relevant to the issue at stake.

4. R. Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Studies in Biblical Literature 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature) 13.

5. E.g., ibid.; L. C. Jonker, "The Exile as Sabbath Rest: The Chronicler's Interpretation of the Exile," *OTE* 20 (2007) 703–19 (esp. p. 708); idem, "The Chronicler and the Prophets: Who Were His Authoritative Sources?" in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and D. V. Edelman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); S. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1993) 1075–76; and cf. S. Frolov, "The Prophecy of Jeremiah in Esr 1,1," *ZAW* 116 (2004) 595–601.

6. E.g., M. Leuchter, "Jeremiah's 70-Year Prophecy and the *lb qmy /ssk Atbash* Codes," *Bib* 85 (2004) 503–22; J. Jarick, *2 Chronicles* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007) 192–95; H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) 417–18 and bibliography.

7. E.g., M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 482–83 (cf. pp. 488–89); I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004) 222, 314; E. Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2006) 150–51, 156–57.

8. E.g., I. Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in The Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (SSN 46; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005) 148–51.

the exile as the sabbath of the land, which in itself implies a temporal limitation, which in turn is explicitly and saliently communicated by the reference to the 70 years that sets clear temporal limits on the exile; and (3) that all this means, as Sara Japhet puts it: "Exile only creates a necessary hiatus, after which life will return to its regular course; with the conclusion of the 'land's sabbaths' the time will come for its 'redemption'."[9] Of course, this means also that the terrible judgment "has fully passed and no longer stands as a threat to his readers," to state this in the words of H. G. M. Williamson.[10] Needless to say, this Chronistic approach to the exile communicates, as Louis Jonker has maintained, a sense that the Persian-period community that emerges after this exile represents a new, positive beginning.[11]

Finally, even the most cursory survey of contemporary research on the concept of the exile in Chronicles cannot avoid noticing that 2 Chr 36:20–21 portrays an image of an "Empty Land." This is not the place to discuss the motif of the "Empty Land" in the postmonarchic period, its history and significance in the discourse of the late-Persian period, or its importance for the self-understanding of a Jerusalem-centered polity.[12] It suffices for the present purposes to say that (1) Chronicles reflected and communicated this common, postmonarchic motif (i.e., the "Empty Land"); (2) as did any other reference to the motif in the discourse of the primary community of readers, it evoked among them an image of the entire land or at least Judah (not just Jerusalem) as empty; and (3) most clearly was not an invention of Chronicles.[13]

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9. Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles,* 1075. See, among others, Jonker, "The Exile as Sabbath Rest"; S. L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004) 371.

10. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 417.

11. Jonker, "The Exile as Sabbath Rest."

12. The matter has been extensively discussed. For an illustrative bibliography and my own take on the matter, see my "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud," in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin; BZAW 404; Berlin: de Gruyer, 2010) 155–68.

13. *The "empty land" of all Judah*: Japhet, among others, has maintained that Chronicles constructs a world in which only Jerusalem suffers from destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (see Japhet, *Ideology*, 364–68; idem, *1 and 2 Chronicles,* 1074). Whether this is the case or not, it is very unlikely that the primary readers of Chronicles would have read the book as stating that only Jerusalem became an "empty land" for 70 years, because there was no reason to understand the sabbath of the land as meaning only the sabbath of the urban area of Jerusalem. The number 70 and the implied 490 years system contradict this position, as well as the *Sitz im Diskurs* of Chronicles.

Regarding Chronicles' not inventing the "empty land," note, for instance, 2 Kgs 25:21–26; numerous images in prophetic books of complete desolation that in Yehud served to imagine the situation in Judah after the calamity of the Babylonian wars (e.g., Jer 32:43, 33:6, 44:2; cf. Isa 6:11–12; Zeph 1:2–3; see also Lev 26:34–35; Deut 29:21–23, 27 as read in Yehud); references to the land's purging itself (Lev 18:24–28, 20:22,

I do not intend to contest in any substantive way the positions just mentioned.[14] They are widely accepted for good reasons—namely, they are all well grounded in 2 Chr 36:20–21. This very observation, however, serves as the starting point for my own exploration of the exile in Chronicles and the way that Chronicles may have influenced social memory about the exile. All these comments are based on just 2 verses in a historiographical work that spans 1,765 verses.[15]

To be sure, there are explicit references to the exile in a *very small number* of other verses in Chronicles, particularly in the genealogies. 1 Chr 5:6, 25–26 refer to the exile of the Transjordanian tribes. Unlike the exile of Judah, their exile is presented as still not being revoked (see "to this day" in v. 26) and thus their lands as not being populated by "Israel" since the days of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria. Chronicles' portrayal of the demographic situation here stands in sharp contrast to the situation of Cisjordanian northern Israel (see, for instance, 2 Chr 30:1–31:1; 34:6–9).[16] Given the tendency in Chronicles to construe "the land" as populated (only) by "Israel" (and those who associate

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26:33–35); and the implied logic of images such as Y\ʜ\ᴡ\ʜ's divorce or at least expulsion from the marital home of Israel. All of these precede Chronicles. On the significance of a particular aspect of this "empty land" motif, see below.

14. However, I would certainly claim that the mentioned ideological positions are placed in proportion within Chronicles itself, as is usually the case in this book in particular and in the repertoire of the authoritative books of Yehud in general. For instance, within the discourse of the period (and even later periods), exile could be seen as both ending with the rebuilding of the temple (or the "return" and, therefore, as a matter of the past) and ongoing. In Chronicles, exile lasts 70 years and ends with Cyrus, but continues as well. See, for instance, the pragmatic meaning of מי־בכם מכל־עמו יהוה אלהיו עמו ויעל in 2 Chr 36:23 (on the matter, see Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian,* esp. p. 153; Ben Zvi, *History, Literature and Theology*, 202–9). Clearly, neither the authorship nor the intended and primary readerships of Chronicles thought that the return of Judah had been complete by the "70 years" and thus "exile" had been banished from Israel. See also 1 Chr 5:6, 26; notice that the return envisaged in 1 Chr 16:35 can be only in the future of the community of readers.

