TEMPLES AND TEMPLELESS TIMES[1]

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Studies of Old Testament history, religion, society, and literature regard what is generally referred to as the 'Exile' as a watershed of great importance in the development of ancient Israelite thought. It is taken to be a period of rupture in which creative adaptation took place. As such, it serves as the qualifier for a period of ancient Israelite history begun with the destruction of Jerusalem 587 and concluded with the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 BC. The biblical account in actual fact concludes the history of the ancient Israelite monarchy with destruction, defeat, and exile (2 Kgs. 25 cf. Jer. 52).[2] In the biblical portrayal, an initial, punitive Babylonian incursion resulting in the exile of the population except for the very poorest members of society (2 Kgs. 24:14, 20) was followed by a second attack, which culminated in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and again the exile of the population (2 Kgs. 25:11–12, 21; Jer. 52:16, 27). A reconstruction of what the exile (considered to be one of the seminal events in the history of ancient Israel) actually entailed on the basis of the biblical record yields very little, either of an objective nature or of concrete information, because the actual biblical historiographical account does not resume until the time of temple restoration associated with the prophetic figures Haggai and Zechariah in Ezra 1–6.[3] On the basis of sources about deportation and resettlement in the ancient and modern worlds, Daniel Smith-Christopher presents a reasonable reconstruction of the events and its consequences for the establishment of communal identity based on an analysis of imperial records as well as comparable data from situations of forced deportation in the modern world.[4] Nevertheless, the use of exile as nomenclature in Old Testament circles tends to refer to an era rather than an experience.

The terminology for the period receives its name from the group of Judahites[5] or perhaps better, Jerusalemites, forcibly deported to Babylon from the southern kingdom of Judah before and after its defeat. The 'exiles' or *Golah* (as they come to be known) represented the religious, social, and political leaders of the former kingdom of Judah. From cuneiform tablets that speak of 'cities of the Jews' it is possible to surmise that the Babylonians settled the deportees in enclaves along the tributaries of the Euphrates.[6] It is this strategy that may have contributed to the

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[1] A preliminary version of this article was presented to the Stockholm School of Theology by the kind invitation of Åke Viberg and I appreciate the stimulating comments and questions from the lecturers and students.

[2] The historiographical accounct of 2 Chronicles is not considered in this context as it ends with Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years rest and the important role ascribed to Cyrus.

[3] See S. Japhet, 'Periodization: Between History and Ideology: The Neo-Babylonian Period in Biblical Historiography', in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, (Winona Lake, 2003), pp. 75–89, for a comparison of the historiographical sources for the period and the lack of interest in a detailed account. A detailed discussion of the ideology and lack of evidence can be found in J. Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1–28.

[4] D. L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, 1989).

[5] Terminology for the population of ancient Israel in the different periodizations established in critical approaches to Old Testament studies is quite varied in the literature. I use the term Judahite with particular reference to the population of the former kingdom of Judah and understand it as a designation for this people until the establishment of the province of Yehud within the Persian Empire.

[6] See the preliminary findings in E. Joannés and A. Lemaire, 'Trois Tablettes cunéiformes à onomastique ouestsémitique (collection Sh. Moussaieff) (Pls. 1–11)', *Transeuphratène* 17 (1996), pp. 17–34, and L. E. Pearce, 'New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia', in O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Ju-*

phenomenon referred to as the exile in the wider sense of a great period of creativity, because as a recognized identity, living among compatriots, deported Judahites founded strategies to enable the remembrance of their deity, their heritage, and their traditions.

