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BEYOND ETHNICITY: BELONGING IN THE FORMER PROPHETS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
PINES SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

BY  
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



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May 2024



## **Acknowledgments**

This project could not have reached completion without the generosity, kindness, and dedication of others. First of all, I am deeply indebted to my two readers, Professors Nili S. Fox and Katherine E. Southwood. My words cannot adequately express my gratitude for all that they have done for me. Through her support, guidance, and mentoring over the years, Prof. Fox has gone above and beyond what could be expected. Her wisdom and keen insight have always steered me in the right direction. Prof. Southwood's advice has spurred my thinking in new directions. I am especially grateful for introducing me to the work being done on belonging. Her encouragement has often sustained me in the course of this research.

I am also very grateful to Prof. Richard Sarason, Director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies, who has more than once opened new opportunities and generously offered advice. I would not have gotten this far without the kindness and mentoring of Profs. K. Lawson Younger, Jr., James K. Hoffmeier, and Richard Averbeck. Additionally, each of my teachers and fellow students on this journey have contributed so much to my understanding of the Bible and the world.

I would like to give special thanks to my family, especially my wife, Carolon, and my son, Caleb, for their love and great patience. They were my enthusiastic cheering section in those times when this project's completion seemed so far away. Most of all I would like to thank God who has carried me every step of the way and shown me the value of the journey and not the destination.

## **Abstract**

In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites demonstrate a wide range of attitudes toward their neighbors that extend from marriage to murder. This interdisciplinary study uses the analytical framework of *belonging*, which integrates identities, social locations, and normative values, to investigate why this range of attitudes arose and persisted. Discussions in the literature typically approach the subject through the lens of ethnic identity. While valuable, ethnic identity alone cannot account for all of the attitudes observable in the text. This study will demonstrate through three case studies in the Former Prophets that belonging can offer a coherent explanation not only for the wide range of attitudes but also for those that are seemingly inconsistent and contradictory. This analysis is contextualized through the examination of literary and iconographic material from ancient Egypt. Analysis through the lens of belonging shows that, in both the material from Egypt and the Hebrew Bible, social locations, normative values, and other identities beyond ethnic identity often play a decisive role in the nature and outcome of interactions between neighboring people groups.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview of the Problem**

The Hebrew Bible (HB) is replete with accounts of the interactions between the Israelites and their neighbors. Despite the intensity and frequency of these interactions, however, a coherent explanation for the particular shape they take is lacking. To the extent the relationships of the Israelites with their neighbors are addressed, the subject is usually discussed through the lens of identity, specifically ethnic identity.<sup>1</sup> The adversarial nature of the relationship is often, but not always, assumed. This is understandable because, as might be expected in ancient texts, many of these accounts are tales of wars and battles. They tell of the conflicts over land and the struggle for dominance. Hostility and violence are spread across the centuries. It would be easy, when discussing the biblical history of Israel, to see this pattern of mutual hostility and violence as something of the default paradigm. In many ways, biblical texts unambiguously encourage this perspective, yet a careful reading reveals that this paradigm of default hostility and violence is not the whole story.

There are other kinds of stories in the HB that are completely at odds with this vision of the Israelites' attitudes toward their neighbors. Abraham maintained friendly relations with the Canaanites and almost everyone else he encountered. The HB indicates the Israelites sustained good relations with the Kenites and the Tyrians for long periods. Naaman, the Aramean general, was cured of a skin disease by the Israelite prophet

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<sup>1</sup> The scholarship will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Elisha, and at other times the text portrays Aramean kings and future kings showing deference to the same prophet. Deuteronomy enjoins the Israelites from abhorring an Egyptian or an Edomite (Deut 23:8). These are but a few examples of the positive portrayals of the Israelites' neighbors. Leveen expresses the contrasts eloquently,

The people Israel lived in a land inhabited and surrounded by others who could not be written out of existence. Canaanites and Midianites, Philistines, Phoenicians and Aramaeans were adversaries or allies, competitors or partners. Sometimes enemy became ally or friend became foe. Israelites held a range of attitudes toward those outsiders from avoidance to curiosity, distrust to desire, and from rejection to welcome. At times the Israelites reacted violently to their neighbors. Others among them found a way not only to coexist but also to thrive in relationship to other peoples.<sup>2</sup>

The question remains as to how and why this wide variety of attitudes toward the Israelites' neighbors — ranging from marriage to murder — arose and persisted.

The question becomes all the more challenging when it is recognized that the different attitudes evident in the HB can at times appear to be inconsistent or contradictory. David was celebrated for his victories over the Philistines, yet at one time in his life, he lived with and served the Philistines. At another, he was served by Philistines who had not been conquered or captured by him. Most striking of all is David's dealings with the Moabites. When he was a fugitive, the king of Moab hid his parents from Saul at his request (1 Sam 22:3-4). As king, his attitude toward the Moabites radically changed for reasons not given in the text. He not only conquered the Moabites,

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<sup>2</sup> Adriane Leveen, *Biblical Narratives of Israelites and Their Neighbors: Strangers at the Gate*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Biblical Criticism 3 (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 1–2.

he also randomly slaughtered two-thirds of his prisoners using a measuring line (2 Sam 8:2). If the biblical author offers an explanation, it is cursory.<sup>3</sup>

This study aims to examine these relationships in a corpus that has an especially rich variety of attitudes and portrayals toward other people groups, the Former Prophets.<sup>4</sup> Previous studies generally focused on data from a single discipline. Works by archaeologists naturally focus on archaeology. Biblical scholars often focus on redactional or other literary approaches. Examination of comparative ANE material, where used at all, has often been haphazard. This study on the Former Prophets will be interdisciplinary. It will analyze the text using analytical tools from both anthropology and biblical studies while contextualizing the literary data by comparative analysis with material from the ancient Near East (ANE).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Though the task of bringing the narratives of the HB together into a fairly unified structure is an editorial enterprise, the distinction between an author and an editor in ancient texts is often not clear and may have considerable overlap. Therefore, for the sake of convenience, the term *author* will be used of the person(s) who produced the biblical text in its final form, with the recognition that it may reflect the work of one or more authorial and editorial hands.

<sup>4</sup> The Former Prophets, with the addition of Deuteronomy, are often referred to as the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). Martin Noth initially proposed as part of his version of a DtrH that Deuteronomy was the introduction to the historical narrative of Joshua-2 Kings. The idea that Deuteronomy is related to Joshua-2 Kings in a DtrH has received very widespread support to the point being, at times, assumed. Developments in the scholarship, however, have moved away from the concept of a Deuteronomistic History toward seeing Genesis-2 Kings as a unified Primary History. This study will accept the Former Prophets as a canonical subdivision of a unified Primary History. For additional discussion, see Konrad Schmid, “Deuteronomy within the ‘Deuteronomistic Histories’ in Genesis- 2 Kings,” in *Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Raymond F. Jr. Person, *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* 56 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 28.

<sup>5</sup> I recognize that the term *ancient Near East* is inherently Eurocentric. I use it in this study as it is the current convention in scholarship for designating a wide geographical area that encompasses approximately modern Morocco to Afghanistan

The comparative analysis with the ANE material is appropriate and necessary because the Israelites' attitudes toward their neighbors arose in the context of the regional and supra-regional socio-economic networks of which they were a part. It is, therefore, important to situate those attitudes in their ancient context. This study will show that these issues are not limited to the Israelites. Inconsistencies of this kind can be observed in other cultures of ANE and the eastern Mediterranean.

