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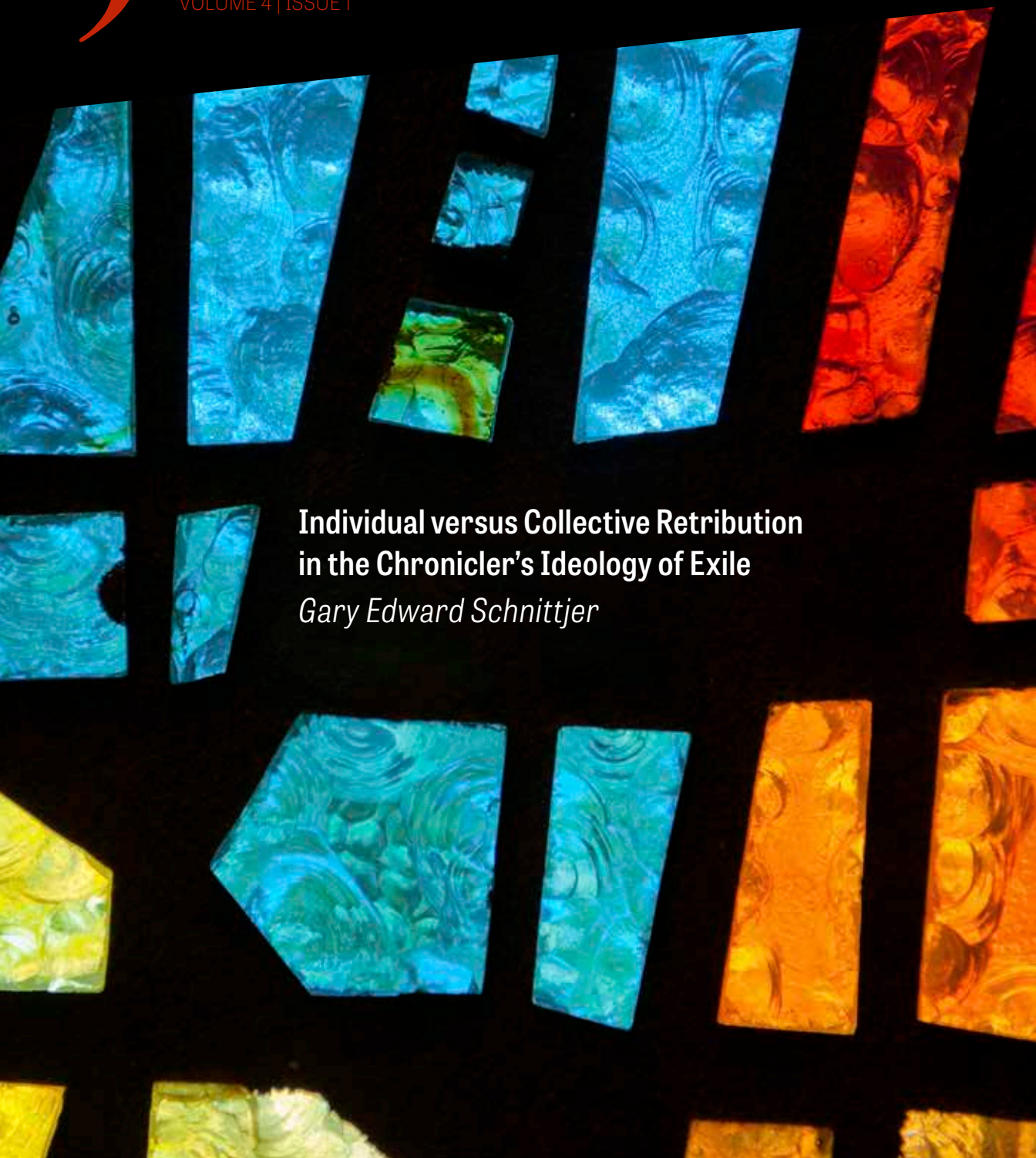

Individual versus Collective Retribution in the Chronicler's Ideology of Exile

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Abstract: It has long been argued that exilic and postexilic biblical writers shift from a model of collective accountability to that of individual accountability. The most notable example of this interpretation of Chronicles, exemplified by the Chronicler's ideology of exile, comes from Sara Japhet's work. Did the Chronicler "democratize" identity and responsibility to redefine the justice of God? Did the Chronicler follow some of the prophets before him, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and reframe retribution in terms of individual responsibility? Who is being punished in the Chronicler's version of the exile? This study evaluates the most important evidence for retributive culpability in 2 Chronicles 36. The evidence does not support an individualistic model of retribution but a complex view featuring deferred judgment and cumulative culpability.

Key Words: 2 Chronicles 36, Leviticus 26, Jeremiah's seventy years, exile, retribution

Introduction

The problem of "paying for the sins of others" has been raised with respect to the Babylonian exile since the eve of the disaster. Jeremiah and Ezekiel each responded to a contemporary proverb, "the ancestors have eaten sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2).[1] The exile refers to the entire catastrophe: the fall of the city of God, the destruction of the temple, the imprisonment of kings Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, and the forced migrations of the people of Jerusalem and Judah in 597, 586, and 582 BCE. The exile triggered numerous interpretations within the scriptural writings including the prophets, the stories of Esther, Daniel, the returns in Ezra-Nehemiah, Lamentations and several psalms, as well as the Deuteronomistic Narrative and Chronicles.[2]

1. All translations from *Biblia Hebraica* are mine unless stated otherwise.

2. Deuteronomistic Narrative refers the four-part serial narrative of the rise and fall of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms within the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Deuteronomy functions as a covenantal compass for the tetralogy. While neither date nor diachronic matters are important to the present argument, the Deuteronomistic Narrative reflects an exilic perspective. The term Chronicler refers to the author of the book of Chronicles ("author" in the sense of redactor/

The Chronicler's version of the exile has often been interpreted as the premier embodiment and culmination of his much discussed views of divine retribution upon the First Commonwealth. The present study seeks to offer some adjustments and alternate explanations of the Chronicler's ideology of exile as it is exemplified in the closing chapter of his narrative, especially as it relates to retribution. The term "retribution" denotes the enactment of God's justice in punishment and reward, though it usually is used of the former.[3] Sara Japhet's work on retribution in Chronicles provides a useful point of departure because many recent discussions of both Chronicles and his view of retribution rely on her body of research.[4] Japhet states:

> The Chronicler's well-known theory of "reward and punishment"…[is] his way of portraying history as a concrete manifestation of divine justice. It is characterized by several features. Reward is mandatory, immediate and individual. Every generation is requited for its own deeds, both good and evil, with no postponement of recompense; there is no accumulated sin and no accumulated merit.[5]

editor/narrator), the narrative of which may be called Chronistic. The Chronicler is not the same person(s) who authored/redacted/edited Ezra-Nehemiah. See Sara Japhet, "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew" in *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah: Collected Studies of the Restoration Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 1-37 (originally published in *VT* 18 [1968]: 330-71); H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 83-86.

3. For a helpful discussion, including a survey of the biblical terms, summarizing major viewpoints, and basic bibliography, see Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "Retribution," in Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 671-76. For thoroughgoing interactions with issues of corporate versus individual responsibility in the Hebrew Bible, with significant critique against many of the standard views, see Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible,* JSOTSS 196 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); idem, "The Sins of the Fathers: A Theological Investigation of the Biblical Tension Between Corporate and Individualized Retribution," *Judaism* 46 (2001): 319-32.