The phenomenon of exile was a martial tactic in the ancient world. In addition to removing the possibility of unrest in certain areas, it entailed an ideological motivation. Societal identity was defined along national and geographical lines, that is, by proximity. You were a Judahite because you lived in Judah, your king was a Davidic king, and your god was Yahweh. Yahweh was understood as a national God, abiding among the borders of ancient Israel and being available to the people there. Exile meant being outside Yahweh's jurisdiction—being in an unclean land, far away, uncertain of identity. At the same time, deportation and dislocation allowed the expansion of ancient Israelite borders, literally and ideologically, with regards to a dispersion of the population that would continue indefinitely as well as in terms of the understanding of the individual and the community (how can we show that we are still from Judah even though living in another country?) and of the deity (is Yahweh available to those of us away from a homeland on foreign soil?). Relocation resulted in reassessment and reconfiguration and hence the importance ascribed to the exile. When the focus on the period following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 is on the exile, interpretations tend to favor the view of rupture, creative adaptation, and change.

Although details about actual living conditions and social life during the period itself are relatively scanty in the biblical record, the prophetic figure Jeremiah is said to have written to the deportees in Babylon to encourage them to resume normal living conditions,

> These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon… [4]Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. [7] But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Yahweh on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. [8] For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, [9] for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says Yahweh. [10] For thus says Yahweh: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. [11] For surely I know the plans I have for you, says Yahweh, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jer. 29:1, 4–11)

In a relatively short letter there is a three-fold use of the divine messenger formula 'Thus says Yahweh' and one occurrence of the concluding messenger formula 'says Yahweh' along with the ascription of authorship to Jeremiah the prophet. The prophetic letter emphasizes authentication and authorization. Yahweh has decreed through the deity's prophet that the exiles are to build their lives in Babylon until divine intervention returns them to Jerusalem. The message includes only positive pronouncements about building, planting, marrying, and extending the family. According to the biblical view a sojourn in Babylonia will be as fruitful and evocative of the deity's oversight as in the homeland.

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deans in the Persian Period (Winona Lake, 2006), pp. 399–411. Partly on the basis of this evidence, Bob Becking has argued recently that the impression of hardship experienced by the exiles in Babylonia may be overstated, see his, 'Does Exile Equal Suffering? A Fresh Look at Psalm 137', in B. Becking and D. Human (eds.), *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa OTWSA/ OTSSA, Pretoria August 2007* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 183–202.

However, the views expressed in the book of Jeremiah are not only for the benefit of those deported to Babylonia and this is, of course, one of the reasons that the book is thought to have a complicated redactional history. The population that remained in Judah becomes the focus of a few tantalizing pastiches in the biographical account of Jeremiah in chs. 37–44. The details, though scanty, suggest a population regrouping after disaster with imperial assistance and divine oversight.[7] In spite of indications of Jeremiah acting in a capacity to embolden and support the population remaining in Judah in the aftermath of the fall of the city, the book contains a series of prophecies that exhibit the inevitability and necessity of the destruction of the various social, political, and religious structures of the kingdom of Judah.[8] A central concern in this respect dealt with worship practices and, indeed, Jerusalem temple ideology. The temple is presented in the prophecies of Jeremiah as akin to an idol—in that it was an establishment in which people put their trust. Instead of living in accordance with Yahwistic principles, the population of Judah relied on the temple of Yahweh for security and blessing,

> Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. [9] Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, [10] and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"-- only to go on doing all these abominations? [11] Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says Yahweh. [12] Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. [13] And now, because you have done all these things, says Yahweh, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, [14] therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. [15] And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim. (Jer. 7:8–15)

In Jeremiah's prophecies the loss of the temple was thought of as a correction. It could also be considered a generative event that would enable the community to come to a better understanding of Yahweh's purposes in the world and for a Yahwistic society.

A focus on the temple and worship is a dominant theme of literature commonly associated with the exilic period. Similarly, it is one of the key concepts found in literature associated with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after the destruction, as in the prophetic collections of Haggai, Zechariah 1–8, and Trito-Isaiah. With their focus on the temple (and religious practices more generally) the prophecies of Jeremiah present 'templeless' as at least one other conceptual way of regarding the period known more widely and more commonly as the 'Exile'. Being without the temple provides an alternative to the emptiness and barrenness implied by a perspective focused on the exile and suggests creative space for renewal. Although the 'exile' has been understood to be the period and the experience that offered new life to the community, religion, and leadership of the former kingdom of Judah, the biblical record also maintains an interest in templeless as a feature of the disaster accompanying the downfall of Jerusalem in the early sixth century BCE. It is these two prongs—templeless and exile that define the experience of Judahites in the sixth century BCE.