For example, the tomb of Seti I is one of the largest and most richly decorated among all the pharaonic tombs. Among the wall decorations was included the text, with illustrations, of an Egyptian book of the afterlife, *The Book of Gates*. Famously, these illustrations depict the so-called "four races" of ancient Egypt (Egyptian, Libyan, Cushite, and Asiatic) entering the blessed afterlife together.<sup>6</sup> What is remarkable about this scene is how much it contrasts with the typical Egyptian propensity for contempt toward foreigners.<sup>7</sup> This universalist sentiment is also not unique to Seti I's tomb. For instance, the Great Hymn to the Aten from the reign of Akhenaten extols the care of the Aten for all peoples,

You set every man in his place,  
You supply their needs;

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along the east-west axis and the Caucasus Mountains to Sudan along the north-south axis. Where more precise terms are available that do not privilege a Western perspective, they will be used.

<sup>6</sup> Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 62.

<sup>7</sup> Consider, for example, a prayer to Amun by Ramesses II, Seti I's son, "How (much) great(er) is he, the great Lord of Egypt, (than) to allow foreigners to approach his [Amun's] path! What are they to you, O Amun, these Asiatics, despicable and ignorant of God!" Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Battle of Qadesh - The Poem, or Literary Record 2.5A," in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 34.

Everyone has his food,  
His lifetime is counted.  
Their tongues differ in speech,  
Their characters likewise;  
Their skins are distinct,  
For you distinguished the peoples.<sup>8</sup>

Given the relative continuity in the culture of New Kingdom Egypt, strongly divergent perspectives toward the same foreigners such as these raise questions as to how both fit into a common worldview and how the ancient Egyptians perceived ethnic difference. This is complicated yet further by the reality that Egyptians were neither as hostile nor as welcoming as their rhetoric would suggest. Just as with the Israelites, these contradictions and inconsistencies beg for a coherent explanation.

As I demonstrate in this thesis, scholars have, for three decades, investigated related issues regarding the peoples of the ANE, and of ancient Israel in particular, mainly through the lens of ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, they have often drawn on theories of ethnicity to provide an analytical framework for their research. One of the most basic issues that needed to be resolved was whether the concepts of race and ethnicity could be

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<sup>8</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, “The Great Hymn to the Aten (1.28),” in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 46.

<sup>9</sup> The scholarship in this area of study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. To give a few examples: E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993); Carly L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014); Brian Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible: A Theoretical, Exegetical and Theological Survey* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019); Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998).

applied to the ancient world at all. Other issues have been raised including how these concepts should be defined and how they function in these cultures. Concerning the study of ancient Israel, numerous studies have attempted to ascertain whether the ancient Israelites saw themselves as an ethnic group in the modern understanding of the term, what were the components of that identity, and what formational processes brought about the creation of this shared ethnic identity. The scholarly literature tends to treat ancient Israel as an ethnographic case study for analyzing in detail the inner workings of their society with the HB and archaeology as their primary sources.<sup>10</sup> What is missing is a concerted attempt to understand the complex relationships of this ethnic group with its neighbors.

## **1.2 Thesis of This Study**

This study will argue that the attitudes of the Israelites toward their neighbors in the Former Prophets are best explained as the product of the influence of a variety of factors beyond ethnicity alone. Specifically, it will be argued that other identities besides ethnic identity, social locations, and normative values often play a decisive role in the nature and outcome of interactions between Israelites and their neighbors. Ethnic identity is not excluded, quite the opposite, but it will be argued that neither it nor any one factor should be privileged *a priori* in the analysis. Ethnic identity is applicable and relevant to the ancient context, but as an analytical framework, theories of ethnicity are limited in

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<sup>10</sup> This reliance on a single literary source is certainly a major drawback in these studies, but the scarcity of texts from the southern Levant in the Iron Age and the abundance of literary material from the Hebrew Bible renders it a necessity.

their heuristic potential by the narrowness of their scope to just one identity. Any given person has multiple identities, e.g. gender, parent, child, spouse/partner, colleague, etc., yet even expanding the scope to identity in general is insufficient to adequately explain Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors.

The modern anthropological framework of *belonging* has the advantage that it encompasses much more than identity. Because it does, it can adequately account for the wide variety of Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors as well the extremes and inconsistencies. Nira Yuval-Davis theorizes that belonging may be understood through intersectional analysis along three dimensions: identities, social locations, and normative values.<sup>11</sup> While her theorization of belonging was intended to be applied to modern individuals and people groups, it will be argued that the framework of belonging is also useful for analyzing people in an ancient context. As with modern people, the ancients had multiple identities. They were Israelites, Philistines, parents, children, and spouses. Ancient peoples had more than one social location. They were soldiers, kings, artisans, and farmers, but they also belonged to a social class whether wealthy, poor, or somewhere in between. Their perspectives were influenced by their normative values like religious ideology, royal ideology, or their family's values. As with modern people, they were situated, "in particular times and in particular spaces, along intersecting (or, rather,

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<sup>11</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, "Theorizing Identity: Beyond the 'Us' and 'Them' Dichotomy," *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 3 (July 2010): 267–68. cf. also Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*, SAGE Studies in International Sociology (London: Sage, 2011). Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 193–209.



mutually constitutive) grids of social power.”<sup>12</sup> Ancient or modern, it is the confluence of all these factors that shape one’s sense of belonging.<sup>13</sup> With this broader scope, the framework of belonging has greater heuristic potential to explain the extremes and inconsistencies in the Israelites’ attitudes toward others.

### **1.3 Methodological Challenges**

#### **1.3.1 Modern Anthropology**

At the outset, a number of difficulties present themselves. In anthropological studies, investigators are studying modern groups to which they have direct access. Individuals and groups may be observed for months or years. They may conduct extensive interviews to ascertain the meaning and context of the behavioral patterns observed. To the extent the people being studied have preserved a record of their history, the anthropologist, without necessarily affirming the factuality of this record, may access the people group’s account of its past.

Anthropologists would, at first glance, seem to have available for their research projects an ideal level of primary data. Nevertheless, scholars in the field have long recognized the numerous problems these studies face even with such rich sources of data. Not the least of these problems is the investigator(s) themselves. The anthropologist in the field cannot be a truly neutral observer. The things that are chosen for observation and closer study, the categories that they are placed in, the terminology used, the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> This theoretical framework will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.6.

characterization of the observed people group, and the entire conceptual framework of the study are all shaped by the biases of the researcher.

Accounting for these issues, of course, there still remains the challenge of the difference between an emic and etic perspective on the culture of the people studied. Just as a researcher should not be put in the position of the sole authority on the meaning and significance of the behavior observed, neither can the emic understandings of those observed be accepted uncritically. In short, there is no easy correction to observer bias nor one definitive perspective on the behavior and culture of a people group. Each of these topics can be and has been treated at length and will not be elaborated on here. These issues of methodology in the anthropology of modern peoples do serve to highlight the pitfalls researchers face even in circumstances where access to primary data is extremely favorable.

### **1.3.2 Research on the Ancient World**

Research into similar issues in ancient contexts brings additional methodological problems. First and most significantly, the information available for the study of ethnicity is incomplete. Without living witnesses, the closest that we can approach the social realities of ancient people groups are their texts and archaeology. For the particular period of Iron I and II in the Levant, few texts of any kind exist. Iconography is also scant. The large, monumental iconographic works for which Egyptian temples and Assyrian palaces are justifiably famous are almost completely absent in the Levant.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> A stele depicting a stylized representation of probably the moon-god from Geshur is one of the few exceptions. *Cultic Stele of the Moon-God*, 9th-8th centuries

main sources for information during this period include a few reliefs from the aforementioned temples and palaces, Egyptian texts, Assyrian and Babylonian texts, archaeological remains, some inscriptions in Northwest Semitic languages, the inscriptions from Ugarit, and the Hebrew Bible.<sup>15</sup>

As this list suggests, what has come down to the present from this period is the result of the accident of discovery. Consequently, the gaps in our knowledge are enormous, and what we do have is unevenly distributed. Each of these sources, in their turn, has significant limitations. Archaeologists have long wrestled with how to connect the assemblages of artifacts that they uncover with the people who used them.<sup>16</sup> Inscriptions offer a narrow window into a few points of view on other groups. Their scope and usefulness for extrapolating the author's views are circumscribed by the limited purpose of the text. Wall reliefs share many of these limitations with the added consideration of artistic conventions. The artistic conventions for a given place, period, and purpose will radically affect how images are represented. Those viewed as foreigners, depending on the context, may be depicted in what seems to be an ethnographic fashion with distinctive phenotypical features: clothing, headgear, skin

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BCE, Basalt, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem,  
<https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/371435>.