(The present discussion deals with "exile" in Chronicles; for a recent study from a different methodological perspective on different concepts of "exile" and what "exile" entails in other texts, see M. A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* [VTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011].)

15. D. N. Freedman, A. D. Forbes, and F. I. Andersen, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography* (BibJS 2; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 304.

16. It is worth noting that Chronicles shifts images/memories associated with the exile of (mainly) Cisjordanian Israel to the exile of Transjordanian tribes (cf. 1 Chr 5:26 and 2 Kgs 17:6, 18:11) and thus activates them in an, at least by connotation, more restrictive environment. In other words, it reshapes the target group and land associated with these images/memories in the social memory of the community of readers and, therefore, their relative mindshare.

themselves with "Israel"),[17] this portrayal evokes a sense of boundaries or pe-ripherality. It is not by chance that Transjordanian tribes and space play a sub-stantially less significant role in Chronicles than their counterparts in northern Cisjordanian Israel[18] and, needless to say, incommensurably less than those in Judah.[19] The marginal character of these tribes and their land, along with the rather generic explanation of their exile (1 Chr 5:25) explains why these three verses played only a peripheral role in scholarly reconstructions of the concept of the exile in Chronicles, other than recognizing the rhetorical use of terms from the root מעל (cf. 1 Chr 9:1b; 10:13; 2 Chr 12:2; 26:16; 28:19, 22; 29:6; 30:7; 36:14).

There are two more explicit references to exile in the genealogies. 1 Chr 9:1b contains a *very brief note* that explicitly mentions Judah's exile and ex-plains it in terms of 'their unfaithfulness' (במעלם). Not only is the explanation "generic," but also and perhaps more importantly, the main function of this note is clearly not to dwell on the exile, the reasons and historical processes that led to it (see the space given to it in the book), but to introduce (in an ex-tremely sparse way, to be sure) the main themes of restoration and continuity, which are clearly expressed in a way that fits the genre of these chapters in 1 Chr 9:2–34. The second reference occurs in 1 Chr 5:41. Here Jehozadak is described as the Aaronide who "went into exile when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar." The addition of Jehozadak to the list of "high priests"—he is not mentioned in Kings—and the reference to him as the Aaronide in exile served not so much to dwell on exile or its causes but mainly to construe an ideological narrative and memory of continuity, because within the world of knowledge and the discourse of the community of readers of Chronicles, he was the father of Joshua, the "high priest" at the time of the rebuilding of the temple (see Hag 1:1, 12, 14; 2:2, 4; Zech 6:11). As in the previous case, it is easy to understand why 1 Chr 5:41 has served, at best, a very peripheral role in scholarly reconstructions of the concept of the exile in Chronicles.[20]

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17. See Japhet, *I and II Chronicles,* 46; R. W. Klein, *1 Chronicles* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) 46.

18. It is worth noting that different views about the actual extent of "the land" and particularly the inclusion of Transjordan existed in the authoritative literature of the period. Compare the mentioned tendency in Chronicles with Num 34:1–15; Ezek 47:13–23; and cf. 2 Kgs 14:25. A discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this contribution. For studies on this matter see, for instance, M. Weinfeld, "The Extent of the Promised Land: The Status of Transjordan," in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit* (ed. G. Strecker; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 59–75.

19. On the issue of land/people peripherality in Chronicles, see my previous work in *History, Literature and Theology*, 195–209.

20. 1 Chr 8:6–7 does not seem to refer to exile (that is, exile outside "the land") at all. There is no reason, therefore, to discuss this text here.

In sum, the exile is (unavoidably) acknowledged in 1 Chronicles 1–9, but the book allocates minimal space to references that evoke memories of exiles. Moreover, in two of the cases it does so for the purpose of conveying a sense that the exile was overcome and that continuity prevailed in Israel. In the other two, it refers to peripheral space. In none of these four brief references is there anything remotely similar to the treatment of the exile in 2 Chr 36:20–21 in terms of an explicit and substantive message about the exile. Moreover, the concept of "the sabbath of the land," which with good reason is considered to play a central role in the explanation of the exile and its significance, is not mentioned elsewhere in the historical narrative of Chronicles, except in these 2 verses.

Although there are still a very *few* references (e.g., 1 Chr 16:35, 2 Chr 34:23–28) or typological allusions (2 Chr 29:6–9)[21] to the exile in Chronicles besides the aforementioned instances in the genealogies and 2 Chr 36:20–21, none of them addresses the nature of the exile as these two verses or has the exile as its main focus.[22] Thus and returning to the brief summary of the present understanding of the concept of the exile in Chronicles advanced by Albertz, it is with very good reason that scholars focused their attention and developed their positions on the matter on the basis of two crucial verses—namely, 2 Chr 36:20–21.

But, this being the case, two questions emerge: (1) What may all the other verses that do not refer directly to the exile contribute to the impact of Chronicles on the construction of social memory about the exile? And (2) may the fact that only two verses out of 1,765 speak directly about exile insinuate something significant in itself on these matters, especially given (a) the social setting of the emergence and first readings and rereadings of Chronicles and (b) the fact that reading involved remembering the past evoked in the reading (and bracketing or momentarily forgetting, or at least displacing one's active memory of, what was not being read)?