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[7]   O. Lipschits, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Policy in "Hattu Land" and the Fate of the Kingdom of Judah', *Ugaritic Forschung* 30 (1998), pp. 476–82, 'The History of the Benjamin Region under Babylonian Rule', *Tel Aviv* 26 (1999), pp. 159–61, and more fully in his, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, 2005). There are details in the records of the Mesopotamian empires and other regional factors that would make regeneration under the Neo-Babylonians likely, see Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 48–70.

[8]   L. Stuhlman, *Order and Chaos: Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry* (Sheffield, 1998), shows the progressive and thorough destruction wrought on the symbolic world and social order of the kingdom of Judah in chapters 1–25 of the book of Jeremiah. J. G. McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1993), argues a similar point with a view towards the possibility of restoration.

Templeless as Terminology

A recent number of scholars have drawn increasing awareness to the fact that there was not an absolute destruction of the southern kingdom of Judah after the Babylonian campaigns in the early sixth century BCE. Robert Carroll began questioning the biblical portrait of the events that coincided with the fall of Jerusalem early on.[9] He pointed to hints in the biblical narrative in Kings, but also more importantly in Ezekiel that suggested at least one biblical writer was aware of a greater population in the homeland than the conclusion to the book of Kings led one to believe, such as,

> In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, someone who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has fallen."… [23] The word of Yahweh came to me: [24] Mortal, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, "Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess." (Ezek. 33:21, 23–24)

However, it was not until Hans Barstad's *Myth of the Empty Land* that an outline for a new direction in this study took place.[10] He pointed out that archaeological and imperial sources supported a more favorable view towards the reconstruction possible in the homeland following the destruction of Jerusalem.[11] The first comprehensive assessment of the material evidence was compiled by Oded Lipschits who argued originally in a series of articles, but later in a volume, that communal life shifted north of Jerusalem to the territory of Benjamin, with its regional capital of Mizpah.[12] *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* established evidence compatible with this view and argued for a change of Babylonian policy in the Levantine region that would facilitate, even call for, greater stability and society in the former kingdom of Judah than allowed for by the biblical account.[13] Instead of readdressing those arguments here the focus turns to the concept of templeless.

Terminology employed with the awareness of the importance of the loss of the temple was suggested as an alternative to 'exile' and the Neo-Babylonian period. Why templeless? In part because the use of the term 'exile' does not capture the experiences of all those who lived through and after the fall of Jerusalem. The destruction wrought by the Babylonians resulted in a dispersion of the population. The biblical texts relate that a portion of the population fled as refugees to neighboring regions and to Egypt. Part of the population was exiled to Babylonia, and indeed this may be a significant portion. It is thought to represent the inhabitants in the capital city of Jerusalem, including the king and royal family, nobles, soldiers, artisans, and priests from the temple: the religious, political, and social leadership of the country. Recent studies have also

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[9]   R. P. Carroll, 'The Myth of the Empty Land', in D. Jobling and D. Pippin (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* in *Semeia* 59 (1992), pp. 79–83, but see his later articulation, 'Exile! What Exile? Deportation and Discourses of Diaspora', in L. Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology* (Sheffield, 1998), pp. 62–79. The biblical presentation of the homeland was already the source of scrutiny for C. C. Torrey at the cusp of the twentieth century. See, for example, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah* (Giessen, 1896).

[10]   H. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the 'Exilic' Period* (Oslo, 1996).

[11]   D. S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Atlanta, 1999), presents an alternative reconstruction of imperial policy and concludes that imperial policies would not have been favourable to renewal in the land of Judah/ Benjamin following 587.

[12]   Lipschits, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Policy', 'The History of the Benjamin Region', and *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*.

[13]   Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 24–71.

emphasized that a fairly sizable population remained in Judah that seems to have included community leaders as well as scribes and priests.