<sup>15</sup> As far as the palaces and temples are concerned, the reliefs of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu depicting battle with the Sea Peoples and the reliefs from the palace of Sennacherib showing the conquest of Lachish are important witnesses to the history of this region in the Iron Age.

<sup>16</sup> This dilemma is famously characterized as connecting “pots with people.” An artifact of Philistine style and decoration does not necessarily mean it was owned by, produced by, or otherwise indicates the presence of a Philistine. The item(s) could have been traded or produced by a non-Philistine in imitation of Philistine style.

color, hair/beard style, etc. In other iconographic representations, such as those depicting kings defeating their enemies, foreigners may be stereotyped with large numbers of individuals being depicted identically.

### **1.3.3 The Former Prophets**

The Former Prophets has its own limitations in its utility for reconstructing the past. As literature, the Former Prophets consists mostly of historical narratives. The question then arises as to whether, or to what degree, these narratives may be considered history. This has been a source of much debate, and the numerous issues involved cannot be covered here. Some of the most germane to this study are the biases of the biblical authors, the ways the narratives construct the past and the author's present, and the literary nature of the narratives.

A common critique of the biblical narratives, especially in the Former Prophets, is the unabashed way it presents the history of Israel through a Yahwistic theological lens. The theological lens may be characterized even further as the Yahweh-only perspective within ancient Yahwism that is also reflected in the Torah. At other times, scholars perceive the influence of royal ideology or a pro-Davidic apologia. These lenses are sometimes derisively characterized as the author's bias or dismissed as propaganda. The irony of the critique is the modern scholar's presumption that *any* account of the past can be completely objective and bias-free, including their own. Despite postmodern challenges to the notion of true objectivity, modern historiography of the ANE still often

reflects the desire to uncover “how it actually was” in an objective sense.<sup>17</sup> The heart of the critique does not so much discredit the biblical author as reveal the lack of self-awareness of the modern one. While the biases in the historical narratives do make an evidenced-based reconstruction of the past more difficult, they do reveal the normative values of the biblical authors. This information is valuable for this study in that it provides crucial information for analyzing belonging.

Since history is not just available “out there” to be objectively perceived, scholars have recognized the ways narratives construct the past (i.e. history) and are used by authors to shape the present. If history is constructed, then how should we define history? The definition that historian Johan Huizinga has proposed is, “History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past.”<sup>18</sup> In rendering an account to itself, the civilization or, in this discussion, an ethnic group constructs the past. Their established identities, social locations, and normative values (the biases above) influence how the past is constructed, and how the past is constructed further shapes their identities and normative values.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, to say the past was constructed and

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<sup>17</sup> The phrase, “*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*” is susceptible to different English translations which render quite different nuances. “How it actually was” often appears in English language scholarship. The translation “how it essentially was,” adopted for this study, is that of Römer. According to Griffin, the translation of *eigentlich* as “actually” misunderstands von Ranke’s point, and “how it essentially was” better captures his view. cf. Thomas Römer, “The Invention of History in Ancient Judah and the Formation of the Hebrew Bible,” *Die Welt Des Orients* 45, no. 2 (2015): 265–66. Helga M. Griffin, “Not the Way It Essentially Was,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 68.

<sup>18</sup> Johan Huizinga, “A Definition of the Concept of History,” in *Philosophy & History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1975), 9.

<sup>19</sup> Social locations may not be as amenable to being constructed in this way.

shapes identity does not mean that it is falsified or fiction. It might be both, but this conclusion does not automatically follow and must be demonstrated. The constructed past that informs identity and normative values may well contain much that is accurate regarding actual people, events, and movements. In sum, identities, social locations, and normative values influence those who write history, and the histories that are written can influence identity and normative values. The content of histories, though constructed, can still reveal information useful for our own reconstruction of the past.

The literary nature of the narratives comes with its challenges as well. The historical narratives of the Former Prophets are not a dry chronicle of events. They construct the past through stories. These stories have the usual characteristics of literary works. They have plot, structure, characterization, themes, motifs, protagonists, narration, and reported speech to name but a few. As is typical of antiquity, the narratives were meant to impress upon the reader a particular point of view on the past. From a modern perspective, filtering through the biases of the author is challenging enough, but sorting through how much of the narrative is the product of its nature as a story and how much should be considered a reflection of historical reality is yet more difficult.

Complicating this effort even more is the recognition that the Former Prophets are on some level a composite work. The work of multiple authors was likely redacted by multiple editors. In the process of transmission, the transformations that can occur as texts are copied by multiple, successive scribes also impact the version of the text now in our possession. In this light, “the original form of the text” or “the original autograph” that is hoped to use for historical reconstruction becomes exceedingly difficult to define.

Whereas the work of scholarship ideally should shed light on the compositional history of the text, if anything, the opposite has transpired. In the past, single authorship, double redaction, and triple redaction models for the composition of the so-called Deuteronomistic History have competed with each other to reign supreme as the general consensus of scholars.<sup>20</sup> None have prevailed, and upon closer examination, perhaps none ever could have. External evidence that might adjudicate among the competing proposals is lacking. The result is two-fold. The reasoning involved in making certain redactional decisions tended to be circular.<sup>21</sup> The proposed redactors and the proposed redactional layers perceived in the text are used to validate each other. The second result is the multiplication of redactional layers and redactional schemes. There were in reality as many different redactional schemes as there were scholars. Each scholar used their own judgment in making decisions on exactly where the redactional layers should be distinguished and to whom they should be attributed. For the same reason, there was an

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<sup>20</sup> The so-called Deuteronomistic History is a scholarly construct that includes Deuteronomy-2 Kings. The validity of this construct is contested. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 15 (Sheffield, UK: University of Sheffield, Dept. of Biblical Studies, 1981; German original 1943). Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Rudolf Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker. Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Festschrift Gerhard von Rad*, ed. H. W. Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 494–509.

<sup>21</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, "A Deuteronomistic Redaction In/Among 'The Twelve'? A Contribution from the Standpoint of the Books of Micah, Zephaniah, and Obadiah," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 268 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 235 n.8.

inflationary effect on the number of redactional layers that were identified. At times, it reached the absurd.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, consensus has proven elusive.

Redaction criticism is far from defunct, but scholarly opinion is coalescing around the idea that Genesis-2 Kings should be regarded in its final form as a united Primary History. This proposal does not deny the composite nature of this literature, but it does recognize that the final form has been edited into one work.<sup>23</sup> Themes, allusions, and other intertextual references stretch across the corpora into which Genesis-2 Kings have traditionally been divided. These intertextual phenomena make constructs such as the Pentateuch, Tetrateuch, Hexateuch, and Deuteronomistic History problematic. It also raises more pointedly the issue of whether redactional seams remain visible at all or whether the process of editing ultimately obscured them. The difficulty of identifying redactional seams, in turn, greatly impedes reconstructing the *Sitz im Leben* for the writing of a given text and, consequently, its date of composition.

### 1.3.4 Methodological Assumptions

This study will take as its point of departure that the concept of Genesis-2 Kings as the Primary History is the most viable proposal for how to view the composition and

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<sup>22</sup> Römer and de Pury recount that “Perlitt’s students, in helping their teacher prepare his commentary on Deuteronomy, identified so many layers in it that it became impossible to count them or attribute sigla to them.” Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, “Introduction,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. Albert de Pury, Jean-Daniel Macchi, and Thomas Römer, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 97–98.