Needless to say, Chronicles was not the only book the literati of the period read, nor could it have carried its intended message to the community had this been the case. This, of course, raises the need to take into consideration the implications of the *Sitz im Diskurs* of Chronicles on the matters to which this

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21. 2 Chr 29:6–9 directly comments on and construes the reign of Ahaz, both in terms of the king's deeds (note the explicit reference to סגרו דלתות האולם in v. 7 and cf. 2 Chr 28:24; and see the putative setting of the speech as explicitly and saliently expressed in vv. 3–5). Thus it deals with events more than 100 years earlier than the exile. This said, the particular choice of language used to portray the situation is evocative of images of exile that existed in the discourse of the community (cf. Jer 25:9, Neh 8:17, among others).

22. To avoid any misunderstanding, the point I want to make is *not* that Chronicles contains no explicit references to exile but that these are few and brief (i.e., that they do not occupy much "space" in this book) and that none of them develops the matter as 2 Chr 36:20–21 does.

essay is devoted.[23] Chronicles emerged within and was read by its primary readership, whose discourse was to a large extent obsessed with the exile and with its related ideological constructions and memories (including those dealing with the fall of the monarchic polity) and with a future return, redemption, and related visions of utopian futures. The prophetic corpus saliently attests this concentration of social attention—or more precisely, of mindshare—which reaches the point of what may be called (though not in any pejorative meaning) memory obsession.

Outside the prophetic corpus, but still inside the relevant authoritative repertoire, the shadow of the catastrophe and the exile loomed large throughout the Deuteronomistic historical collection, and allusions to it are not only common but at times key interpretive notes for the historical narrative and its didactic/ideological significance.[24] In fact, one can easily discern a teleological trajectory running throughout the Deuteronomistic (and even in the primary) historical collection. The narrative moves toward a widely announced, anticipated, and at times even prefigured catastrophe and exile, even as it also implicitly points to hope and certitude about their reversal following a dystopian period.[25]

There are good reasons for this memory obsession. In a short period, Judah suffered a reduction of 70–75% in its population, and close to 90% in some areas (e.g., Jerusalem environs, eastern strip). This was due to war, famine, associated diseases, deportation, and migration caused by the economic collapse that followed and was engendered by the sociopolitical collapse. Even in Benjamin, who was the least affected of all regions, the population dropped by more than 50%. A catastrophe of this magnitude could not but be remembered and become a site of memory or cipher bearing a weighty significance for generations after the event, particularly among those whose self-identity was grounded on a close identification with the individuals who were afflicted by the disaster and within any polity or community that imagined itself and was understood as standing in continuation with the community that suffered such

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23. Considerations regarding the *Sitz im Diskurs* of Chronicles apply to any historical study of the significance that reading the book had for the literati of the time. In the present contribution, only considerations that have direct bearing on the issues at stake can be discussed.

24. Some of the instances even involve the creation of memory nodes connecting multiple central threads (e.g., the site/s of memory evoked in 2 Kgs 17:7–23; incidentally, this text informed and was, by the time of Chronicles, informed by Chronicles).

25. From the perspective of the readers of Joshua–Kings, who knew Deuteronomy (as was the case with the literati of the Persian period), the historical narrative from Joshua to Kings becomes a detailed and strongly didactic elaboration of the fulfillment of the prophecies of Moses in Deut 30:1 and 31:26–29. This being the case, the subsequent chapter in their history had to deal with the fulfillment of the promises of Deut 30:2–10.

a calamity.[26] In addition, one must assume that ruins were probably seen in the region throughout the Persian period[27] and served to bring home the presence of a past and of its catastrophic fate.

Against this background, Chronicles' relegation of its *main*, explicit messages concerning its concept of the exile to about two verses warrants some consideration. Of course, one may maintain that Chronicles did not expound much on the exile because, by definition, the exile involved living outside the land of Judah, and anything that happened outside the land of Judah was not conceived within the logic of Chronicles as determinative for the fate of Israel and thus not worth narrating.[28] In this position, thus, Israel in the exile was construed as somewhat akin to Israel in what was the Northern Kingdom—that

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26. Cf. H.-J. Stipp, "The Concept of the Empty Land in Jeremiah 37–43," in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin; BZAW 404; Berlin: de Gruyer, 2010) 103–54, esp. pp. 136–50. Stipp compares this shrinkage of population to that caused by the Thirty Years' War (which was far less dramatic). To put it in today's numbers, this would be equivalent to the loss of about 25 million Canadians or more than 230 million Americans. It is worth stressing that the demographic (or economic) recovery was nowhere even close to the population or economy of late-monarchic Judah during the Persian and early-Hellenistic periods, that is, the time in which Chronicles was composed and first read and reread.

On demographic data about these periods, see, among others, O. Lipschits, "Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations," *JHS* 9 (2009) article 20, http://www.jhsonline.org; idem, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005) esp. pp. 258–71; idem, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E." in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 323–76; I. Finkelstein, "Persian Period Jerusalem and Yehud: A Rejoinder," *JHS* 9 (2009) article 24, http://www.jhsonlin.org; idem, "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah," *JSOT* 32 (2008) 501–20; idem, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," *PEQ* 140 (2008) 7–16; H. Geva, "אומדן אוכלוסיית ירושלים בתקופותיה הקדומות: ההצעה המינימליסטית" ("Estimating Jerusalem's Population in Antiquity: A Minimalist View"), *ErIsr* 28 (Teddy Kollek Volume; 2007) 50–65 [Hebrew]; A. Kloner, "Jerusalem's Environs in the Persian Period," in *New Studies on Jerusalem* (ed. A. Faust and E. Baruch; Ramat Gan: Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, 2001) pp. 91–95 (Hebrew); cf. C. E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); A. Faust, "Judah in the Sixth Century B.C.E.: A Rural Perspective," *PEQ* 126 (2003) 37–53. See also the summary of the situation in K. Valkama, "What Do Archaeological Remains Reveal of the Settlements in Judah during the Mid-Sixth Century BCE?" in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin; BZAW 404; Berlin: de Gruyer, 2010) 39–59.

27. Cf. D. Ussishkin, "The Borders and *De Facto* Size of Jerusalem in the Persian Period," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 147–66.