There were at least three groups of Judahites: the dispersed for whatever reason (refugees and exiles) and the landed—those who had remained behind. The term templeless speaks of the loss common to all of them. Moreover, it includes a wider sense of systemic collapse, but also and more pointedly including the fall of the temple. Of course, the fall of the temple did not just include the collapse of the city, the sanctuary, and the destruction or capture of the temple vessels. It sparked a series of serious questions about Yahweh—the god of ancient Israel. Where was the deity? Was Yahweh not strong enough to defeat the Babylonians and their gods? Where was the security and blessing promised by the deity for his nation of Judah? What is the role of human beings in the light of these events?

Templeless captures a sense of the crisis evoked by the disaster and includes a wider perspective than that of just the exiles in Babylonia. The title Neo-Babylonian has been offered as an alternative and is preferred by many historians. However, defining the experience of Judah by the wider forces of empires shifts the focus away from how formative this period was for some members of ancient Judah. Also, it cuts across the time that the biblical texts present as the period—the destruction of the temple to its rebuilding accompanied by the efforts of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. It is worth noting that the timeframe of desolation suggested by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah was linked ideologically to divine judgement and the renewal of divine initiatives of restoration, thus fulfilling the 70 years prophecy of Jeremiah, rather than to what the empire was doing. The use of templeless, therefore, posits an alternative time frame more in keeping with the biblical historiographical record than that generally accepted in conjunction with the terminology of exile or the Neo-Babylonian period. Templeless as a periodization stands for the time between the fall of temple in 587 and the reconstruction of the temple around the time of Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, which according to Ezra 6:15 is 515.[14] The concept of templeless offers a perspective on other important developments of the period, too—the importance ascribed to worship, for example, rather than just to the experience of dislocation. Without the temple in Jerusalem Judahites spent a great deal of time contemplating their god, themselves, and the intersection of the divine and their history. How consistent would this have been in comparison to the experience of the loss of a temple in other ancient cultures?

The Temple in the ancient World and ancient Israel
An entry into thinking about this question in more detail is to consider, first, the meaning and significance of the temple in the ancient world. Temples were originally constructed as homes for the deities in whom people believed. In fact, there is no special word for temple in Hebrew. In Hebrew we use the term *beth* 'house' and call the temple the '*byt elohim*' 'the house of God' or the '*byt YHWH*' 'the house of Yahweh'. In addition, we employ the term *hkl*—temple or palace, but *hkl* is more properly understood as the palace of the king. When used in reference to the deity, it represents the divine court—the deity's palace. The terminology employed reflects an understanding based on human institutions—the deity's house and palace were an earthly representation of the cosmic or heavenly home of the deity.

The temple was the physical location where the divine realm met the human realm. There a deity could appear in a divine theophany to meet the community. Moreover, the deity's community could bring gifts to sustain and please their god. Human beings, then, provided for the physical needs of their gods—food in the form of sacrifices and water or wine as oblations. In return

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[14]   I am aware that the date of the actual reconstruction of the temple has been challenged recently by D. V. Edelman, *The Origins of the "Second Temple": Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (London, 2005), but even if the date for the construction of the Second Temple falls at a later time, the fact remains that the biblical portrait is interested in dividing its historical presentation at the point of the two temples (the first and the second temples). See P. R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (Leiden, 2001), for an important study on the ideological impetus behind the reconstruction as well as its dating.

the deity was expected to care for and provide for human needs. The intermediaries between the people and the gods were the priests and the king.

The deity was not confined to the building. Instead the building was a symbolic microcosm of the deity's world. Ancient Near Eastern temples were constructed with representations that would suggest the cosmos. Temples were sources of tremendous power in the ancient world. The stability of the social order was dependent on the temple. Also, they served as the center of economic life and as a seat of learning—where priests and scribes were trained, manuscripts written and copied, and where copies of important texts, secular and sacred, were stored.