<sup>23</sup> Konrad Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story: Israel’s Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible*, trans. James Nogalski, Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 29.



structure of the texts that will be discussed. For convenience, when this corpus is subdivided for discussion, it will be subdivided using the traditional canonical categories of the Torah and the Former Prophets. This is a conscious effort not to endorse a redactional or compositional scheme beyond the Primary History and to recognize the many intertextual connections in the corpus. One of the implications of working with Genesis-2 Kings as a Primary History is that the canonical order of the books and inner-biblical chronology are relevant for understanding the texts. If the text has been redacted into one work and there are intertextual linkages across the entire corpus, then texts in the Primary History should be understood in the context of what canonically preceded it. Specifically, the Former Prophets should be understood in light of the Torah. This is, in principle, not too unlike the heart of the proposal for a Deuteronomistic History where the Former Prophets was interpreted based on its assumed dependence on Deuteronomy.

The issues of history and historiography must also be addressed with regard to the texts that will be reviewed, especially the works of literature. The approach taken here toward texts, biblical and non-biblical, will be that what, if any, historical reality lies behind a text will be left undetermined. Intersectional analysis using the framework of belonging is valid and productive regardless of the answer to the question of historicity. The two extremes on the issue of historicity will be used to illustrate the point. If one assumes the absolute historicity of a biblical or non-biblical text, then it follows that a framework that is valid for analyzing human experience will also be valid and productive for analyzing the text. If the work is completely fictive, then, the degree to which an author has captured historical realism in their work is the degree to which a framework

that is valid for analyzing human experience will also be valid and productive for analyzing the fictional text. Reversing the perspective, if the analysis using the framework of belonging, presuming its heuristic validity, can demonstrate the coherence of the attitudes of the characters in the story toward others, then that suggests, but does not prove, some degree of historical realism. What it cannot adjudicate is historicity.

To the degree the historical narratives may be understood as historiography, they represent history as it is remembered. The form in which that historical memory comes to us is as story — as literature. Whether viewed as history, just story, or something else, the literary quality of these texts cannot be ignored. Plot, structure, characterization, motifs, etc. will be informative both for the author's attitudes and also for how the story should be understood internally. As different narratives are discussed, then, attention will be given to the author and what the text says about their attitudes and perspectives. In particular, the normative values the author promotes and/or assumes will be considered.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the view from the world of the story, the social forces that seem to be at work, and its inner coherence (or lack thereof) will be discussed through the framework of belonging.

#### **1.4 Terminology: Why Neighbor?**

At this point, it is important to reflect on the impact of terminology used as analytical categories in the discussion. Various terms can and have been used in the

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<sup>24</sup> To what degree the author is actively promoting certain ideas or assuming them is difficult to discern. It requires assessing the level of the author's conscious intentionality which may not be possible with an ancient text.

literature to describe those non-Israelites with whom the ancient Israelites came into contact. The choice of terminology is significant in that each choice carries with it connotations and assumptions about the nature of the people so described and the relationship of the Israelites to them. These connotations and assumptions then shape the kinds of analysis that can be done, yet few researchers discuss the rationale for their choices in their writing.<sup>25</sup> While no single term could be expected to perfectly fit all circumstances, the term *neighbor* will be preferred with other terms being used as circumstances require.

*Foreigner* or *foreign* is a popular choice in scholarly literature.<sup>26</sup> A *foreigner* can be defined as “a person belonging to or owing allegiance to a foreign country” or, more

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<sup>25</sup> Both Adrian Leveen and Brian Doak, for example, discuss their choice of terminology. Leveen, 5-8. Brian R. Doak, *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*, Essentials of Biblical Studies (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1–3.

<sup>26</sup> Brian P. Rainey, “Non-Peoples and Foolish Nations: Religion, Xenophobia and Ethnic Foreigners in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia” (Brown University, 2014). Anselm C. Hagedorn, “Looking at Foreigners in Biblical and Greek Prophecy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 57, no. 4 (2007): 432–48. Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde Im Antiken Juda : Eine Untersuchung Zum Sozialen Typenbegriff “Ger” Und Seinem Bedeutungswandel in Der Alttestamentlichen Gesetzgebung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). Reinhard Feldmeier and Ulrich Heckel, eds., *Die Heiden: Juden, Christen Und Das Problem Des Fremden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300-1100 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). For *foreign* modifying a noun, M. I. Rey, “Reexamination of the Foreign Female Captive: Deuteronomy 21:10–14 as a Case of Genocidal Rape,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 32, no. 1 (May 5, 2016): 37–53. Nancy Nam Hoon Tan, *The “Foreignness” of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9: A Study of the Origin and Development of a Biblical Motif*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 0934-2575 ; Bd. 381 (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008). Jan Krzysztof Winnicki, *Late Egypt and Her Neighbours: Foreign Population in Egypt in the First Millennium BC*, 1st ed., vol. XII, *Journal of Juristic Papyrology. Supplements* (Warsaw: Warsaw University, Faculty of Law and Administration, Chair of Roman and Antique Law, 2009).

simply, “a person who comes from another country.”<sup>27</sup> The *country* which is the point of reference is a distinct territory with well-defined borders, a people with a national identity, and often a centralized political state.<sup>28</sup> A possible problem is that the use of *foreigner* as an analytical category could import by implication concepts more appropriate to the modern nation-state.<sup>29</sup> Rather, care needs to be taken to consider what being a *foreigner* actually means.

This is not to dismiss the use of the term. From an emic perspective, very often ancient people groups did see themselves as a people connected with a place. Israelites, Moabites, Egyptians, Arameans, Philistines, etc. live within well-defined borders.<sup>30</sup> When a person crosses one of these borders, they have left their country and are a foreigner in the place they have entered. The Former Prophets often reflects the

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<sup>27</sup> “Foreigner,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foreigner>. “Foreigner,” in *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/foreigner>.

<sup>28</sup> “Country,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/country>; “Country,” in *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/country>.

<sup>29</sup> “Nation-State,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., accessed July 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nation-state>. and “Nation-State,” in *www.dictionary.com*, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/nation-state>.

<sup>30</sup> This also recalls archaeological models that understand zones of similar material assemblages as denoting the locations of the different peoples. This is a more sophisticated development from the simple equation of the presence of artifacts of a particular style with the presence of the people associated with that particular style. E. Bloch-Smith discusses the limitations of connecting these labels to peoples vis-à-vis both archaeology and text. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, “Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What Is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel’s History,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122, no. 3 (2003): 405–11.

presumption not only of clear distinctions in the geographic territories of people groups but also of a certain homogeneity in the people groups dwelling within a given territory. The phrase “land of the Ammonites,” for instance, suggests that the native population is only Ammonite. The biblical material also explicitly characterizes certain people as foreign or a foreigner (נכרי), so using the term as an analytical category is not necessarily a modern imposition on the ancient text.<sup>31</sup>

Where the term *foreigner* falls short is its connotation of social distance or outright alienation. It marks someone as not one of “us” but one of “them.” Evidence is abundant within the HB and outside it that ancient peoples did alienate, exclude, and dehumanize others. Thus, the negative connotations of the word *foreigner* are not always out of place. The problem is that the connotation *is* sometimes out of place, so the blanket use of the term imports into nearly every usage a connotation that may or may not be appropriate. Therefore, though *foreigner* is a viable and reasonable choice in many cases to describe the other people groups with whom the Israelites interacted, a term that does not come quite as loaded with other semantic freight is needed.

*Stranger*, used to translate זר in the HB, has also been employed in scholarly literature for categorizing those who are not Israelites.<sup>32</sup> Meaning “someone not known or not familiar” or “one who does not belong to or is kept from the activities of a group,” the

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<sup>31</sup> A few examples of references to foreigners include Deut 17:15, Judg 19:12; 2 Sam 15:19; 1 Kgs 8:41, 43, 11:1-8.