4. See Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought,* trans. Anna Barber (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1989; reprint, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009); idem, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); and selected essays in idem, *From the Rivers of Babylon*. The 1989 and 2009 eds. of *Ideology of Chronicles* are paginated differently, since the latter is re-typeset. Though the 2009 ed. is used here the page references to each have been provided since the 1989 ed. is widely cited (thank you to R. Devine for looking up the page numbers). For selected interaction with Japhet's work on retribution see Brian E. Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicle*, JSOTSS 211 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 37-42, 236, n. 5, 240; idem, "'Retribution' Revisited: Covenant, Grace and Restoration," in M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 209-10, as well as interaction with Japhet more generally throughout, see 206-27. For debate with Japhet's view of the exile, esp. dissenting against her downplaying the exile and the corporate guilt of Israel, see William Johnstone, "The Use of Leviticus in Chronicles," in John F. A. Sawyer, ed., *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas*, JSOTSS 227 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 243-55. Japhet's presentation of how Chronicles "minimizes" the exile is affirmed in Adele Berlin, "The Exile: Biblical Ideology and Its Postmodern Ideological Interpretation," in Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming, eds., *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 349 [341-56].

5. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 44. Japhet considers the Chronicler's presentation of the exile a

Yet, the Chronicler's version of the exile does not fit with Japhet's reading. This study will suggest that Chronicles presents the exile in terms of deferred justice, cumulative and corporate.

The next section will briefly frame the place of Japhet's argument in the context of other leading interpretations of retribution in Chronicles, namely, the much discussed interpretations of Julius Wellhausen and Gerhard von Rad. In response, the present study claims that the Chronicler's interpretation of the exile turns on the way he uses Leviticus and Jeremiah.

Retribution in Chronicles following Wellhausen

Wellhausen (in)famously offers well-studied, sustained ridicule of Chronicles in a chapter on it.[6] While many of his attacks have been overturned and seem increasingly unlikely, Wellhausen's view of mechanical divine retribution in Chronicles remains convincing to many interpreters, including von Rad and Japhet.[7] At the end of a sarcastic passage Wellhausen says, "Never does sin miss its punishment, and never where misfortune occurs is guilt wanting."[8] He then goes on to list examples of the Chronicler creating justice from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, by attaching consequences to deeds and vice versa.[9] Wellhausen refers to these retributive connections as "inventions," and speaks derisively of how they are born from the Chronicler's plan for writing history, "as it is euphemistically called."[10]

For von Rad, Chronicles is a theodicy wrestling against the problem of retribution.[11] Von Rad condenses Wellhausen's list of retributive examples in Chronicles to demonstrate the Chronicler's consistent effort to show "correspondence between guilt and punishment."[12] Von Rad interprets the retributive connections as part of the Chronicler's strategy of narrating each generation to stand before the

leading example of his view of retribution; see Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 41. For another oft cited summary of immediate retribution in 2 Chron 10-36, cited approvingly by Japhet, see Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles,* WBC 15 (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 1987), 76-81.

6. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies (1885; reprint, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 171-227. Wellhausen did not invent a negative view of Chronicles, but often credits de Wette. See Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, *A Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament,* 2d ed., trans. and ed. Theodore Parker, 2 vols. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1850), 2: 253-316.

7. See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 203-10.

8. Ibid., 203.

9. See ibid., 203-7.

10. Ibid., 207.

11. See Gerhard von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werks,* BWANT 3 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930), 11 (*The Historical Picture of the Chronistic Work*). Thank you to Samuel Matlack for translating and discussing nuances of passages from von Rad's book.

12. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology,* trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1: 348-49.

Lord "immediately" and "individually."[13] "It is characteristic of him [the Chronicler] that before the account of Jerusalem's destruction in II Chr 36 he speaks only of the sins of the last living generation."[14] The Chronicler's commitment to immediate and individual retribution is, for von Rad, part of the developments of "later Jahwism."[15] Von Rad spells out this late shift to individualism in his treatment of biblical wisdom. He explains individualism replacing collectivism in the context of the fall of the Hebrew monarchy. He uses Ezekiel 18 and Jeremiah 31:29, 30 to illustrate the new emphasis on every individual before God.[16] Von Rad rightly discerns Ezekiel's sweeping away of excuses, seen especially in the final verses of Ezekiel 18. "If a man cannot rely on his own righteousness, so as to hide himself behind it from Jahweh, how much less can he rely on the righteousness of others."[17]

13. See ibid., 1: 349, 350.

14. "Es ist bezeichnend, daß er vor dem Bericht von der Zerstörung Jerusalems II. Chr. 36 allein von den Sünden der letzten lebenden Generation spricht" (von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werks*, 13).

15. See von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 349.

16. See ibid., 1: 391-94. "Jeremiah and Ezekiel had to address themselves to the question, 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, but it is (only) the children's teeth which are set on edge' …. The familiar quotation is in rebellion against the falling asunder of cause and effect, offense and punishment" (1: 392). The proverb cited in Jer 31 and Ezek 18 is often compared to a passage in an ancient Hittite prayer: "O Storm-god of Ḫatti, my lord, and gods, my lords — so it happens: People always sin. My father sinned and transgressed the word of the Storm-god of Ḫatti, my lord. But I did not sin in any way. But so it happens: The sin of the father devolves upon his son. The sin of my father has devolved upon me" ("Plague Prayers of Muršili II," *COS* 1.60: 158). See Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 393-94; A. Malamat, "Doctrines of Causality in Hittite and Biblical Historiography: A Parallel," *VT* 5 (1955): 1-12; and for critique of Malamat's article see Jože Krašovec, "Is There a Doctrine of 'Collective Retribution' in the Hebrew Bible?" *HUCA* 65 (2001): 38-39, n. 9 [35-89]. Also discussed is an ancient Hittite punishment against the entire household of one who incites divine anger, yet this applies only to the temple. "If, however, someone angers the mind of a god, does the god seek it (revenge) only from him alone? Does he not seek it from his wife, [his children,] his descendants, his family, his male servants, his female servants, his cattle, his sheep and his grain? He utterly destroys him with everything. Be very afraid of a god's word for your own sake" ("Instructions to Priests and Temple Officials," *COS* 1.83: 218). See Jacob Milgrom, "The Concept of *Ma'al* in the Bible and the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 96 (1976): 246 [236-47]; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB 22 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 338-39.

17. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 394. Daniel I. Block interprets Ezekiel 18 similar to von Rad: "[C]hildren may not hide behind a theology of corporate solidarity and moral extension that absolves them of personal responsibility for their own destiny" (*The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 589). While studies of Ezekiel 18 continue to see it as making an argument for individual responsibility, many have discerned the function of his example of individual accountability to indict the entire generation. For Ezekiel 18 as teaching individual responsibility, see Michael Fishbane, "Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 140-43 [121-50]. For examples of studies which challenge the thesis that individual accountability is a development, and also see Ezekiel 18 as judgment against the nation as a whole, see Herbert May, "Individual Responsibility and Retribution," *HUCA* 31 (1961): 107-10 [107-20]; Barnabas Lindars, "Ezekiel and Individual Responsibility," *VT* 15 (1965): 452-67; P. M. Joyce, "Individual Responsibility in Ezekiel 18?," in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Biblica 1978: I. Papers on Old Testament and Related Themes*, JSOTSS 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1979), 185-96; Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, esp. 116-78. Kaminsky

Japhet also notes Wellhausen's list connecting sin and punishment and vice versa in Chronicles, but she expands attention to many more details and examples as well as establishing the Chronicler's interest in justice regarding the cause and effect of merit and success.[18] Japhet defines the Chronicler's view in contrast to the Deuteronomistic interpretation of sin and guilt, the latter of which she summarizes as "cumulative" and "collective" both of which are evident by "delayed" punishment.[19] Japhet, like von Rad, regards the Chronicler's theology of retribution as part of an individual-oriented innovation born out of interpreting the fall of Jerusalem especially by Ezekiel.[20] For Japhet, Ezekiel's and the Chronicler's views on divine justice are so similar that Chronicles' "outlook may be defined in Ezekiel's words: 'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.'"[21]

Japhet thinks Chronicles refines the basic principle "that might be termed 'the imperative of reward and punishment.'…Chronicles does not allow for the theoretical possibility that man may sin and neither he nor his son will be punished: every sin must be punished. For this reason, Chronicles cannot justify the destruction of the Temple as punishment for the sins of previous generations."[22] Japhet contends, "Only Zedekiah and his generation are responsible for the disaster that occurred in his time."[23] Regarding the fall of Jerusalem Japhet distinguishes that the Chronicler accepted what others might call "horizontal" societal collective punishment while denying "vertical" generational collective punishment. She maintains that, according to Chronicles, the exile is punishment only of the exiled generation itself.[24]

Whether or not Ezekiel 18 is emblematic of a turn from collective to individual identity and accountability in the outlook of biblical Israel falls outside the present

summarizes, "Although there is evidence of a growing awareness of the importance of the individual, there is also evidence that texts from the later biblical period continue to highlight the importance of the community" (138). Some of Eichrodt's explanations of the effects of the exile upon the identity of the Judean expatriates help to explain the increased attention to the individual. He notes that the community became defined by what was not present reality: the kingdom of the past and the restoration to come. Eichrodt also suggests the universalistic attitude which included the nations underlines an identity defined by religious convictions and practices in the absence of the monarchical political structure of the First Commonwealth. See Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), 2: 254-59.

18. Japhet refers to Wellhausen's list (see *Ideology of Chronicles*, 121 [1989 ed., 155]) to set up her own treatment (see 129-38 [1989 ed., 165-76]).

19. See ibid., 124-29 (1989 ed., 159-66).

20. See ibid., esp. 118-29 (1989 ed., 151-65).

21. Ibid., 127 (1989 ed., 162); quotation from Ezek 18:20. Also see Japhet, *From the Rivers of Babylon*, 323.

22. Japhet, *Ideology of Chronicles*, 127; 1989 ed., 163.

23. Ibid., 128 (1989 ed., 163). See Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1069.

24. See Japhet, *Ideology of Chronicles*, 128 (1989 ed., 163). Japhet makes a couple of distinctions between the views of justice by Chronicles and Ezekiel (see 128-29). The terms "horizontal" societal collective punishment and "vertical" generational collective punishment come from Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 339.

study.[25] Japhet asserts that 2 Chronicles 36 shares an identical outlook with Ezekiel 18, but it may be merely that her interpretation of retribution in Chronicles fits.

The present argument is that the Chronicler's interpretation of the basis for the fall of Jerusalem turns on an interpretive blend of Leviticus 26 and Jeremiah's seventy years.[26] This is not to deny the Chronicler's marked interest in illustrating retribution and reward across the First Commonwealth. The Chronicler affirms and/or augments retributive tendencies in his treatment of most Davidic kings even while a few kings are treated in a more complex manner. In spite of usually stressing individual retribution, the allusions to Leviticus 26 and Jeremiah in 2 Chronicles 36 point to a decidedly corporate understanding of judgment by exile. The Chronicler's ideology of exile is, in part, embodied in the description of exile in Leviticus 26:39, "And those of you who survive shall rot because of their iniquities, in the land of your enemies, and even because of the iniquities of their ancestors they will rot with them."[27] The next two sections will discuss the relevant details in the final chapter of Chronicles before drawing conclusions.

Retribution and Prophetic Messages in Chronicles

What is the scope and significance of the Chronistic account of Zedekiah's rejection of Jeremiah's warnings? Is it about Zedekiah and his generation exclusively? Does the Chronicler view Jeremiah as simply another in a long line of prophets dealing with the situations of their own days? Such a reading does not fit the evidence.

The Chronicler makes allusion to Jeremiah in a manner that views the prophet and his work in continuity with an ongoing mission of God to warn his people to turn to him. The function of the prophets in Chronicles runs along the lines of Yahweh's message to Solomon in a theophany sometime after the dedication of the temple, which, in turn, echoes the pivotal language of Leviticus 26.

> If then their uncircumcised heart *humble itself* (כנע Nif), and then they **pay** (רצה) for their iniquity…(Lev 26:41b).

25. The shift has been noted since late antiquity, "Moses said [Ex. xxxiv. 7]: 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.' Ezekiel abolished it by saying [xviii. 4]: 'The soul which sinneth, that alone shall die'" (*b. Mak*. 24a). For brief remarks against the position by Wellhausen, von Rad, and others that Ezekiel's individual focus is a new development during the exile, see Krašovec, "Is There a Doctrine of 'Collective Retribution' in the Hebrew Bible?" 85-86; Block, *Book of Ezekiel, 1-24*, 556.

26. The concept of interpretive blends is broader but built on Fishbane's helpful term "legal blend" to speak of scriptural exegesis based on interpreting one context in light of another. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 110-19, 134-136.

27. For more detail on exile and Lev 26 see Gary Edward Schnittjer, "The Bad Ending of Ezra-Nehemiah," *BSac* 173 (2016): 46-49 [32-56].

And Yahweh **has been sending** to you all of his servants the prophets, **persistently sending** (הַשְׁכֵּם וְשָׁלֹחַ), but you have not listened and you have not inclined your ear to listen (Jer 25:4).

> [Yahweh said to Solomon] And if my people who are called by my name *humble themselves* (כנע Nif) and pray and seek my face and *turn* (שׁוב) from their wicked ways, then I will hear from the heavens and I will forgive their sin and I *will heal* (רפא) their land (2 Chron 7:14).

> [Zedekiah] did not *humble himself* (כנע Nif) before Jeremiah the prophet from the mouth of Yahweh.…And he stiffened his neck and he strengthened his heart from *turning* (שׁוב) to Yahweh the God of Israel.…Moreover, all of the leaders of the priests and the people increased infidelity according to all of the offenses of the nations. And they polluted the house of Yahweh which he had made holy in Jerusalem. And Yahweh the God of their ancestors **sent** to them by the hand of his messengers, **persistently sending** (הַשְׁכֵּם וְשָׁלוֹחַ), because he took pity on his people and on his dwelling place. And they ridiculed the messengers of God, despising his words, mocking his prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh rose up against his people, until there was no *remedy* (רפא) (36:12, 13b, 15, 16).[28]

The Chronicler's use of "persistently sending"—literally "rising up early and sending" (הַשְׁכֵּם וְשָׁלוֹחַ)—seems like an intentional allusion to Jeremiah. The majority of uses of the Hifil infinitive absolute of שׁכם complementing various verbs occur in Jeremiah, along with this one occurrence in 2 Chronicles 36, a couple of occurrences in Samuel, and one in Proverbs.[29] Anyone who has read Jeremiah can remember the frequent use of this phrase and others similar to it. Jeremiah speaks of God as subject, usually in first person and sometimes in third person discourse, "rising early (שׁכם) and sending (שׁלח)" (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) as well as "rising early (שׁכם) and speaking (35:14 ;25:3 ;7:13) "(דבר), "rising early (שׁכם) and warning (11:7) "(עוד), and "rising early (שׁכם) and teaching (למד)" (32:33).