As recounted in the biblical record the First Temple in ancient Israel would share much of the ideology found of other temples in the ancient world. The biblical writers confirmed its significance by its association with an important hero and monarch, King David (whether fictional or not) and with an important symbol of divine power and presence, the Ark of the Covenant (also whether fictional or not). Moreover, in the Old Testament, with the exception of two references to Shiloh, Jerusalem is the only earthly sanctuary to be described as Yahweh's dwelling place. It was an important location, made even more so by the biblical account of the Josianic reforms that centralized worship in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem temple would naturally have had its own symbolism. Some of the symbolism of Solomon's temple as recorded in the Old Testament suggests that the building was understood not just a divine residence, but also as a divine garden on earth. The symbolism of furnishings in the temple carried meaning as well, in that they were designed to stress divine power over the created sphere and to establish the temple as a source of blessing for the land and the people of ancient Israel. The building gave visual expression to the belief in Yahweh's dominion over the world and over natural forces. Moreover, the temple was the supernatural source of power that provided for the welfare of the community, their herds, and their crops. From the temple divine blessing and life flowed to the land of ancient Israel.

It is difficult to convey a sense of what the temple represented in the ancient world, particularly as there are few equivalents in the modern one.[15] The Jerusalem sanctuary was understood as *the* location where the heavenly and the earthly realms intersected. More than that, it was the place of Yahweh's throne—where the deity abided among a chosen people, from whence divine presence and protection mediated, and in which a community celebrated and honored its God in great pilgrimage festivals.

A Temple in post-collape Benjamin?
The renewal of society on Judahite territory after 587 on more than a subsistence level has been associated with the resurgence of Yahwistic religious practices from at least the time of Enno Janssen who followed his *Doktorvater* Martin Noth in positing a great deal of literary activity to this population during the period of the exile.[16] Consistent with practices in the ancient Near East, it was possible that sporadic and spontaneous worship or mourning rituals took place at the site of the ruined temple in Jerusalem.[17] In the autobiographical account of Adad-Guppi, mother of the last king of Babylon and a priestess of the Moon God, Sin, she recounts ongoing service in the destroyed sanctuary.[18] Similarly, the Jewish military colony at Elephantine recalls three years

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[15]   It has been suggested that the nearest contemporary equivalent would be the internet because it allows populations to be connected and provides access to advice and counsel.

[16]   E. Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Enstehung des Judentums* (Göttingen, 1956), pp. 101–104.

[17]   On different grounds, but also argued by O. Lipschits, 'Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple 586–539 BC', *Transeuphratène* 22 (2001), pp. 129–42.

[18]   T. Longman, 'The Adad-Guppi Autobiography', in W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, I, Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 477–478.

of lamentation following the destruction of the temple there.[19] Proto-Zechariah supplies some evidence for mourning rituals taking place in Judah in the aftermath of destruction in an oracle that suggests the continuation of fasting during the seventy years prior to the rebuilding of the temple (Zech. 7:5).[20] In addition, the scene in Jeremiah where a group of eighty men bear grain offerings and incense during the reign of Gedaliah to 'the house of Yahweh' further reinforces the impression given by Zechariah as to the existence of mourning rituals at the site of the Jerusalem temple during the period after the destruction of Jerusalem.[21] The biblical portrait suggests that at the very least some type of ritual observance resumed at the site of the Jerusalem temple, but it is not likely that a fully operative temple cult was restored during the time or that animal sacrifices were offered therein due to the fact that the temple was devastated and despoiled by the Babylonians.[22]

It is possible, nevertheless, that a sanctuary was established in the former kingdom of Judah, but more likely in the Benjamin region where the population and its government had its base. Joseph Blenkinsopp has argued for the existence of a temple in Bethel and/or Mizpah on the basis of analogies in the ancient Near East and tantalizing details in the biblical portrait.[23] Zechariah 7:2 with its reference to Bethel sending a delegation 'to entreat the favor of Yahweh' certainly hints that priests were operative there in some kind of official capacity.[24] In addition, the references to an unnamed sanctuary in Trito-Isaiah ch. 57 that is doomed to destruction provides some further justification for regarding another sacred site in use during this period.[25]