28. Cf. Japhet, *Ideology*, 371.

is, a kind of Israel whose actions are removed from and essentially irrelevant to the main historical narrative of Israel (and the causality governing it).[29] But even if this position is correct (and I think it is), a communicative (implied, but clear) statement that something is not worth writing about in a book meant to instill memory of the past is tantamount to stating that this very something is not worth remembering much, which in itself is a significant observation.[30]

Moreover, and following the logic of the position mentioned above, whereas life in the exile may not be worth remembering much, because it takes place outside "the land," the actions in "the land" that led to the greatest national calamity in "the land"—and whose outcome was the exile, that is, the abandonment of "the land," the place where "history" took place—are not only memorable but very much worth remembering. In fact, an analysis of these grave actions could only serve as one of the best possible didactic examples for the community.[31] The systemic, generative power of this line of thought is indeed widely attested in both the Deuteronomistic historical collection and the prophetic corpus. But the situation is strikingly different in Chronicles. Moreover, the difference cannot be explained in terms of glossing over negative images. Chronicles allocates substantially far less space than Kings not only to the narrative of the destruction but also to its discursive and ideological counterpart within Israel's social memory—namely, the nondestruction of Jerusalem during the reign of Sennacherib. In addition, the difference on the matter between Chronicles, on the one hand, and the Deuteronomistic historical collection and the prophetic books set in the monarchic period, on the other, goes far beyond a few literary units in Chronicles. Unlike the other books, Chronicles does not ask its readers to imagine a community walking for

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29. Of course, Israel in the North was in the periphery of the land, whereas Israel in exile was outside the land altogether, but this difference did not have much bearing on the matter discussed here. See my discussion in my *History, Literature and Theology*, 195–209.

30. There was a general, systemic tendency within Yehud to write, read, and therefore to remember far more about life and events in "the land" than about life and events in the Babylonian or Egyptian Exile. This tendency is attested across literary genres in the repertoire of the community and is certainly not limited to Yehud.

On the matter of "skipping" periods in historiographical works, see K. Stott, "A Comparative Study of the Exilic Gap in Ancient Israelite, Messenian, and Zionist Collective Memory," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (ed. G. N. Knoppers and K. A. Ristau; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 41–58.

31. This is an important point since Chronicles, like much of the authoritative literature in Yehud, was a didactic book. Moreover, Chronicles shows an extensive array of "persuasive techniques" meant to make memorable not only events of the past as construed in the book but also the ideological messages that they embodied and communicated.

generations, as it were, toward a well-deserved but catastrophic judgment.[32] The fall of Jerusalem and the exile do not hang over the narratives or the met-anarrative of Chronicles.

This being so, these questions arise: Why is Chronicles—which after all is a didactic book that emerged within a social discourse strongly informed by these two corpora and sharing much with them[33]—unlike them in this respect? And why does the book fail to make the most of the memories about the central catastrophe of the community for didactic purposes?

A potential answer to these questions is that the historical narrative in Chronicles was not shaped around a progression toward the calamity, or—and above all—as an explanation for that central catastrophe, because, unlike the Deuteronomistic historical narrative, Chronicles rejected the concept of cumulative sin and, therefore, whatever happened to Judah in the times of Zedekiah could not have been presented in Chronicles as the culmination of a long process of cumulative sin. Moreover, since supposedly in Chronicles sinners are punished for their own sins, not for those of others, even the claims about Manasseh's responsibility for the catastrophe, which are advanced by one voice in Kings (2 Kgs 24:3; cf. 2 Kgs 21:11–14, 23:26–27; Jer 15:4) cannot hold. Within this logic, then, Chronicles had no option but to place the blame for the fall of Judah and the exile on Zedekiah or on Zedekiah and his people. In other words, there was simply no room within the ideology of Chronicles for the ubiquitous presence of the exile looming large on the historical narrative of Israel, from any of its multiple (discursive) origins to the fall of Jerusalem.

To be sure, even if for the sake of argument one would accept this explanation, still the lack of references to the exile would have had an impact on the relative mindshare of the exile in a community that was reading and re-reading Chronicles. But this explanation of the relative absence of the exile in Chronicles must be rejected because of the cumulative weight of the following reasons.[34]

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32. Cf. Japhet, *Ideology*, 364–73; but also contrast the position advanced here with Japhet's concluding statement, "[In Chronicles,] foreign armies come and go, but the people's presence in the land continues uninterrupted" (*Ideology*, 373). On this matter, see, for instance, 1 Chr 9:1, 2 Chr 36:20–23, and also 1 Chr 9:2–44 and the discussion advanced here.

33. I discussed matters of sharing elsewhere; see "Reconstructing the Intellectual Discourse of Ancient Yehud," *SR* 39 (2010) 7–23; and "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* (ed. G. N. Knoppers and K. A. Ristau; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 59–86. It is precisely against a background of shared discursive tendencies that differences are particularly significant.

34. Some of these reasons by themselves would have provided sufficient ground to reject this position. The combined weight of all together makes the case even stronger.

First, it assumes an authorship that lacks the ability to create and rhetorically use exceptions and is unable to stand seeming contradictions. Nothing can be so far from the truth in the case of Chronicles—but, significantly, neither is it the case in any prophetic or historical book within the repertoire of late-Persian Yehud.[35]

Second, this explanation fails the test of Chronicles' own explicit explanations of the catastrophe. Most evidently, the reference to the 70 years of Sabbath rest that is so crucial to the explanation of the exile in Chronicles implies both a span of 420, not 11 years (the length of Zedekiah's reign according to 2 Chr 36:11), preceding the catastrophe and a clear notion of cumulative burden or sin.[36] The explanation given in 1 Chr 9:1 for the exile of Judah (and Israel; cf. 9:3)—that is, במעלם—does not need to refer only to the 'unfaithfulness' of those living during the reign of Zedekiah and, given its context in the text, it is unlikely to have been so narrowly understood.