The Hifil infinitive absolute הַשְׁכֵּם takes an intensifying adverbial sense of repetition or continuance in its several combinations with finite verbs in Jeremiah. For example, "Rising up early and speaking" (הַשְׁכֵּם וְדַבֵּר) in Jeremiah 7:13 signifies *I have spoken to you already for a long period*.[30] The connotation of the various

28. The use of "infidelity" (מעל) to describe the cause of "polluting" (טמא) the temple is a significant element in the Chronicler's explanation for Judah's downfall (see Milgrom, "Concept of *Ma'al*," 236, 247). For a treatment of Chron centered on מעל, see William Johnstone, *2 Chronicles 10-36, Guilt and Atonement*, vol. 2 of *1 and 2 Chronicles*, JSOTSS 254 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Johnstone, "Use of Leviticus in Chronicles," 243-55; and for summary and evaluation of Johnstone's work, see Kelly, "'Retribution' Revisited," 210-13. Also note that Zedekiah's broken oath to Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Chron 36:13a relates to Ezek 17:11-21 (see H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NCB [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 416).

29. See Even-Shoshan, 1143.

30. See *IBHS*, §35.3.2c.

hendiadyses which all include שכם in Jeremiah is *earnestly, persistently, repeatedly.*[31] The verb "has sent" (*qatal*) at the beginning of Jeremiah 25:4 can refer to acts which have already taken place and are still constantly reoccurring: "And Yahweh has sent to you all his servants the prophets rising early and sending but you have not listened."[32] A casual paraphrase would be "he has been talking about this all day long" roughly equivalent to 24/7/365.

The Chronicler's reference to Jeremiah's refrain about the long line of prophets who warn of judgment makes explicit one of the significant tendencies across his narrative. Von Rad says,

> No, Jahweh's patience is not exhausted until the people (usually in its representative king) reject the salvific relation with obvious intentionality—that is to say, when they freely step out from the divine ordinances. In this aspect in the outline of the Chronicler's narrative, we find something almost like a sermon on Jahweh's searching love. This becomes apparent especially in the tireless *warnings* that, from our author's perspective, time and again go out to man who is about to step out of the present salvific relation.[33]

The description of Zedekiah refusing to "humble himself" (כנע Nif) offers a negative counterpoint to the programmatic statement in 2 Chronicles 7:14.[34] The use of this term describing an "inner quality of the pious man in general, as resignation and repentance before God" stands among the Chronicler's innovative and distinct narrative ways of describing the "spirit of penitence."[35] Japhet suggests the Chronicler

31. So *HALOT*, 2: 1494.

32. See GKC §106k, as applied in *HALOT*, 2: 1493-94. GKC lists וישלח in Jer 25:4 as *veqatal* with a function of introducing frequently repeated action (see §112dd). The verb שכם in the *qatal* form can also refer to acts which have already taken place and are still constantly reoccurring (as in 7:25; 25:4; 26:5, etc.). For a brief description of the figural sense of שכם as rise early in the morning, see *IBHS*, §27.4b.

33. "Nein, Jahwes Geduld erschöpft sich erst, wenn das Volk (meist in seinem Repräsentanten, dem König) in offenbarer Absicht das angebotene Heilsverhältnis verschmäht, wenn es sich also um ein freies Heraustreten aus den göttlichen Ordnungen handelt. Es liegt in dem Aufriß der chronistischen Geschichte in diesem Punkte geradezu etwas wie eine Predigt von Jahwes suchender Liebe, und das wird vor allem in den unermüdlichen *Warnungen* sichtbar, die nach Anschauung unseres Verfassers immer wieder dem Menschen zugehen, der im Begriff steht, aus dem bestehenden Heilsverhältnis herrauszutreten" (Von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werks*, 12; emphasis original).

34. 2 Chron 7:14 is part of a plus (material not in 1 Kgs) which embodies the central themes of the narrative. See Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 225-26. For a detailed discussion of the structure, leading terms, and significance of this context, see Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*, 50-61. Kelly traces out the pattern of retribution in 2 Chron 10-36 in light of the themes in 2 Chon 7 (see 93-110). It should be added, as Knoppers suggests, that David's repentance in 1 Chron 21 may function "paradigmatically" as the appropriate response to "disasters of one's own making." See Gary N. Knoppers, "Democratizing Revelation?: Prophets, Seers and Visionaries in Chronicles," in John Day, ed., *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 404 [391-409].

35. Japhet, "Common Authorship," 27.

may have appropriated the use of self-humbling (כנע Nif) from Leviticus 26:41 and Psalm 107:12, but she does not list the negative use of this term in 2 Chronicles 36 (even though she appears to be listing all occurrences in Chronicles).[36] In light of this it will be worth considering the importance of the ideology of exile as rooted in the absence of self-humbling. The question, for present purpose, is whether the absence of self-humbling in Zedekiah indicates an individual failure or if the Chronicler is using his personal lack of repentance as an embodiment and symbol of a collective apostasy of the First Commonwealth. While the answer turns on the significance of "rising early and sending" noted above, it is necessary to get at the function of the prophets in Chronicles before describing the meaning of Zedekiah's rebellion.

Sharp debate surrounds the identity and function of prophetic figures in Chronicles.[37] William Schniedewind claims vocational prophets interpret history and warn while inspired messengers warn and exhort.[38] Amit pushes back against this as an "artificial" and inconsistent distinction.[39] Gary N. Knoppers illustrates the Chronicler's interest in aligning prophets and prophecy with the criteria of Deuteronomy.[40] The present discussion extends and applies this approach. Knoppers' quip identifies the real issue: "The medium is not the message; the message is the message."[41]

The prophetic messages of Chronicles line up with the criteria of Deuteronomy.[42] Deuteronomy does not deal with prophets in terms of advocacy for those under judgment but by an evaluation of the prophetic message.[43] Also, Deuteronomy rejects

36. See ibid., 27, n. 145.

37. Discussions often work with or against von Rad's thesis that the Chronicler spoke through prophetic speeches in non-synoptic narrative. See "The Levitical Sermon in 1 and 2 Chronicles," in Gerhard von Rad, *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology,* ed. K. C. Hanson; trans. R. Smend (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 232-42.

38. The issues go beyond designations of "prophet" (נביא), "visionary" (חזה), "seer" (ראה), "servant of Yahweh" (יהוה עבד), and "man of God" (איש האלהים) and include recipients and inspiration formulas. See William M. Schniedewind, "Prophets and Prophecy in the Books of Chronicles," in M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund, and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Historian*, JSOTSS 238 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 216-20 [204-24].