The question then arises: if at least one other sanctuary were operative during this period, how can the term and concept templeless be an accurate descriptor? In the first place, there is simply not enough evidence to give a clear picture about whether a temple in the Benjamin region was in use after the collapse of Jerusalem and what its worship practices entailed. There are suggestive hints in the biblical narrative, but the Jerusalem/ Zion focus of much of the literature prohibits any clarification on this point. In the second place and related to the first point, the biblical portrait concentrates to a large extent on the centrality and importance of the Jerusalem temple. Whether purely for ideological purposes or representing the actual importance of the Jerusalem temple, this indicates that the understanding of the religious identity of the population of the former kingdom of Judah continued to be thought of with reference to the capital city of the monarchical period and its sanctuary. This is particularly clear in the literature ascribed to ancient Israel following the reconstruction of the sanctuary which emphasizes Jerusalem and

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[19]   B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of a Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 289–93, and *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 139–147.

[20]   For this text and references to its use of 70 years in particular, see Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 127–128.

[21]   There is some debate about whether the temple in Jerusalem is meant by the phrase 'House of Yahweh' and I have argued elsewhere that this is the case, see Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 126–26.

[22]   For references about this, see Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 131–133.

[23]   J. Blenkinsopp, 'The Judaean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction', *CBQ* 60 (1998), pp. 25–42, and 'Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period', in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, pp. 93–107. An argument along these lines was launched already by E. Giesebrecht, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Göttingen, 1907), and H. W. Hertzberg, 'Mizpa', *ZAW* 47 (1929), 161–96.

[24]   Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 134–136, on the interpretation and its use in reconstruction.

[25]   It is usually understood that the Jerusalem temple is meant by the critique, but I have argued elsewhere that this is not the case and it is accepted here. For more information see, J. Middlemas, 'Divine Reversal and the Role of the Temple in Trito-Isaiah', in J. Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 164–187, and *Troubles*, pp. 136–144.

Zion.[26]

Templeless, then, connotes a sense of the importance of a state centralized sanctuary in Jerusalem rather than a general lack of religiosity among the Judahite populations following the collapse of Jerusalem. In addition, it more accurately reflects one of the experiences shared by Judahites within and outside the homeland, serving thus as a feature of commonality rather than difference (and contrary to the biblical portrait that privileges the exilic situation in Babylonia). Finally, it shifts the perspective to one of continuity rather than discontinuity, because it takes into account a population in the homeland resuming communal life on more than a subsistence level and carrying on with life as before the destruction, but without the Jerusalem temple. How would ancient Israel respond to the loss of the physical and the ideological symbol of the temple?

Other Templeless times of note
Ancient Israel was neither the first nor the last ancient culture to lose a temple. It would in fact lose the temple and the possibility of the temple three times (587 BC, 70 AD, and the failed attempts to rebuild a third temple in the fourth century AD). Jacob Neusner has considered in great detail the creativity that followed the loss of the three temples,[27] so the focus in the present study will be to highlight examples that shed light on 'templessness' more broadly and which make available a promising area of further research.

The first example of the destruction of a city and its temple stems from the third millenium BC. Ur, the capital of the third Sumerian empire, fell to the invading forces of the Elamites and the Amorites. After the fall of the city, a series of laments were composed to mourn its loss.[28] The lament begins with a general outline of the destruction of the five major cities and their temples. The poet laments abandonment and in a touching refrain he depicts the various gods as shepherds and shepherdesses who have abandoned their sheep, leaving them haunted. In response to his helpless and desperate cries the goddess Ningal intercedes on behalf of her city and pleads to the other gods for release. In her grief is the grief of every person of the community. She weeps as only a goddess can—long and unyielding. But she concludes her prayer on a different and more joyous note, which Assyriologists use as evidence for the poem's *Sitz im Leben* during a service of temple restoration or rededication. The lament over Ur contains important themes that transcend time and place, giving rise to questions of theodicy (where is divine justice?) and of the human responsibility (what is the role of human beings in disaster and in relation to the divine?). In the lament Ningal drew attention to divine responsibility and the need for human repentance. Finally, the poem's celebratory conclusion draws attention to the importance attributed to divine sustenance.