Third, within the world of Chronicles, the prophecy of Huldah (2 Chr 34:23–28) at the time of Josiah announced the divine judgment that would fall on Judah after the death of Josiah. The account of Josiah in Chronicles requires a separate discussion that goes well beyond the scope of the present contribution[37] but, for the present purposes, suffice it to say that (1) the prophecy of Huldah explicitly refers to a full destruction that is about to happen following the death of Josiah, as it actually does in the world of the book, which moves quickly from his death to the fall of Jerusalem; and (2) the text nowhere states that the announcement of judgment can be averted or cancelled, and it clearly implies a notion of cumulative sin. Significantly, the text is about what a pious leader is supposed to do in the face of an unavoidable catastrophe.

Fourth, the notion that one generation may suffer because of the sins of a previous one is explicitly communicated in 2 Chr 29:6–9 and implicitly (and most relevant to the present purposes) communicated by the exile: people who were not even born at the time that monarchic Jerusalem existed experience it and suffer from it.

Fifth, this explanation fails to account for the relatively little narrative space allocated to Zedekiah or to the post-Josianic period for that matter. Had Chronicles wanted to convince its intended and primary readership that the fall of Jerusalem, the exile, and the largest catastrophe in Israelite history were all the

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35. I discussed numerous examples of seeming contradictions and exceptions elsewhere. See my *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*.

36. Compare, for instance, Williamson, *1–2 Chronicles*, 418; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008) 2324–25.

37. I have discussed this account in "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 Naʾaman* (ed. Y. Amit et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 89–106.

results of Zedekiah's sins and those who followed him during his relatively
short rule, one would have expected a substantial recounting of these sins.[38]
Nothing of the sort appears in Chronicles. The sins of Zedekiah receive, if any-
thing, less narrative attention than those of other kings (e.g., Ahaz). In addition,
Chronicles does not draw particular attention (and readers' mindshare) toward
the figure of Zedekiah or turn him into one of the most salient kings of Judah.[39]

38. Similarly, the point cannot merely be that the catastrophe was simply caused
by Zedekiah's revolt against its Babylonian suzerain. To be sure, Chronicles reflects a
point similar to that of, for instance, Ezek 17:15 (see 2 Chr 36:13a), but this was not
construed in the book (or elsewhere in the discourse of Yehud) as the only, main, or
even primary reason/cause for the exile and catastrophe.

39. Compare the narrative about him in Kings and Chronicles. Although, unlike
Chronicles, the former contains a strong voice that blames Manasseh (not Zedekiah)
for the fall of Jerusalem and the exile, it still devotes more narrative space and makes
Zedekiah a more memorable personage than Chronicles. Other considerations further
strengthen the case for the relatively low-key characterization of Zedekiah in Chron-
icles. For instance, the same Manasseh is relatively central but clearly not the most
central character in Chronicles' narrative of the post-Davidic/Solomonic Kingdom of
Judah—for reasons other than those in Kings; the Manasseh of Chronicles serves as a
"site of memory" that embodied and communicated the ideological motif of repentance.
An analysis of the image of Manasseh in Chronicles shows that it was construed at the
crucial time in his life (as per the account in Chronicles) as standing parallel with and
in contradistinction to the combined image of two kings of the late period: namely,
Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. Like the first, he is taken captive to Babylon (and compare the
precise language in 2 Chr 33:11b with that of 2 Chr 36:6), but in contrast to the second,
he humbles himself (compare 2 Chr 33:12b with 2 Chr 36:12b). The general tendency
was to construe major characters as encompassing (in a contrasting or noncontrasting
way) several minor characters rather than vice versa (compare Manasseh and Josiah in
Kings). In other words, the more central the character is, the more s/he tends to attract
features/partial images associated with several other characters (thus acquiring a larger
mindshare among the intended readers). This tendency suggests that Manasseh was
portrayed as a more central character than Zedekiah—that is, someone to whom more
attention is drawn than Zedekiah. This suggestion is supported by the relative length of
the two regnal accounts in Chronicles and by subtle changes in contrastive references;
for instance, whereas Yʜᴡʜ is portrayed as sending messengers calling for repentance
during Zedekiah's reign (2 Chr 36:15), Yʜᴡʜ himself addresses Manasseh (and his
people) and calls them to repent (2 Chr 33:10). The matter is not trivial or just a product
of random chance, because it is consistent with the (contrastive) minor difference in the
language of 2 Chr 33:12b and 36:12b. A comprehensive study of Manasseh in Chron-
icles is beyond the scope of this contribution, but the preceding considerations along
with the comparison between the accounts of Zedekiah in Kings and Chronicles suffice
to make the point that (and perhaps contrary to some narrative expectations—after all,
he is the king at the time of the catastrophe) Chronicles does not focus attention on the
figure of Zedekiah in a way that is commensurate with what would have been required
had the "sins of Zedekiah" been construed as the main (or only) reason for the calamity.
Of course, a study of each (the Zedekiah and the Manasseh of Chronicles) not only de-
serves but requires a separate discussion that goes well beyond the scope of the present
essay. For the Manasseh of Chronicles, see my "Reading Chronicles and Reshaping

Sixth, had Chronicles consistently communicated to these readers a doctrine of proportional, individually assessed, full coherence between sin and punishment, why would Chronicles not only fail to mention in any direct way the individual punishment of King Zedekiah but also draw the community's social memory away from the memorable images shaped by 2 Kgs 25:5–7?

And seventh, not only does Chronicles devote little narrative space to the fall of Jerusalem and its circumstances, but it clearly reduces the focus on its social-memory counterpart, the non-fall of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's days. The tendency to diminish the treatment of both closely related events in the discourse of the period suggests that something more than a narrow focus on the sins of the king and the people during the reign of Zedekiah was at stake.