39. Yairah Amit, "The Role of Prophecy and Prophets in the Chronicler's World," in Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak, eds., *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 95, n. 40 [80-101].

40. See Gary N. Knoppers, review of *From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period* by William M. Schniedewind, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49.1 (1998): 133-35; idem, "'To Him You Must Listen': The Prophetic Legislation in Deuteronomy and the Reformation of Classical Tradition in Chronicles," in Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams, eds., *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 172-74 [161-94].

41. Knoppers, "Democratizing Revelation?," 400.

42. Though there are important differences discussion here is broadly indebted to ibid., 392-404; Knoppers, "'To Him You Must Listen,'" 165-74.

43. On prophets as advocates for the condemned see Gen 20:7; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; Amos 7:1-8; Hab 1.

deductive divination related to omens, spiritual mediums, and the like (Deut 18:9-13).[44] The two prophetic criteria of Deuteronomy relate to reality and Torah. First, the message of a prophet must accord with reality (18:22). This relates especially to prophetic claims about divine intervention in history. But prophetic threats and warnings may evoke repentance and adjust the contingent judgment. Such ironies make up a normal sort of difficulty in identifying true prophets—the problem of prophetic success. Stated differently, prophetic warnings seem to always have an implied "unless you repent" contingency clause.[45] Even with the contingency of repentance the prophetic word binds reality by God's own fidelity.[46] Second, the prophet's message needs to accord with Torah (13:2). A prophet who performs signs but speaks against Torah must be rejected as a false prophet (13:1; cf. Matt 7:21-23; 2 Thess 2:9).[47]

For the moment the prophetic criteria of concord with reality and Torah may be aligned with the historical and instructional functions of prophetic messages in Chronicles. The historical and instructional emphases of prophetic messages get at different kinds of interpretation even if they overlap. Interpretation of divine intervention in historical events focuses on God's sovereignty and instructional interpretation of scriptural traditions on human responsibility. The different kinds of prophetic messages in Chronicles often feature literary signals of interpretation like "because," "so that," "by this," and the like. Table A provides broad organization of the overlapping and interrelated interpretive functions of prophetic messages.

44. This aligns with general prohibitions elsewhere, see Exod 22:18; Lev 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27.

45. See, e.g., Jer 26:18-19 for Micah not being a false prophet even when Jerusalem was spared, thus, shifting from his initial warning.

46. See discussion related to Isa 55:11 in Gary Edward Schnittjer, "Idolatry in Isaiah," *Credo Magazine* 8.2 (2018).

47. The prophet's conservative role as interpreter of Torah in Deut 13:1-5 remains irrespective of how the possible relationship of Deut 13 and ancient Near Eastern covenantal conventions get sorted out. For competing views see Bernard M. Levinson, *"The Right Chorale": Studies in Biblical Law and Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008; reprint, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 138-43, 184-90; idem, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty as a Source for the Canon Formula in Deuteronomy 13:1," *JAOS* 130.3 (2010): 337-47; idem and Jeffrey Stackert, "Between the Covenant Code and Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty: Deuteronomy 13 and the Composition of Deuteronomy," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 3 (2012): 123-40; Joshua Berman, "CTH 133 and the Hittite Provenance of Deuteronomy 13," *JBL* 130.1 (2011): 25-44; idem, "Historicism and Its Limits: A Response to Bernard M. Levinson and Jeffrey Stackert," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 4.3 (2013): 297-309; Markus Zehnder, "Building on Stone? Deuteronomy and Esarhaddon's Loyalty Oaths (Part 1): Some Preliminary Observations," *BBR* 19.3 (2009): 341-74.

Table A: Exegetical Function of Prophetic Messages in Non-synoptic Contexts of Chronicles

	Historical—exegesis of divine intervention (Deut 18:22 oriented)	**Historical and Instructional** (Deut 13:2 and 18:22 oriented)	**Instructional**—exegesis of human responsibility (Deut 13:2 oriented)
direct discourse	**2 Chron 16:7-9**, Hanani[a] **20:14-17**, Jahaziel[b] **20:37**, Eliezer[c] **21:12-15**, Elijah[de] **25:15, 16**, prophet[c] **28:9-11**, Oded[ef]	**2 Chron 12:5, 7**, Shemaiah[f] **15:1-7**, Azariah[hf] **19:2-3**, Jehu[gi] **25:7-9**, man of God[b] **35:21**, Neco[j]	**1 Chron 12:18 [19]**, Amasai[i] **2 Chron 24:20**, Zechariah[i]
summary allusion		**36:21**, Jeremiah[k]	**36:12**, Jeremiah[k] **36:15**, messengers[k]

- Literary signals of historical contingency and/or explanation: [a] "because" (עַל־כֵּן); [b] no literary signals; [c] "because" (כִּי); [d] "because" (תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר); [e] "behold" (הִנֵּה); [f] "because, so that" (כִּי); [g] "on account of this" (בָּזֹאת).
- Literary signals of instructional motivation (parenesis) and/or explanation: [h] "if" (אִם); [i] "because" (כִּי); [j] syntactical jussive; [k] no embedded direct discourse.

The critical issue in Zedekiah's rule stems from the rebellion against the instructional messages of Jeremiah and the divine messengers (2 Chron 36:12, 15). Disobeying the instructional message incites the condemning wrath of Yahweh which triggers the exilic timetable according to Jeremiah (36:21, see Table A).

Prophetic authority, by means of historical and instructional messages, maintains a decisive place in the Chronicler's understanding of divine intervention within historical contingency. A few examples including the present context can illustrate (emphasis mine):[48]

> Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in Yahweh your God and you will be upheld; *have faith in his prophets and you will be successful*" (2 Chron 20:20 NIV).
>
> They abandoned the temple of Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God's anger came on Judah and Jerusalem. *Although Yahweh sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them*, they would not listen (24:18-19 NIV).
>
> *Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place*. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his

48. See Howard Ray Macy, "The Sources of the Book of Chronicles," Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1975, 48.

> prophets until the wrath of Yahweh was aroused against his people and there was no remedy (36:15-16 NIV).

The Chronicler frequently features prophetic messages with explicit acknowledgments of fulfillment, most of which do not have a synoptic parallel in Kings.[49] The narrative also includes numerous cases of prophetic messages implicitly fulfilled by subsequent events, again, several of which are plusses in Chronicles.[50] The consistent pattern of divine utterance and fulfillment may be considered a function of putting divine retribution on display. All of this directly bears on the explicit use of Jeremiah's seventy years to explain exile.

Prophets in Chronicles address both monarch and people. Knoppers points out that monarchs in Chronicles function according to ancient Near Eastern ideology as both representatives and personal embodiments of the states they lead. This provides a mechanism for the Chronicler to hold people and leaders accountable.[51] If the Chronicler presented horizontal corporate solidarity by the prophetic messages to the kings, his allusion to Jeremiah establishes vertical corporate solidarity.

Zedekiah's rejection of the prophet's message reflects a grasp of the book of Jeremiah (2 Chron 36:12-16; see above). The starting point may be "but neither he [Zedekiah] nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Jeremiah the prophet" (Jer 37:2). Far from being an isolated warning to this king at this time, the Chronicler uses the prophet's own constant refrain to situate his message within the ongoing context of God's pity-motivated incessant sending of his prophets.[52] Jeremiah did not claim to be innovative, nor a lone voice, nor do anything unusual. The prophet frequently identifies his role and message as part of God's persistent prophetic warning—"rising early and sending/speaking/warning." By adopting Jeremiah's mantra of continuity of constant warning, Zedekiah's rejection functions as the culmination of a transgenerational rebellion against God's covenantal will.