<sup>32</sup> c.f. Mark R. Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 33 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018). Notably, Leveen opted for both *stranger* and *neighbor*. Leveen, *Biblical Narratives of Israelites and Their Neighbors*. The publications in German cited under *foreigner* could also be cited here as the German word *Fremde* can be translated as either foreigner, stranger, or alien.

term *stranger* maintains or increases the sense of social distance that *foreigner* does but has the virtue of doing so without importing the modern concept of a nation-state.<sup>33</sup> It also has the benefit of being somewhat generic in that *stranger* does not specify in what sense or what level of identity someone is a stranger. Again, it emphasizes clearly that a person does not belong to “us.” The question immediately arises as to whether the term corresponds, in fact, to the lived experience of those involved. Like *foreigner*, the alienation implied by the term *stranger* is undermined by the fact it is not always appropriate. Using *stranger* as a primary descriptor for the non-Israelites with whom the Israelites interacted encourages assumptions of negative attitudes when it is those very attitudes that require examination. Therefore, *stranger* will not be used except where it is a contextually appropriate translation of a text.

Another popular choice in the humanities is to create the most basic opposition by means of reference to “the Other.”<sup>34</sup> The term is extremely abstract and strips out all

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<sup>33</sup> These definitions are taken as representative and not authoritative of the normal use of this term. *Merriam-Webster* adds other possibilities which are worth mentioning: “1: one who is strange: such as a (1) : foreigner (2) : a resident alien; b: one in the house of another as a guest, visitor, or intruder; c : a person or thing that is unknown or with whom one is unacquainted “Stranger,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stranger>; “Stranger,” in *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/stranger>.

<sup>34</sup> cf. Cynthia Edenburg, “Construction of Identity by Marginalizing an Imaged Other,” in *Collective Memory and Collective Identity: Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History in Their Context*, ed. Johannes Un-Sok Ro and Diana Vikander Edelman, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Volume 534 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 85–103. and Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Vikander Edelman, eds., *Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period*, T & T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014). The general thrust of this discussion and many of its specifics is indebted to Brian

information except the notions of alterity and/or opposition. As Rainey observes, however, “scholars are often unclear about what kind of work they expect the concept of the Other to do in their analysis of so-called Others.”<sup>35</sup> He argues that, because of its use and associations with philosophical hermeneutics, scholars in the humanities have come to employ the term as “jargon” and as a “buzzword” to indicate “a piece of humanistic scholarship should be taken seriously as a piece of humanistic scholarship because it engages the Other.”<sup>36</sup> Too often, the use of the concept of the Other has more to do with scholarly fashion than communicating a substance that advances their argument.

Johannes Fabian, who is credited (or accused) of popularizing the use of *the Other*, discussed how the widespread use of the term in anthropology has led to an inflationary effect.<sup>37</sup> By this he means, the more *the Other* is used, the less substance or value stands behind it. Since it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to invest the Other with the kind of substance that is needed to make it heuristically useful, it will be avoided unless specific reference is being made to the relevant concepts in philosophy or anthropology.

Employing categorizations such as *non-Israelite*, *non-Egyptian*, and *non-Assyrian* do not entirely escape this critique as these terms themselves do not communicate much beyond what they are not. Like the Other, they create a basic dualistic opposition that lumps all humanity into two people groups, X and not X. While by no means ideal, this

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Rainey who engages in a more thorough treatment of the subject than will be found here. Rainey (2014), 11-21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>37</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (Columbia University Press, 1983).

kind of nomenclature does offer some benefits over the Other. The Other depends on the existence of a boundary, but terms like *non-Israelite* provide a point of reference rather than relying on pure abstraction. It provides the *I* that stands in relation to the Other. With the point of reference, the boundaries can be anchored, with further discussion, to what and who are perceived to be in-group/out-group from an emic perspective. The discussion can move toward using, as Jonathan Z. Smith puts it, “the language of ‘difference’” rather than “the language of the ‘other.’”<sup>38</sup> He contends that language of the ‘other,’ “invites misunderstanding, suggesting, as it does, an ontological cleavage rather than an anthropological distinction. Much better is the language of ‘difference,’ which is as relational and relative a terminology as the ‘other’ is absolute.”<sup>39</sup> The not-X type of terminology, then, does have some utility, though limited.

A better term, and the one that will be preferred, is *neighbor*.<sup>40</sup> Ordinarily defined as “one living or located near another,” the word provides some of the “relational and relative” context the other terms lack.<sup>41</sup> Unlike *foreigner*, *neighbor* does not imply modern concepts of national boundaries or strong boundaries of any kind. *Neighbor* only implies proximity, which is relevant for both the context and the significance of the

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<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 241.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Publications embracing this terminology include: Doak, *Ancient Israel’s Neighbors*. and Nadav Na’aman, *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005). James C. Miller, “Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible: Problems and Prospects,” *Currents in Research* 6, no. 2 (June 2008): 170–213.

<sup>41</sup> “Neighbor,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neighbor>.



attitudes of one people group toward another. Similarly, unlike *stranger*, *neighbor* does not imply either unfamiliarity or exclusion between groups. If anything, the term implies, or implies the likelihood of, a strong familiarity. Whereas the *Other* is purely abstract and provides no information except that of a basic opposition, the idea of *neighbor* is rooted in the reality of geographic or social proximity. The inclusion of social proximity is important because the Israelites had neighbors that were geographically distant. The most notable example is that of the Assyrians. Though Assyria was geographically distant, the long reach of their empire brought them into social proximity with the Israelites.<sup>42</sup> It also requires a relation of some kind as a result of the physical and/or social proximity. *Neighbor* also goes beyond the simple antithesis of describing a person or group as a *non-X* (e.g. non-Israelite). Perhaps most importantly, *neighbor* can accommodate a range of complex attitudes that can extend across the spectrum from strongly positive to strongly negative.<sup>43</sup> Individuals and groups who are relatively near to each other geographically or socially can form strong bonds that lead to a sense of being natural allies or equally strong conflicts leading to a feeling of natural, perennial enmity. Social, cultural, religious, political, and economic forces, among others, can lead to radically different outcomes. Diachronically, the same two groups can move between both ends of the

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<sup>42</sup> The use of “social proximity” is meant only to distinguish the relationship from one of geographic proximity. It should not be understood to diminish the extreme violence or threat of violence that proximity created.

<sup>43</sup> An exception to the neutral connotation of *neighbor*, at least in the United States, would be certain positive associations made with the word based on idyllic conceptions of the classic American neighborhood. These associations are no doubt facilitated by television programming in prior decades. A prominent example in the culture would be the children’s program Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood where the genteel title character famously asks, “Won’t you be my neighbor?”

spectrum.<sup>44</sup> *Neighbor*, in short, does the work of conveying the relation of the people(s) involved as one of relative geographic or social proximity without unduly prejudicing the perspective of the observer as to what other qualities that relation may have. Therefore, *neighbor* will be the preferred descriptor in this study to refer to those who are in geographic and/or social proximity to the Israelites. It must be noted, however, that *neighbor* can be understood in a much broader way to include not only non-Israelites but also Israelites. Put another way, the semantic range of *neighbor* can include in-group people as well as out-group people. For clarity, when *neighbor* is used without further qualification in this study, only non-Israelite neighbors are meant. Intra-Israelite group dynamics are beyond the scope of this study.

## 1.5 Outline

This study will begin in Chapter 2 with a review of the varied approaches taken to ethnicity by scholars of the HB and the ANE. This literature in this area of study has not received as much attention as other issues concerning the HB. Much of the literature was published after 2000 with some earlier works in the 1990s. Because it has not received much attention, a linear development in scholarly thought cannot be traced. Moreover, the question of ethnicity has implications for a number of disciplines beyond biblical studies. These include research on the Assyrians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arameans, Philistines, Egyptians and Cushites, and the ancient Greeks. Past research involves studies focused on archaeology in addition to those focused on texts. In an attempt to get

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<sup>44</sup> One need only to consider the evolving relationships among various European peoples such as the British and the French across the last five centuries.

a clearer sense of how scholars have and are handling the question of ethnicity in the ANE and the eastern Mediterranean, it will be necessary to explore the related issues in these various clusters of research in conjunction with research on the Israelites and the HB. This chapter will identify a few major tendencies and the research including the methodological difficulties of using texts and archaeology to reconstruct the ancient world.