A second important example arises when attention is turned to the classical Greek world, where a situation of disaster resulted in a rather different response. In the early fifth century BC Athens was subjected to a series of invasions by the Spartans and Persians. The original Parthenon was destroyed around 480 BC in conjunction with a Persian incursion. The devastation of the city and the destruction of the temple in Athens served as a catalyst for the development of classical philosophy. The loss of the temple created the opportunity to think, ponder, and ruminate about the deep questions of life and sparked a science that still carries on today. Explanations were founded on the ability of human beings to explore their environments and to reason conclusions, rather than on the precarious will of the gods.

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[26]   See, J. Middlemas, *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the "Exile"* (Louisville, 2007).

[27]   J. Neusner, *Transformations in Ancient Judaism: Textual Evidence for Creative Response to Crisis* (Leiden, 2005).

[28]   The Mespotamian laments and the biblical book of Lamentations have been the subject of a great many fruitful analyses. For references to the literature, see Middlemas, *Troubles*, pp. 174–175, n. 9.

Finally, the templeless situation of the Qumran sectarians provides another example worthy of consideration. The community who left the documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, commonly, though not universally, thought of as the Essenes, considered the temple in Jerusalem to be corrupt. The Community Rule, one of the sectarian documents, provides some evidence that the Qumran sectarians abandoned allegiance to the Jerusalem temple as it was regarded as defiled and beyond human restoration. The officiating priests were corrupt and polluting the temple. The Qumran sectarian rejection of the earthly temple raised to prominence their thoughts about their own religious expression. Consequently, they understood their own practices as a fitting substitute for the temple cult. Moreover, in rejecting the Jerusalem sanctuary, they regarded themselves as the earthly temple. As such, they believed that they were more closely aligned with the divine purposes practiced in heaven than their fellow Jews. They write in the Community Rule,

> When these are in Israel, the Council of the Community shall be established in truth. It shall be an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel, an Assembly of Supreme Holiness for Aaron…It shall be a House of Perfection and Truth in Israel that they may establish a Covenant according to the everlasting precepts. (1QS 8:5–10, selected Vermes 1998)

Their community even became less hierarchical and more inclusive as they understood themselves to be the true bearers of right worship. In fact, they understood that their own worship more closely reflected the worship of the angels.

The above examples shed light on a variety of possible responses to the fall of the temple in the ancient world as well as providing new avenues for reflection on the situation in the literature of biblical Israel. The Mesopotamian City Laments, of which the Lament over Ur is one, the rise in Philosophical thought, and the sectarian response of the Qumran community present us with three alternative ways to respond to the loss of a temple. One response exhibits a holding fast to religion. Complaints are brought directly to the gods by the poet and the city goddess about the role of deities in the fate of human beings. Lamentation even concludes with a celebration that affirms the divine and human relationship. In contrast, evidence from the Greek world suggests greater awareness that recourse to the divine fails to provide convincing explanations about world events. At the same time, philosophical thought elevated the role of the human person and the ability of reason to explore questions about human existence, life, and the world. Finally, a third response elevated human institutions to the realm of the divine and in so doing contemplated more carefully ideas of an eschatological and visionary nature. The Qumran sectarians ruminated about the role of human beings in the divine plan.[29]

These three types of responses certainly do not encapsulate all of the possibilities of a response to the destruction or loss of a temple. They could (and should) be supplemented with other examples that would widen knowledge of templeless responses, including closer analysis of the literature of the Elephantine community or the literature classified as 'Rewritten Scripture' in the intertestamental period. Positively these three examples provide an indication that reactions to the loss of divine symbolization vary and include a great many ways of understanding the world, the divine, and the role of the human person. In this way, they encourage the supplementation of a view that concentrates on exile or displacement alone.