Zedekiah is not alone. Leaders and people rebel and refuse to submit to the persistent messengers of God (2 Chron 36:14, 16). The leaders and people are not alone. They represent full continuity with their forebears. They sustain the persistent addiction of rejecting the warnings of God's messengers (36:15). The Chronicler does not depict the generation of Zedekiah's exile as unto themselves on a clean slate. They continue a long commitment by the people of "Yahweh, the God of their ancestors" of scorning prophetic warnings (36:15-16).

49. See 2 Chron 10:15//1 Kgs 12:15; 2 Chron 12:5-8, 12; 24:20-25; 25:15-16, 20; 36:22; cf. 1 Chron 11:3, 10; 2 Chron 3:21-24 (ibid., 50-51).

50. See 1 Chron 14:10-12, 14-17//2 Sam 5:19-21, 23-25; 1 Chron 21:9-16//2 Sam 24:11-15; 2 Chron 15:1-9; 18//1 Kgs 22; 2 Chron 20:14-17, 20, 37; 21:12-19; 24:20; 25:7-13; 34:22-25 (ibid., 51-52; Knoppers, "Democratizing Revelation?," 403).

51. See Knoppers, "Democratizing Revelation?," 400.

52. The term in Jeremiah is "servants" and in Chronicles "messengers" (see Jer 25:3; 2 Chron 36:15, 16).

Jeremiah represents the trans-temporal company of prophets, and Zedekiah, in the twilight of the First Commonwealth, personifies by his own impudence the rebellion of his people across the generations. Jeremiah and Zedekiah are both individuals—prophet and king—and all that means. They also represent and speak for two horizontal and vertical collectives. The Chronicler appropriates Jeremiah's language of continuity of warning to signify the prophetic and Davidic institutions by these two men.

Exilic Culpability in Chronicles

Biblical prophets and storymakers see the exile as more than a political and social event. The exile is explained as just punishment from Israel's God. Is the exile, according to the Chronicler, a judgment of the First Commonwealth as trans-temporal collective? Is it a punishment only of Zedekiah's generation? The difficulty with this latter view, promoted by Japhet, is the way the Chronicler uses Jeremiah and Leviticus to explain the event.[53] The Chronicler connects the duration of the exile and its rationale from Leviticus 26 with Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years (shared language marked by emphasis).

> Then the land **shall pay** (רצה) **its sabbaths** all the days of **its desolation** (שׁמם), and you are in the land of your enemies, then the land **will rest** (שׁבת) and **shall pay** (רצה) **its sabbaths**…If then their uncircumcised heart humbles itself, and then they **pay** (רצה) for their iniquity…And the land will be abandoned by them and it **shall pay** (רצה) **its sabbaths** while it lies **desolate** (שׁמם) without them, and they **pay** (רצה) for their iniquity, because they rejected my rules and their soul spurned my statutes (Lev 26:34, 41b, 43; cf. 25:2).[54]

> All of this land will become a ruin and a waste, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon *seventy years*. And it will be when *seventy years are fulfilled* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, declares Yahweh, and the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it an everlasting waste (Jer 25:11, 12).

> For thus says Yahweh, "When *seventy years are fulfilled* for Babylon I will visit you and I will establish my good word to you to return you to this place" (29:10).

53. Japhet discusses the use of Lev 26 and Jeremiah's seventy years, but does not take up the question of vertical versus horizontal collective judgment in that context. See Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1075-76.

54. On רצה (Q) as *pay* for iniquity (ן ו ע ֲ) in Lev 26:41, 43 see *HALOT*, 2: 1282. See JPS 1917 for translation of רצה as *pay/repay*; this is followed to a large degree by NJPS. Also see Schnittjer, "Bad Ending," 47.

> And he took into exile the remnant from the sword to Babylon, and they were for him and for his descendants slaves until the reign of the kings of Persia, to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land **paid back** (רצה) **its sabbaths**, all the days of **its desolation** (שמם) it **rested** (שבת), *to fulfill seventy years*. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia to accomplish the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh instigated the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he announced in all his kingdom and even in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth Yahweh the God of the heavens has given to me, and he has appointed me to build for him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Whoever among you from all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up'" (2 Chron 36:20-23).

The Chronicler's intentional allusion is demonstrated by using several of these terms from Leviticus: "pay back" (26:41), "desolation" (26:43), "rested" (25:2; 26:34), and "sabbaths" (26:34, 35, 43). The Chronicler innovates by making explicit connection between the land's sabbaths and Jeremiah's oracle concerning seventy years (see Jer 25:11; 29:10).[55]

The use of seventy years to signify judgment occurs in Isaiah 23:15-17 regarding Tyre and regarding Babylon in the Esarhaddon inscription (c. 679 BCE).[56] Zechariah twice refers to the seventy years of Jerusalem's suffering without directly referring to Jeremiah's oracle (see Zech 1:12; 7:5). The seventy years of Jeremiah are referred to directly in Daniel and Chronicles, and connected to Leviticus 26 in both cases. When Daniel observes Jeremiah's seventy years he offers a "Leviticus 26 style confession," only to learn that these are seventy weeks of years (see Dan 9).[57]

Jeremiah explains the seventy years in terms of slavery "among the nations" (Jer 25:11 LXX) or slavery to "the king of Babylon" (25:11 MT).[58] Jeremiah reinforces the seventy years to the Jehoiachin exiles of 597 in a letter rejecting the optimistic message of the false prophets (29:10). The Septuagint mildly adjusts this with

55. For other connotations see Magnar Kartveit, "2 Chronicles 36.20-23 as Literary and Theological 'Interface,'" in M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture,* JSOTSS 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 395-403. Also see Amber K. Warhurst, "The Chronicler's Use of the Prophets," in Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Edelman, eds., *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 175-81 [165-81]; Mark Leuchter, "Rethinking the 'Jeremiah' Doublet in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles," *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, 183-200.

56. See "Esarhaddon," *COS*, 2.120: 306. For discussion of the possible implications of the seventy years of Jeremiah see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 143-64; Mark Leuchter, "Jeremiah's 70-Year Prophecy and the לב קמי/ ששך *Atbash* Codes," *Biblica* 85 (2004): 509-11 [503-22].

57. Fishbane suggests that the "seventy sabbatical cycles" (or ten Jubilees) of Dan 9 plays off 2 Chron 36:21, which reads the seventy years of Jeremiah in relation to Lev 26:34-42, see *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 482-91.

58. See Steven M. Bryan, "The End of Exile: The Reception of Jeremiah's Prediction of a Seventy-Year Exile," *JBL* 137.1 (2018): 116-17 [107-26].

"When Babylon's seventy years are *about to be* completed" (36:10 NETS=29:10 MT, emphasis mine).[59] Jeremiah elsewhere used three generations to denote the duration of Babylon's rule: "And all the nations will serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land comes, then many nations and great kings will make him their slave" (27:7).[60] Whether Jeremiah means the seventy years as an exact period or round number or symbolic number akin to three generations is not important for the present purposes.