Chapter 3 will shift from the applications of the concept of ethnicity and its theorizations by scholars of the ancient world to examining the theories of ethnicity themselves. Before dealing with ethnicity, however, the question of whether race or ethnicity is the appropriate term for ancient people groups and whether either is appropriate at all. Anticipating future discussion, it will be argued that race is an inappropriate concept for discussing ancient people groups. The concept itself has no basis in reality and was created to perpetuate systems of oppression. Furthermore, this comparatively modern concept does not reflect the thinking of the ancient people groups under discussion. By contrast, ethnicity, properly understood, can be applied to ancient people groups.

The discussion will address the three main theories of ethnicity: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Primordialism assumes that ethnicity is something a person is born into and is intrinsic to the person. From this perspective, ethnicity is seen as unchangeable. Instrumentalism takes the opposite position and sees it merely as an instrument of social power. Individuals and groups use ethnicity to gain social advantages. Following the critique of both of these approaches, Fredrik Barth advanced a

proposal now known as constructivism. Constructivism understands ethnicity to be situational and contingent and defined primarily by its boundaries. As will be seen in Chapter 2, the idea of defining an ethnic group by its boundaries has proven to be a compelling idea with, for the ancient world, unfruitful results. For all of its merits, a constructivist approach to ethnicity will be passed over in favor of the concept of belonging. Belonging will be preferred, as stated above, for its capacity to account for a wider variety of factors that capture more dimensions of the human experience. The study will emphasize throughout that, though belonging is a productive analytic framework, other frameworks are both valid and useful.

Chapter 4 will provide context for the biblical material by applying the framework of belonging to texts and iconography from ancient Egypt. The Israelites' attitudes toward their neighbors arose in the context of the regional and supra-regional socio-economic networks of which they were a part. It is, therefore, important to situate those attitudes in their ancient context. The choice of Egypt is appropriate for a few reasons. First, there are few inscriptions available from the southern Levant to complement the archaeological findings. Fewer still, if any, are relevant to the present study, so examination of one of the Israelites' closer neighbors is precluded for lack of evidence. Ancient Egypt for centuries of their shared history had frequent contact with the southern Levant. Egypt's empire, which extended into the Levant, only ended in Iron I. Even after the end of its empire in the Levant, pharaohs would continue to conduct military campaigns there. Some of these, Shishak/Sheshonq, Tirhakah/Taharqa, and Necho II, would be mentioned in the Former Prophets.

What makes Egypt especially useful for study is the content and variety of the surviving material. The Egyptians often expressed their attitudes toward their neighbors. Those expressions also come to us in different genres and contexts. Royal inscriptions and iconography proclaim the greatness of the king. Religious texts and iconography proclaim the greatness of the gods. We may also add works of literature and items from domestic contexts. Of special interest for our purposes will be the Tale of Sinuhe and the Report of Wenamun. Because they are works of literature, these two stories represent the closest Egyptian analogs to the biblical narratives. As the examples earlier indicate, the Egyptians express both positive and negative attitudes toward their neighbors and sometimes in ways that seem contradictory. Thus, Egypt offers significant advantages when studying belonging.

Beginning with Chapter 5, three case studies from the Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible will be analyzed using the framework of belonging while also giving some attention to other analytical lenses. The first of these case studies will be the Rahab/Jericho narrative from Joshua 2 and 6. It is the individual story of Rahab interwoven with the larger story of the destruction of Jericho and its people. The inconsistency to the point of contradiction in the two parts of the narrative is high. The Israelites spare Rahab and her family and eventually include them in Israel. At the same time, they are slaughtering everyone and everything else in her city. Heightening the contrast is the fact that she is not just spared from death. From a literary perspective, she is cast as the protagonist and hero of the story. One person in a collectivity is valorized while the rest of the people in the same collectivity are killed.

The Samson cycle in Judges 13-16 is the second case study. The contrasts and contradictions can be united in Samson himself. He has a distinct preference for Philistine women, yet he shows an equally distinct preference for murdering Philistine men. His behavior literally ranges from marriage to murder. This raises an additional issue. Concurrent with Samson's behavior, on a collective level, the Israelites behave in ways that sometimes express openness to the Philistines and sometimes express contempt. It will be argued that the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in the Samson cycle can be coherently explained using the framework of belonging.

The third case study is the life of David in 1-2 Samuel. A distinctive characteristic of his portrayal is that he does not adopt one attitude toward the Israelites' neighbors consistently or permanently. It shifts back and forth through most of the account. Because the account covers much more than a few episodes in the protagonist's life, this case study will not go into depth on every interaction David has with a non-Israelite, but it will focus on key periods in David's story that illustrate broader trends and issues in his dealings with the Israelites' neighbors.<sup>45</sup> David is at first characterized as the champion of Israel. The narrative starts with his shocking defeat of Goliath and builds on this with his prowess as a military commander. In his fugitive period, his attitudes toward Israel's neighbors, and the Philistines in particular, dramatically changes for the better. Then it

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<sup>45</sup> One episode that will not be covered directly is David's pursuit and destruction of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30). For this episode, there is no lack of coherence either within the story or for the reader. He killed them because the Amalekites had captured the families of David and his men, stolen their possessions, and burned their town. There is additional theological significance related to the ban imposed by Yahweh on the Amalekites and the contrast that creates between Saul and David, but the episode is not informative for David's attitudes toward non-Israelites.

changes just as radically again when he becomes king, but not consistently. It will be argued that his behavior cannot be easily accounted for by relying on the lens of ethnicity, politics, or simple survival. The additional tools that belonging provides, however, can begin to bring coherence to his behavior.

Finally, Chapter 6 will summarize and synthesize the analysis from Egypt and the case studies in the Former Prophets. It will be argued that the framework of belonging can show the inner coherence of these widely varied, extreme, and seemingly inconsistent attitudes toward neighboring peoples. It will also show that the biblical material reflects many of the tendencies found in the Egyptian material so the biblical material should probably be understood as typical of its ancient context.

## Chapter 2: The Problem of Ethnicity in Studies on the Hebrew Bible and the ANE

### 2.1 Clusters of Research

Interest in the study of ethnicity relative either to the HB and/or the ANE has arisen primarily since 2000. Studies before the end of the 1990s were done and will be discussed below, but they were somewhat rare. For example, the monographs by Theodore Mullen, *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (1993) and *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (1997), attempted to tackle the interaction between issues of ethnicity and the portrayals of the Israelites in the HB. Since this area of research is not fully developed relative to other aspects of biblical studies, publications likewise are still a patchwork. It will be necessary then to explore clusters of research that approach ethnicity and the HB and ANE with several analytical lenses. Particular attention will be given to those works whose topics are the most relevant for explaining the variety of ways the ancient Israelites related to their neighbors. It should be acknowledged at the outset that the delineation of these clusters should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Substantial overlap does exist between them. There is, nevertheless, value in sketching a picture of the overall academic landscape. Some clusters of research focus on a specific people group: the Assyrians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arameans, Philistines, Egyptians and Cushites, and the Ancient Greeks.<sup>46</sup> A second major research cluster revolves around Israelite identity, its content,

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<sup>46</sup> The millennia-long, historical entanglement of the Egyptians and the Cushites warrants their treatment together. For much of their shared history, Egyptians ruled Cush, and for approximately a century, the Cushites ruled Egypt as the pharaohs of what is now



boundaries, and formation. Finally, there are studies on the HB and the issue of others, ethnicity, nationality, onomastics, etc. A few of these studies address aspects of ethnicity, identity, and Israel's neighbors and are the most pertinent to the present study.