This being so, especially considering the failure of the aforementioned approach to explain it away, the questions raised above call for an explanation. Against the background of a society whose memory was obsessed with the exile and its related themes and sites of memory, Chronicles emerged and was read and reread as a national historical narrative in which the fall of Jerusalem and subsequent exile were mentioned, of course, but not provided with the salience given elsewhere. Within Chronicles, neither these events nor their ideological or theological underpinning were given the prominence granted in other texts meant to create and shape social memory (e.g., the Deuteronomistic historical collection, the prophetic corpus) or allowed to inform time and again central narrative accounts or large-scale metanarratives. Neither catastrophe nor the exile nor the theological notions associated with them were hammered down to the readership in Chronicles (note, for instance, the lack of reference to the sabbath of the land anywhere in Chronicles, outside the two mentioned verses).

The result from the perspective of the impact of reading and rereading Chronicles on social memory seems clear. By creating a landscape of social memories to be evoked by a community in which the exile, the catastrophe of 586 B.C.E, and associated sites of memory figured far less prominently, Chronicles rebalanced to the best of its possibilities the mindshare allocated to these common topoi. Of course, Chronicles did not ask its intended and primary readership to forget about the fall of monarchic Judah or the exile. It could not have done that, given the social location in which it emerged and the discourse of the period. In fact, Chronicles reminded the readership of the catastrophe not only in its expected location in the narrative (that is, the reign of Zedekiah and its immediate aftermath) but also in places such as 1 Chr 16:35[40] and within

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the Memory of Manasseh," in this volume and bibliography there. For the Zedekiah of Chronicles, see my "Reshaping the Memory of Zedekiah and His Period in Chronicles," to be published in the *Congress Volume: Leipzig 2013*, by Brill, and bibliography there..

40. I discussed this text elsewhere; see my "Who Knew What? The Construction of the Monarchic Past in Chronicles and Implications for the Intellectual Setting of

the genealogies in 1 Chr 5:6, 26,[41] 41; and 9:1 (and by implication, 9:2–34). It even contains an explicit reference to the common early-Second-Temple motif of the rejected, monarchic prophets (2 Chr 36:15–16; cf. Zech 1:4; 7:7, and 12; and the general image of the monarchic prophets that emerged from the prophetic corpus). But Chronicles was about setting these topoi in proportion and subtly decreasing their mindshare. As I mentioned elsewhere, this attitude is typical of Chronicles and is probably necessary for any "national" history that must conform with a set of "facts" about the past that was already agreed upon in the community and fit its general discourse.

But why would Chronicles draw (in relative terms) attention *away* from the calamity of 586 B.C.E. and its surrounding images and concepts? Or in other, more-precise words: which general, systematic, ideological positions within the range of what was potentially acceptable for the community could have generated (or at least been consistent with) the attested Chronistic trend toward a shift on social memory *away* from the catastrophe, including the themes of Sennacherib's campaign and an idyllic restoration?

An array of diverse but related notions seems to answer this question. To begin with, from the perspective of Chronicles there was nothing of essential value for the community that changed because of the catastrophe. Yhwh's teachings certainly did not change, nor did Yhwh's way of governing the world, nor did Israel's obligation to follow Yhwh.[42] The portrayal of Josiah in Chronicles as a person who acted in accordance with Yhwh's will while fully aware of the calamity that would follow his death becomes an archetype for proper behavior. For Chronicles, knowing about the impending or already fulfilled destruction does not and could not change what a person should do— that is, follow Yhwh and follow Yhwh's teachings, which are conceived as

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Chronicles," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007) 349–60.

41. 1 Chr 5:6 and 26 refer to the exile of the Transjordanian tribes. Unlike the exile of Judah, their exile is seen as still not being revoked (see "to this day"). These tribes play a substantially less-significant role in Chronicles than the Cisjordanian northern tribes. The differentiation between the Cisjordanian and Transjordanian northern tribes may reflect debates about the actual extent of "the land" or degrees of regional peripherality within the discourse of the community. See n. 18 above. 1 Chr 8:6–7 does not refer to the exile, not even "exile" in the sense of removal from "the (promised) land." See G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 12; New York: Doubleday, 2003) 482.

42. In this sense, and despite its obvious differences, Chronicles reflects an ideological response to the calamity of 586 B.C.E. that is partially comparable with the Mishnah's response, much later, to the catastrophe that ended the Second Temple period. On the latter, see J. Neusner, *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe: Founding Judaism 70–640* (M-QSHR 2/51; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

the same thing.[43] Neither the catastrophe nor the exile constitutes any kind of watershed in this respect.

The actual temple may come and go and come again. As important as it is in Chronicles, it may be run properly, be polluted, cleansed, closed, destroyed, and rebuilt through the vicissitudes of history, yet Israel remains.[44] Moreover, no matter how many times the proper temple may cease to exist in actual Jerusalem, it is always re-buildable, because the community's knowledge of the temple and worship is always available through Yʜᴡʜ's teachings, in the form of authoritative texts held by the literati of the community. These texts provide them with a mental temple, accessible through reading and imagination, that cannot be polluted, destroyed, or the like. In addition, although the "wordly" temple (as opposed to the temple in the shared imagination of the literati) may certainly be destroyed, closed, or polluted, it will always be cleansed and rebuilt eventually, because of Yʜᴡʜ's will, as demonstrated in the history and prophecy within the world of Chronicles. The calamity of 586 ʙ.ᴄ.ᴇ. and its eventual aftermath thus provide a good didactic example, but certainly do not constitute a crucial watershed. Nothing in any of these issues that really matters was changed because of the catastrophe.

Of course, life according to Yʜᴡʜ's wishes is possible without (access to) the temple, as the authorship and readership of Chronicles know, and as the case of the northern Israelites at the time of Oded (2 Chr 28:8–15) exemplified well.[45] What is necessary for society is a successful teacher/prophet who knows Yʜᴡʜ's teachings and is successful enough to be able to lead the people to follow them in practical ways.