The Chronicler's innovative interpretation aligns with, broadly speaking, the references to the seventy years in Zechariah and Daniel. The messenger of Yahweh asks, "How long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry for these seventy years?" (Zech 1:12). Zechariah seems to think of the seventy years as literal rather than symbolic, and to associate the beginning and pending conclusion with the destruction (586 BCE) and rebuilding of the temple (within a few years of 520 BCE when the oracle is dated).[61] In a later exchange, Zechariah receives an oracle from Yahweh that implies his skepticism as to the purpose of the people's fasts over the seventy years—"Did you really fast for me, indeed for me?" (7:5).[62] In spite of these allusions to the twilight of the seventy years Zechariah looks forward to the restoration of Jerusalem and the return of the

59. Bryan suggests the phrase of the *Vorlage* of the LXX matched the MT, "When the seventy years are fulfilled for Babylon," but that a Septuagintal scribe or translator inserted "about to" (μέλλῃ). The reason for this adjustment may have been to soften the chronological challenges of an exact seventy-year period (see ibid., 117-18).

60. See Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah, A Commentary,* OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 307. Also see Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1074. Jer 27:7 is a MT plus (not in the LXX). The reference to seventy years in 25:11, 12 as three generations in 27:7 could be seen as a general figural reference however the difference between the MT and LXX is explained. For a summary of the debate surrounding 27:7 see William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah,* ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 2: 689-90. Lious Jonker argues that it cannot be determined if the Chronicler used the proto-MT or the *Vorlage* of the LXX, see "The Chronicler and the Prophets: Who Were His Authoritative Sources?" in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, 161 [145-64]. Jonker goes on to affirm that the Chronicler's use of seventy years has most affinity with Jer 29:10 (not 25:11, 12) since both Jer 29:10 and 2 Chron 36:21 focus on the restoration of the exiles (see 162). Strangely, Bryan's somewhat strenuous case for a completed literal seventy-year exile does not interact with Jer 27:7 MT (see "The End of Exile," 107-26).

61. The actual time between the destruction and rebuilding of the temple is a little more than seventy years, based on the reference in Ezra 6:15 (sixth year of Darius I = 515 BCE). See discussion in Michael R. Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8,* LHB/OTS 506 (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 93-95; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8,* AB 25B (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 117-18.

62. Four fasts are listed in Zech 8:19 "The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months"; those in the fifth and seventh months are referred to in 7:5, 6. The fasts: "fourth," lamented the breaking into Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:3-4; Jer 39:2; 52:6-7); "fifth" mourned the burning of temple (2 Kgs 25:8-10; Jer 52:12-14); "seventh," marked the assassination of Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25:22-25; Jer. 41:1-3); "tenth," commemorated the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:1; Jer 39:1; Ezek 24:1-2). For a discussion of the force of the rhetorical questions in Zech 7:5 as an indictment against the people who remained hardened against God's word in exile, see Stead, *Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 221-26.

remnant as an event of the future (8:3-7). Working out the already and not-yet of return and restoration of Jerusalem in Zechariah cannot be pursued here.[63] Whatever the timing, these passages infer that the destruction of Jerusalem should invoke true repentance. Confession would signal humility and turning to God for mercy. Daniel has the turning point of Leviticus 26 in view: "I prayed to Yahweh my God and I made confession (ידה)…we have sinned and committed iniquity (עוה)" (Dan 9:4, 5). The pivot from judgment to restoration reads "they shall confess (ידה) their iniquity (עון) and the iniquity (עון) of their ancestors…and I will remember my covenant" (Lev 26:40, 42).[64]

The Chronicler makes more concrete the predicted doom for breaking the covenant according to Leviticus 26. He explains the seventy years of exile as directly associated with the destruction of the temple in order to give the land its sabbaths. The personification of the land of promise runs across several contexts in Leviticus: the contamination of the land by the Canaanites, and later the Israelites, will cause the land to vomit out its inhabitants (18:24-28; 20:22), the trees bear foreskinned fruit that needs to be circumcised upon Israel's initial entry into the land (19:23-25), and the land needs to observe sabbath years (25:2).[65] The personification of the land offers a powerful figure to denote accumulated iniquity of the First Commonwealth. The Chronicler equates the seventy years of exile with the land's sabbaths. This follows the description that the judgment had been deferred while God persistently sent his prophets. Deferred judgment and cumulative guilt do not mean that there are no immediate retributive acts, nor are these mutually exclusive of the responsibility of individual persons or individual generations.

The Deuteronomistic and Chronistic narratives each present immediate judgments upon individuals and particular generations even while interpreting the continuation of the kingdom according to the patience and mercy of God. The Chronicler does not view the removal of the Davidic monarch, the destruction of Jerusalem and temple, and the exile of the people in 586 BCE, as the immediate judgment of Zedekiah's generation alone. Rather, the seventy sabbath years infer a penalty for rejecting God's will for nearly five centuries—"seventy sabbatical

63. The eschatological expectations for the return of the remnant and restoration of Jerusalem in Zech 8:1-7 do not fit easily with Fishbane's claim that for Zechariah (and the Chronicler) "seventy years meant seventy years" (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 481). Likewise, it is difficult to accept the cut and dry assessment that for Zechariah "the exile had ended" (Bryan, "The End of Exile," 112). Bryan's reading is based on Zech 1:11-17, and he mentions Zech 7:1-7 but does not interact with Zech 8 (112-13).

64. Baruch Levine invites comparison of this confession with the confession for the "guilt offering" (Lev 5:5) and the day of atonement (16:21), see *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 28, 106, 190. Von Rad considers the biblical notion of retribution as integral to the evil actions themselves. Rather than a separate word for punishment, "sin" and "iniquity" (חטא, עון) denote both the acts and their results (see *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 385, 266).

65. On the function of the personification of the land in Leviticus, see Gary Edward Schnittjer, *The Torah Story* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 344-47.

cycles."[66] The Chronicler often seems exacting, and he may mean seventy sabbaths for 490 years of rebellion. Or the seventy sabbath years might be seen as a round number inferring judgment for the comprehensive rebellion of the First Commonwealth.[67]

David Kimchi infers that the completion of the seventy years is the edict of Cyrus (c. 539 BCE) and thus began with the rise of Nebuchadnezzar and includes the fifty-two years of exile.[68] However, the period from the destruction of the temple to its rebuilding comes close to seventy years.[69] The seventy years without the temple in Jerusalem and Cyrus' edict directed toward the temple fits well with the centrality of the temple in Chronicles.

The contexts of two references to the seventy years in Jeremiah thematically correspond with the Chronicler's narrative interpretation in the last chapter of his story. The Chronicler emphasizes the reason for God's persistent sending of messengers to preach against the sins of the people as including the pity he had for his people and his dwelling place (2 Chron 36:15). This emphasis accords with the persistent warnings by the prophets across the years and including Jeremiah himself (Jer 25:4; cf. seventy years in 25:11). While Jeremiah associates the seventy years with Babylonian rule (27:7), in his letter he connects the completion of these years with renewal of his people. "For thus says Yahweh, 'When the seventy years are fulfilled for Babylon, I will visit you and I will establish upon you my good word to return you to this place'" (29:10). The Chronicler may make allusion to this connection when speaks of Cyrus' edict after referring to the seventy years of exile.