The sections that follow will survey the relevant scholarship in each subject area. To the extent there is development or an exchange of views among scholars, these will be traced. Because scholars are researching these subject areas in parallel and often independently of each other as sub-disciplines within an academic field, the survey will show that many of the same methodologies are employed and in similar ways. Likewise, many of the same problems arise across these subject areas. For example, a recurring theme is the appropriate role of archaeology in delineating ethnic groups. Another issue is the usefulness and reliability of texts for historical reconstruction generally and the reconstruction of ethnic consciousness specifically. Because these discussions in the scholarship are happening more or less independently of each other and with attention to just the particular questions of the sub-discipline, developments in one subject area do not necessarily have a direct impact on the others. Consequently, while some preliminary analysis will be offered throughout, more substantive analysis will be reserved until the end of the survey in order to pull together such a wide array of academic studies into dialogue with each other. It will identify and discuss the themes, assumptions, and methodological problems that are common across these subject areas. Finally, a path forward will be introduced that will be developed further in the following chapter.

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called the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. This, of course, is but one brief illustration of a far more complex web of political, economic, military, and personal connections.

## 2.2 People Group Studies

### 2.2.1 Assyrians

The idea of probing the characteristics, history, development, and even existence of ancient ethnic groups is hardly unique to scholars concerned with the ancient Israelites. For those investigating the Neo-Assyrian (NA) empire, the central concern is understanding the composition of this multi-ethnic, far-flung state. Different approaches include analyzing the onomastic data available from the tens of thousands of administrative and other documents preserved in the various archives that have been excavated. The assumption behind this approach is that the linguistic and theophoric elements in the names provide a significant clue as to the ethnic identity of the person or, at least, of their parents. Parpola was less confident in these kinds of analysis and endeavored to understand whether and to what degree people of different ethnicities became socially and linguistically assimilated into the larger Assyrian society.<sup>47</sup> He adopted a model that relied on a multifaceted understanding of ethnicity in which a person's sense of ethnic identity was one component of their sense of belonging. Parpola articulates his model in terms of ethnic identity being "only one of several secondary identities an individual may have."<sup>48</sup> In later scholarship, *intersectionality*, divested of any automatic connotation of discrimination (though not excluding it), may best describe his model of identity. He concludes that people of different ethnicities incorporated into

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<sup>47</sup> Simo Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 6–7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 n.6.

the NA empire, through the processes of linguistic and social assimilation, did develop an Assyrian identity. These processes were uneven in their distribution across the empire, and Assyrian identity did not prevent or exclude maintaining their previous ethnic identity.

Mario Fales, by contrast, pursues identifying ethnicity in the NA empire, not through sociological processes, but through texts.<sup>49</sup> While others address onomastics, he examines “ethnic-group terms” expressed in nouns using the Akkadian “suffix of relation or pertinence,” the so-called *nisbe* form.<sup>50</sup> This has the advantage, according to Fales, of by-passing the need to deduce the ethnicity of the bearer of a name and rely on the explicit indications of origin whether it be an ethnic, geographic, or some other designation. He concludes that these designations ultimately must be understood in the context of what it meant to be *Assyrian* and the hegemonic ambition of the monarchy to expand “Assyrian-ness.”<sup>51</sup> This Assyrian-ness was itself a flexible concept that at times reflected position within the hierarchy or positionally included in the population of Assyria.<sup>52</sup> At other times, it designated adjectivally things that were produced in Assyria or in the Assyrian manner.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, Fales concludes that the designation “Assyrian” and contrasting *nisbes* of other ethnonyms encompasses two tendencies. The first is a

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<sup>49</sup> Mario Fales, “The Composition and Structure of the Neo-Assyrian Empire: Ethnicity, Language and Identities,” in *Writing Neo-Assyrian History. Sources, Problem and Approaches*, ed. R. Mattila, G. Lanfranchi, and B. R. Rollinger, State Archives of Assyria 29 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 53. The suffix takes the form of either -āy or -āyum.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

certain pride in what is Assyrian, and the second is an impulse to expand those who were included by that designation.<sup>54</sup>

One of the outstanding features of these two works is the conscious effort to view ethnicity within a more sophisticated theoretical framework than the essentialist understandings that are still prevalent in the scholarship of the ancient world. Ethnicity is understood by Parpola and Fales as flexible and complex. Notions of ethnic identity change over time, or, in the case of the Neo-Assyrian empire, may be imposed by the king. Certain portions of conquered populations may be forced to belong whether they wish to or not. This, of course, does not arise from any sort of magnanimity on the part of Assyrian kings. It is an expression of Assyrian hegemony and the idea that the king has the mandate to bring order to the world through obedience to him.<sup>55</sup> Studies such as these provide helpful steps forward in that they recognize factors beyond simple ethnic identity and the complexity of ethnic identity itself in their efforts to explain Assyrian attitudes toward others.

### **2.2.2 Canaanites**

Also among textual approaches to dealing with ethnicity and people groups are attempts to define the Canaanites. To give one illustrative example, Neils P. Lemche, in one of the earlier attempts to discuss ethnicity in the ANE, argues that the ancient scribes did not have a clear idea as to where Canaan was and that the Canaanites did not know

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>55</sup> Machinist, 85, 89.

they were Canaanites.<sup>56</sup> Lemche advances the idea that much of the modern concept that *Canaan* was a known and well-defined place and *Canaanites* were a similarly well-known people finds its origins in the Eurocentric perspective of modern scholars. Specifically, the attribution of national and ethnic consciousness to the average person is a modern imposition on the ancient sources.<sup>57</sup> Noteworthy in this respect, Lemche relies on a dubious comparison between errors from an early stage of modern ethnography and the scholars working with textual sources related to the Canaanites.<sup>58</sup> Instead, he explains the perceived incongruity in the sources as “a lack of appropriate criteria among the ancients by which to distinguish among the different states and peoples of their own age.”<sup>59</sup> Lemche’s analysis, however, infantilizes the ancient inhabitants of the Levant and Egypt. He assumes that they were somehow incapable of gaining reasonably accurate information and forming clear ideas about the regions nearest themselves even as they built vast trade networks and engaged in regional warfare. Na’aman and Rainey leveled additional critiques against Lemche’s work.

Nadav Na’aman responded to Lemche by returning to the ancient sources that refer to Canaan and Canaanites. He sought to show that the ancient sources were quite clear on the location of Canaan in contradiction to Lemche. He also accused Lemche of demonstrating poor scholarship in his methods for elevating the most ambiguous and

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<sup>56</sup> Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanites*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 110 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), 152–54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 152–153.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 50–52.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 153.

least significant text as the standard for judging all others, fragmenting the meaning of *Canaan* and *Canaanite* unnecessarily, arbitrarily selecting interpretive solutions that suited his theory without evidence, and not dealing with the implications of his own interpretive selections.<sup>60</sup>

Independently of Na'aman, Anson F. Rainey vigorously refuted Lemche's argument along the same lines.<sup>61</sup> He countered that the sources show the ancient scribes did in fact have a clear understanding of where Canaan was as a geographical entity and that the Canaanites did understand themselves to be Canaanites. In making this argument, he consciously eschewed any resort to modern theory in a rejection of Lemche's critique. Rather, he opted for relying on "the simple, straightforward meaning of the passages" and "allowed [the ancient scribes] to speak within the context of their own times and their own understanding."<sup>62</sup> Rainey reverses Lemche's critique and charges him with relying on modern theory for his conclusions. Though Rainey's position of giving greater credence to the text is well taken, his assertion that his reading is a bias and theory free reading is problematic as well. In doing so, he leaves his own assumptions unexamined even as he criticizes Lemche for his.

While this academic exchange is earlier than most of the other publications reviewed here, it is illustrative of an approach to issues of ethnicity in the ancient world.