The land itself may be momentarily lost and partially regained. As much as Chronicles teaches that only life in the land is determinative for the history of Israel and worth remembering, and as much as Chronicles consequently shifts, to the best of its ability, the mindshare of the community toward memories of Israel in the land, temporary losses are no watershed and cannot be construed as such. They are part of a long-term system of sabbaths and to a large extent even necessary for purification.

Moreover, the notion of the "Empty Land" works to shape, not only the image that all Israel came back from exile, but also that the land was not available to anyone other than Israel for settlement. The land imagined as "empty of

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43. Compare 1 Kgs 8:25 and the rendering of its meaning in 2 Chr 6:16. The concept is already implied in 1 Kgs 9:6, but see Psalm 119.

44. And, of course, along with it, the divine teachings about how it should behave and what should it remember. Within the world view of Chronicles (and probably of all the discourse of the literati of its original time), these teachings were considered to be what made Israel self-aware, and as such, were not only a key attribute of Israel but also an essential possession for its future and present.

45. I discuss this passage elsewhere; see my *History, Literature and Theology*, 223–28.

Israel" is imagined as remaining "empty"—as though Yhwh had set what we would call a "force field" around it.[46]

The Davidic Dynasty was certainly important to Chronicles, but again not indispensable. Israel could live and follow Yhwh without a Davidic king, because the readership within which and for which Chronicles emerged certainly knew how and needed to imagine. This was possible because there was no need for a second David to institute instructions for the establishment of the proper (i.e., Davidic) temple and its worship. They were already set, and thus Israel could follow them in the absence of a David. The fact that both temples were established by kings other than David makes the point even more memorable. Again, as devastating as the fall of the monarchy was, it was not a crucial watershed as far as what matters most within Chronicles' ideology.

There are additional considerations that contributed to Chronicles' tendency to rebalance the weight of the overwhelming memory of the catastrophe in the community. For instance, a community whose mindshare is partially locked onto the catastrophe and who sees monarchic (or even premonarchic) history as greatly informed by the calamity and, to a large extent, as a long trajectory heading toward it is a community whose image of the Israel of the remembered past must on the whole be negative. Their past Israel must be very sinful, because its actions merited extreme divine punishment; in fact, it "forced" a reluctant Yhwh to finally punish Israel as it fully deserved. This image of past Israel is present in the discourse of the community and finds clear expression in both the Deuteronomistic historical collection and the prophetic corpus. But this is a problematic image. Recounting Israel's sins may be appropriate in confessions of sin, prayers, and the like (e.g., Psalm 106), which serve rhetorical roles. But a social memory that focuses for the most part on the inherently and irremediably sinful character of Israel and the extreme catastrophe that is the unavoidable, just outcome of this sin is not the best image with which to develop hope for the postmonarchic community. Neither does it help develop Israel's sense that it can follow Yhwh's teachings, even if imperfectly, or its ability to avoid disasters in the future. Although in times of crisis or calamity, this characterization is necessary to maintain a sense of agency for the community within its own discourse, it is not the best construction for maintaining hope for the future. And hope is necessary for the community and widely attested as a systemic need in the discourse of Yehud, as demonstrated by the production and reception of prophetic literature.

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46. It is worth mentioning that many areas in Judah were not resettled but remained in ruins during the Neo-Babylonian period. This said, the development of the concept of the "Empty Land" should not be understood primarily as dependent on historicity in the narrow sense. Note that it involved forgetting that the majority of the population in Yehud consisted of descendants of the people who never left the land. The issue, however, is beyond the scope of this work, and I address it elsewhere. See my "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud."

Some texts in the repertoire of the Yehudite community advanced a solution to the problem: Israel will be changed by Yhwh in the future (see Deut 30:6; Jer 24:7, 31:31–34, 32:38–41; Ezek 11:19–20, 36:25–28; Hos 2:21), so it will not be able to sin. But Chronicles—partially because as historiography it creates sites of memory in the past rather than the future, and partially because it promotes a "down-to-earth" utopia—addresses the issue differently, by rebalancing the remembered past. Thus, for instance, Chronicles adds numerous monarchic-period prophetic voices that were heard in their own putative times and remembered.[47] Thus, past Israel sinned, of course, but from time to time. In addition, Chronicles implicitly constructs an Israel that, when it is free from sinful leadership, tends to accept Yhwh and his ways[48]—that is, an Israel that tends by default, as it were, to follow Yhwh.

Summing up, Chronicles influenced the social mindshare about the catastrophe and exile within the community of readers. Chronicles did not attempt to erase the memory of the exile or catastrophe of 586 B.C.E. In fact, it recalled this memory and contributed to reshaping its meaning (e.g., the concept of the sabbath of the land), but it tried to put it into proportion and diminish the exile's mindshare within the community. This trend can be explained as emerging out of (or at least as being consistent with) the ideological agenda of Chronicles.[49] Within this agenda, the issue is not only or merely that nothing that essentially or categorically (not contingently) matters changed after the catastrophe or the exile. The issue is also, relatedly, that attention is turned toward—not away from—a sense of essential (though not contingent) continuity with the past. Furthermore, social memory is nudged to serve this goal better. Within this ideology, this sense of continuity is conceived as being directly related to the continuity throughout the calamity of Yhwh's teachings and what is required to follow them. It is related to Yhwh's ways of governing the world that characterizes Chronicles' world—pre- and post-catastrophe; before, in the middle of, and after the exile.

Of course, the continuity of Yhwh's teachings was predicated on the teachings of foundational written texts and appropriate readings of them as implied

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47. I expanded on this matter in "Chronicles and Its Reshaping."

48. See my article "A House of Treasures: The Account of Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25—Observations and Implications," *SJOT* 22 (2008) 63–85.