Considering in more detail the literature commonly associated with the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem confirms these preliminary observations made of templeless literature in the ancient world. In response to the collapse of the Jerusalem sanctuary—one of the chief physical symbols of Yahweh's rule (others include the Davidic monarch and the Ark of the Covenant)—biblical literature attributable to templeless times contained concentrations on two foci: reas-

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[29] This is a feature found more widely in the phenomenon known as 'Rewritten Bible' or 'Rewritten Scripture', with Jubilees another potential example, although the role of the rejection of the temple in this type of tradition needs more thought.

sessments of Yahweh and reappraisals of the human person. The literature of Lamentations expressed the profound grief of the community and called Yahweh to account with a series of complaints and accusations (*theo-diabole*). The role of repentance appears also, but to a much lesser extent. Using memory for its particular expression the Deuteronomistic History remembered a sorry past as a means to repent from it and to invite Yahweh to reassert divine interaction. The Deuteronomistic History follows a cyclical pattern throughout and ends at the point of divine displeasure, thereby suggesting the response of repentance followed by the resumption of divine care and attention. Prophecy like that found in Deutero-Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah 1–8 functioned in a variety of ways—as theodicy, for example, but also to create a sense of the deity acting anew in the world on behalf of the covenant people, through return, restoration, and the reconstruction of the temple and society. In addition, the prophets placed greater emphasis on the need for human response, especially on the necessity of clarifying regulations as in Ezekiel 40–48, but also found more widely in an interest in the role of the law, like that found in the Holiness Code (Lev. 17–26), which sought clarity for how to sustain more effectively the relationship between the deity and community. Wisdom elements in the literature of the time provide some degree of overlap with the philosophical contemplation typical of the Greek world. Inserted into the heart of Lamentations (3:22–39) is a contemplative wisdom interlude that focuses on the failure of the human person rather than on the deity.[30] Ancient Israel responded to systemic collapse in a variety of ways that complement those found in other cultures of the ancient world. Moreover, considering the literature in this way highlights a degree of variation that is not as forthcoming when the perspective is based on the exile and *Golah* view alone.

Concluding thoughts on Templeless and Exile
The literature of a period defined by templeless rather than exile includes a greater sense of destruction and restoration of the community that reinforces the impression given by the literature of a period of continuity as well as creative adaptation. In addition, it presents a greater sense of the shared experience of many, rather than competition between two groups or the particularistic focus on a few. A templeless view, therefore, draws attention to concepts often overlooked in analyses of the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath. On a basic level, the term suggests something about the time period and includes at least three communities that experienced a single disaster rather than privileging the experience of one. In contrast, 'exile' focuses attention on the particular, on being separate and distinct from an environment. The exiles deported to Babylonia created survival strategies that would enable them to steer the course of Yehud in the Second Temple period. The leadership roles and communal membership of the figures Ezra and Nehemiah, considered to be the founders of Judaism, are traced back to the generations of the *Golah*. In addition, it appears to be the case that the exile generation was partly responsible for the transmission of scripture, its editing, and even rewriting. Exile continues to be an important motif. It is even picked up by the Qumran community who considers itself in exile and it is an idea used of the early Christians.[31] A turn to templeless as an equally important and viable concept raises greater awareness of the 'exile' as less a historical reality and more as a concept useful to categorize and define one reaction to disaster.

As a way of concluding a discussion of the possibilities made available by further consideration of the meaning and significance of 'templeless' as an alternative to 'exile', it is helpful to remember that the book of Jeremiah regarded the loss of the temple in conjunction with the dislocation of deportation. It is important, therefore, that the exile as a period, a concept, and as a population be held in conjunction with that of templeless. Although the two ways of considering the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem should be held together, better regard for the differences they reveal is an important contribution to Old Testament analyses as well as to those that regard questions of identity and religious communities in general. A view towards other templeless ex-

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[30]   J. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations 3?', *Vetus Testamentum* LVI (2006), pp. 505–525.

[31]   See the series of essays in J. Scott (ed.), *Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden, 1997).

periences and reactions provides a fruitful contribution to greater consideration of destruction and its capacity to serve as a catalyst for continuity and creativity.