Conclusion

The exile in Chronicles functions as collective retribution for the rebellion of the First Commonwealth. The Chronicler's version of the exile explains divine judgment as deferrable and cumulative. The Chronicler establishes vertical accountability by tapping into Jeremiah's claim to continuity of prophetic warning. The rejection of Jeremiah's message—the latest of a long line—by Zedekiah and the city continues the long tradition of deriding the messengers of God, finally provoking God to

66. Since sabbath years are due once every seven years, seventy sabbaths are due for 490 years of rebellion. Even a strong proponent of the Chronicler's theology of immediate retribution like Dillard concedes the Chronicler has cumulative guilt in mind when he narrates the indictment against Zedekiah and the seventy years of exile (see *2 Chronicles*, 300-1). Also see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 480-85; Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*, 108-9.

67. Williamson says that the dates the Chronicler gives from the beginning of David's reign to the destruction of the temple come to a total of 474 years, plus the uncertain length of the reign of Saul (see 1 Sam 13:1 MT) meaning 490 years is "more or less co-extensive" with the period of the monarchy (see *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 418).

68. See Yitzhak Berger, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimḥi to Chronicles: A Translation with Introduction and Supercommentary,* BJS 345 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007), 281-82.

69. See Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 418.

wrath against his people. The Chronicler goes so far as to calculate the length of accumulated judgment by identifying Jeremiah's seventy years as the land's sabbath years *via* exile. By "doing the math" the Chronicler clears away mystery regarding the rationale of the exile, at least in one respect. If the secret things belong to God, they do not include the mathematical equation of the exile's duration in Chronicles.

The Chronicler's interpretation of the exile as collective retribution of the First Commonwealth may have come from Leviticus 26:39 as noted above. The Chronicler, in part, built his case for the judgment on allusion to Yahweh's word to Solomon including the need for the people to humble themselves (2 Chron 36:12 with 7:14) which, in turn, tracks with the needed response of the exiles (Lev 26:41). The Chronicler contextualized the exile into an opportunity for response to God's will by equating it with the sabbaths granted to the land by means of the exile of the covenantal community (26:34, 35, 43). The Chronicler does not quote, "And those of you who survive shall rot because of their iniquities, in the land of your enemies, and even because of the iniquities of their ancestors they will rot with them" (26:39). Yet, by emphasizing both the responsibility of the final generation of the First Commonwealth and establishing their continuity with the vertical collective identity of their ancestors, 2 Chronicles 36 shares this aspect of the ideology of exile with Leviticus 26.[70] The Chronicler, it seems, built his interpretation of exile from the larger context of Leviticus 26, beyond those passages to which he alludes directly.[71] In both Leviticus 26 and 2 Chronicles 36 the judgment of God against the iniquities of the exiles and their ancestors situates the expatriates in a context where they need to humble themselves and respond to God's plan for restoration.

Individual and collective retribution are not mutually exclusive.[72] There is merit in the recognition by Wellhausen, von Rad, Japhet, and many others, that the Chronicler makes explicit retributive justice in the lifetimes of many kings and many generations of the First Commonwealth. Greater attention to individually oriented accountability in no way precludes collective responsibility. The problem appears to be a mindset that says the Chronicler can only emphasize individual justice if he

70. Jeffrey H. Tigay explains that the punishment explained in Lev 26:39 "occupies the middle ground between cross-generational retribution and the principle that individuals should be rewarded and punished only for their own deeds. It recognizes the reality of the former but holds that cross-generational rewards and punishments only come to those who merit similar retribution on their own" (*Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 437). See the qualifications to Tigay's point in Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, AB 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2327-28. Also see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 392-96.

71. The idea that cited texts point to whole contexts is one part of Dodd's hypothesis which remains viable even after his more speculative explanations on the use of scripture in scripture have been rightly challenged. See C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 126; and see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 37.

72. See Kaminsky, "Sins of the Fathers," 328. Also see J. Gordon McConville, "Retribution in Deuteronomy: Theology and Ethics," *Interpretation* 69.3 (2015): 288-98.

rejects the possibility of collective culpability. Reality does not work that way, and neither do the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic narratives.

Human persons simultaneously sustain multiple intersecting and overlapping social functions as a part of ordinary identity. An ancient person may be husband/father, and in a larger familial context brother/son/uncle/grandfather, while in society being temple-goer/city elder/employee/taxpayer, and so on. All of these social roles naturally carry their own sorts of responsibilities whether or not rules are followed and whether or not injustice prevails. Normal social collectives and their associated responsibilities in no way excuse personal accountability, and vice versa. Individual responsibility and collective identity do not cancel each other out even with respect to deferred judgment for the same responsibilities. There are all sorts of contingencies, exceptions, and the like, but ancient people naturally exist in multiple collectives, all of which is the normal stuff of identity and social function.[73]

People typically do not object to collective identity when it means they benefit. But, talk of fairness and justice materialize quickly and persistently in the wake of corporate accountability, especially punishment.[74] Collective responsibility for citizens of a kingdom is not exceptional. Framing the issue between individual and collective poles diverts attention from the more basic concerns of retribution and responsibility. When God holds an individual generation to account as an individual generation, he in no way abdicates his prerogative to bring judgment against the larger social collectives of which the individual generation is a part. The Chronicler's explanation of the exile juxtaposes the persistent patience of God toward the First Commonwealth against the callous rebels who ridicule his messengers sent to warn the people of impending peril. The Chronicler does not conclude that the failure of the people eliminates their responsibility or the mercy of God. In Chronicles the exile is not the end, but fulfillment which opens new possibility and new responsibility. The edict of Cyrus simultaneously embodies fulfillment and new beginning for individual citizens who will participate in the assembly of God's people.

These findings regarding the final chapter of Chronicles need to be measured against the book as a whole, at least broadly. First, the corporate perspective is not confined to the final episode of the book. The ideals of deferred judgment and collective responsibility are made explicit beginning with Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:25) and Josiah (34:26-28).[75] Second, Mark Boda argues that 2 Chronicles 36 needs to be

73. Similarly Knoppers says "Collective identities may be multiple and overlapping" which he applies to ethnic identity, see "Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within?" in Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 307 [305-31]. Also see Gary N. Knoppers, "Ethnicity, Genealogy, Geography, and Change: the Judean Communities of Babylon and Jerusalem in the Story of Ezra," in Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau, eds., *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 147-71.

74. For a similar comment see Kaminsky, "Sins of the Fathers," 327.

75. See Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*, 102-8. For other examples of deferred

interpreted in light of its intertextual connections with previous parts of the story. He suggests Hezekiah's revival of worship that had been shut down by Ahaz, along with Manasseh's repentance and restoration, need to be collated with the book's ending.[76] To this can be added David's renewal of honor to God by means of bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, which had been neglected in Saul's day. Days of declension and judgment provide opportunity for God's people to respond in the fashion of David, Hezekiah, and even Manasseh. Together these narratives provide models for the Chronicler's target readers. These connections suggest some of the responsibilities and directions for the shared identity of those who accept the implications of Cyrus' call to go up.

judgment in Chronicles, see Ehud Ben Zvi, "Are There Any Bridges Out There?: How Wide Was the Conceptual Gap between the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles?," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography*, 64-70 [59-86].

76. See Mark J. Boda, "Identity and Empire, Reality and Hope in the Chronicler's Perspective," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography*, 249-72.