49. It also reflects the fact that some time has passed since the catastrophe itself. As Chronicles was written within and for a community that lived far more than a century after the events, it easily passes this test. At the same time, it is worth stressing that Chronicles was probably not the first text within the community to reflect and engage in this type of discourse about the catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile. Moreover, there is no need to go as far as the end of the Persian period (or early Hellenistic), the most likely date of Chronicles, to imagine a community in Yehud and even in Jerusalem with the same or a similar viewpoint on the matter. The question of how much temporal distance was necessary in this and similar cases cannot be answered in any categorical way.

and communicated by Chronicles and its authoritative characters, including its implied author. Likewise, the possibility of learning about Yʜwʜ's ways in dealing with the world and about what is required to follow Yʜwʜ in the present and future of the community are presented as available for learning through the study of Chronicles, within its appropriate *Sitz im Diskurs* in late-Persian Yehud (or early-Hellenistic Judah).

Taking into consideration the facts that (1) Chronicles was essential and significant to the community precisely because it was essential to a larger shared, communal discourse; and that (2) the foundational and connective[50] issues led Chronicles to draw less attention to the catastrophe and the exile—these facts indicate that it is unlikely that Chronicles emerged as the only voice in the discourse of the period to influence the social memory toward rebalancing the weight of the exile and catastrophe. Despite all the differences between the Pentateuch and Chronicles, the latter as a whole may have fulfilled a comparable function,[51] but this is an issue for another essay. Moreover, the general outlook reflected in Chronicles' tendency to draw less attention to supposed watersheds and more attention to a sense of continuity based on following Yʜwʜ, no matter what happens, and in the underlying attitude that nothing really new can be learned from even the largest catastrophe that befell Israel is consistent with the general outlook of Qoheleth (cf. Qoh 12:13), despite the obvious differences in literary genres. The presence of similarities in the underlying outlook of these two works is less surprising once one takes into account that both emerged (likely) within decades of each other and in a comparable setting—that is, a very small group of Jerusalem-centered literati. Further research on the respective *Sitz im Diskurs* of these two works and on the intellectual discourse of late Persian or early Hellenistic Judah is warranted.[52]

A final consideration: multiple voices informing and balancing each other were characteristic of the general discourse of Yehud, the related repertoire of authoritative books, and the books themselves. Chronicles was a prominent example of this feature. This observation is particularly relevant to the

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50. That is, core issues or positions that are strongly connected to a significant number of other matters or positions in the discourse of the community.

51. And compare Sirach's outlook on this matter.

52. The issues to be discussed are not constrained to the presence of similar or dissimilar underlying concepts (see my "When Yʜwʜ Tests People: General Considerations and Particular Observations regarding the Books of Chronicles and Job," in *Far from Minimal: Celebrating the Work and Influence of Philip R. Davies* [ed. D. Burns and J. W. Rogerson; LHBOTS; London: T. & T. Clark, 2012] 11–20) but also reveal the ways in which a readership well aware of Qoheleth may have read Chronicles and vice versa. For instance, to some extent and granted a substantial element of reductionism and exaggeration, it might be claimed that this chapter presents a partial "Qoheleth-light/like" reading of Chronicles, but what would have been a partial "Chronicles-light/like" reading of Qoheleth?

present discussion as well. Reading and rereading Chronicles led to a shift in social memory in particular directions. But reading and rereading Chronicles, not only in a way informed by other texts, but even by itself set this shift in proportion.

Thus, for instance, the exile is over after the "seventy years" but not over.[53] The relative mindshare of the catastrophe decreased as the literati of the time read and reread Chronicles, but the same book still reminded them of the catastrophe, its reasons, meaning, and nature (see above). Israel was not always sinful, but at times it certainly was, as Chronicles itself reminded its readers. The fall of the monarchy may not be a "big deal" because Israel knows how to establish and run a proper temple and because Yhwh can charge a foreign king to build a Davidic temple, but somehow it is still a "big deal," as demonstrated by the numerous memories about the roles of kings and their importance in Judah that the text evokes.[54] No reconstruction of the impact of Chronicles on social memory about the exile and the circumstances that led to it can ignore the fact that, as much as Chronicles conveyed to the best of possibilities in the discourse of the time, a sense of balance regarding the exile and the catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem and the monarchic polity, its communication was not only a *balancing* message but also a *balanced* message.[55]

53. For example, when the readers of Chronicles imagined the Yhwh who caused the catastrophe, they were asked to imagine a deity who had compassion on the people and on the divine dwelling place, the temple in Jerusalem (see 2 Chr 36:15; חמל על־עמו ועל־מעונו). The readers knew that the temple was rebuilt, but they were also aware that Yehud was still depopulated. And, of course, Transjordanian exile remained to "this day." The image of an exile that was overcome but was not overcome, both at the same time, played important roles in many if not most of the discourses that evolved during the Second Temple period, from the Persian to the Roman era.

54. Obviously, the entire matter of Chronicles' message about the Davidic line has some bearing on this matter as well. Personally, I maintain that Chronicles communicated to its readership a sense that a Davidide is not necessary for Israel (only Torah is) and reminded them of the sharp decline in the status of the Davidides in the post-catastrophe period. None of this, however, means that Chronicles necessarily conveyed (1) a categorical opposition to hopes for a Davidide (in fact, it may have reflected or communicated some [muted] hope for a future Davidide in the genealogy); or (2) a sense that the promise to David had to be, was, and would be fulfilled—all three tenses are correct in Chronicles—*only and under any circumstances* in terms of the community (compare the exile that was overcome and not overcome at the same time). These matters, however, are well beyond the scope of this essay and deserve a separate discussion. See M. Boda's contribution to this volume, "Gazing through the Cloud of Incense: Davidic Dynasty and Temple Community in the Chronicler's Perspective."

55. See my *History, Literature and Theology*.