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<sup>60</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "The Canaanites and Their Land: A Rejoinder," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 26 (1994): 407, 410.

<sup>61</sup> Anson F. Rainey, "Who Is a Canaanite? A Review of the Textual Evidence," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 304 (1996): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1357437>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 12.

On both sides of the debate, the main thrust of the argument rests on the analysis of the primary texts, and the differences lie in interpretation. The one intrusion of anthropology and ethnicity is brief and almost haphazard in Lemche's work. Furthermore, unacknowledged in Lemche's conclusions is the presentism of his assumption that the ancients were somehow less sophisticated and less aware of their known world than modern people.

### **2.2.3 Phoenicians**

A subfield of study unto itself is the research conducted on the Phoenicians. Here the issues of ethnic identity are especially prominent. There is no doubt that there was a civilization that was, depending on the period, thriving which the Greeks called *Phoínix*. That name has continued into its current English form. Unfortunately, no one else, other than the Romans who borrowed their word from the Greeks, calls them the linguistic equivalent of *Phoínix* whether it be the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Ugaritians, or the Israelites via the HB. The ancient inhabitants of the Lebanese and Syrian coasts certainly did not use any form of the term. Moreover, there is no evidence that this area along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean was ever a political unity. On the contrary, the data is abundant that others viewed the region as politically fragmented. People, places, and things were referred to according to their association with one of the major city-states, usually Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos. The few inscriptions that survive from the region are of a West Semitic dialect and reflect the same orientation toward city-states but otherwise, reveal little about the self-identity of the people.

Therefore, broad studies of the Phoenicians routinely address in some manner whether they existed at all as a people group. For example, Mark Woolmer approached the subject, inevitably, through a synthesis of text and archaeology.<sup>63</sup> This synthesis is organized according to general topics such as history, government, economy, warfare, art, and religion. Woolmer in the early part of his work addresses the issue of identity directly which he describes as “contentious.”<sup>64</sup> His assessment is that it is entirely unclear whether the inhabitants of this area ever had a unified political identity or a sense of being a nation. He also argued that the trading activities of the major cities likely would have made them ethnically diverse.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, his work treats the Phoenicians as a collectivity. For Woolmer, the cultural commonalities create enough linkages to warrant maintaining the academic construct even where political unity is absent.

Josephine Crawley Quinn adopted a more skeptical stance on the Phoenicians.<sup>66</sup> She places her emphasis on the very fragmentary and incomplete nature of the evidence and so questions the edifice of scholarly reconstruction built on it. She contends that, “the modern notion of the Phoenicians as a people with a shared history, culture, and identity...is the product of relatively recent European nationalist ideologies.”<sup>67</sup> Quinn’s study is in many ways an extended deconstruction of the Phoenicians as an academic

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<sup>63</sup> Mark Woolmer, *Ancient Phoenicia: An Introduction* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Josephine Crawley Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians*, Miriam S. Balmuth Lectures in Ancient History and Archaeology (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 4.



construct. She intends in doing so to encourage opportunities to see new possibilities from the existing textual and archaeological evidence when a coherent civilization is not assumed.<sup>68</sup>

Adopting an equally skeptical position is Nancy O. Meyer in a 2018 dissertation.<sup>69</sup> Meyer's dissertation is relevant in that she considers the implications of attributing ethnicity to ancient people on a deeper and more sophisticated level than other studies on or adjacent to the Phoenicians. In setting up a discussion of the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Northern Polity in her terms, she reviews the questions of ethnicity and Phoenician identity. Meyer's methodology strongly emphasizes archaeology over text and applies a very high standard for the use of texts both from the HB and inscriptions. She states, "All textual sources will be considered equal, and equally assumed inaccurate unless a second source—archaeology or another written source *from another group*—can be found to corroborate the text."<sup>70</sup> What results are explicitly minimalist positions concerning ethnic identities in the ancient world.

To summarize, ethnic identities in the ancient world cannot be truly known. What we think we know of ethnic identity, according to Meyer, is often the result of the biases and ignorance of outsiders both ancient and modern. Likewise, the Phoenicians are barely known from their own perspective if at all. They were not a single political unit but did

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>69</sup> Nancy O. Meyer, "The Real Israel Disembarked: The Phoenician Origins of Samaria" (Ph.D., California, The Claremont Graduate University, 2018).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 6.

share a common language and material culture. Meyer, perhaps as a consequence of this ambiguity, varies between referring to the Phoenicians with the singular *group* and the plural *groups*.<sup>71</sup> The quandary produced by the tension of her minimalist approach to history, ethnicity, and the ancient world comes to the fore with:

In the end, no genuinely comprehensive history can be written (indeed this is true of all historical pursuits), but surrendering is not an option...In an effort to confront history and understand it, however, some kind of organizing principle must be assigned to groups. Names and descriptions of boundaries have to be set. Identifying ethnicity (group identity), as artificial as it may be when we decide to place artificial constructs on these groups, is a reasonable goal.<sup>72</sup>

In making this methodological move, she is explicitly guided by the fact that Oppenheim ran into the same problem when trying to write about Mesopotamian religion.<sup>73</sup> When confronted by the epistemological agnosticism produced from this level of methodological humility, both Oppenheim and Meyer, unlike Quinn, decided to forge ahead anyway.

Meir Edrey took a route similar to Woolmer and numerous other scholars.<sup>74</sup> What was produced included overviews of history, religion, architecture, shipbuilding, and funerary practices. These seem to be intended to lead inductively to answer the question

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 39, 41.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>73</sup> A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 172ff.

<sup>74</sup> Meir Edrey, *Phoenician Identity in Context: Material Cultural Koiné in the Iron Age Levant*, *Alter Orient Und Altes Testament*, 0931-4296, Band 469 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2019). In addition to Woolmer, cf. Brian Peckham, *Phoenicia: Episodes and Anecdotes from the Ancient Mediterranean* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014). Sader approached the subject through an exclusive focus on the Iron Age Levantine coast. Hélène S. Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*, vol. 25, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2019).

of Phoenician identity. Edrey reaches the conclusion that the Phoenicians can be identified as a distinct ethnic group with social boundaries that defined it relative to others.<sup>75</sup> He does so using a combination of approaches that fall into both constructivist and primordialist categories. He argues that the common: name, the ancestry of the people in the area traditionally identified as Phoenicia (as indicated by DNA analysis), material culture, and language distinct from similar linguistic groups nearby “create social boundaries that often distinguish one ethnic group from the other.”<sup>76</sup> The remainder of the monograph emphasizes, among other things, the significance of the continuity in the material culture of the region from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age.

The scholarly work on the Phoenicians highlights a few important issues concerning ethnicity and ancient peoples. The first is that scholars are effectively working with the same pool of very limited data. The differences lie in interpretation. The difference that made the greatest impact on the conclusions reached was not some new bit of information or new insight on existing data, but epistemic. The individual scholar’s epistemological stance on what can be learned from the data ultimately determined the kinds of conclusions that were reached. Both kinds of conclusions are needed. Crawley Quinn’s skepticism reminds us of the limits of the existing knowledge base — the limits of what can be known with reasonable certainty. Also, a periodic challenge to long-held assumptions may stimulate thinking in new directions. At the same time, it is perfectly

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 11.

legitimate to reach beyond the bounds of what is strictly provable to draw reasonable inferences from the scattered data. Woolmer and Edrey represent efforts to do this. This study will do the same with the Former Prophets. The fact that the Former Prophets presents incomplete data filtered through a literary and ideological lens does not require a position of extreme skepticism. This study will assume that reasonable inferences can be drawn from the Former Prophets's portrayal of the Israelites' attitudes toward their neighbors.

#### **2.2.4 Arameans**

Mirko Novák's "Assyrians and Aramaeans: Modes of Cohabitation and Acculturation at Guzana (Tell Halaf)" delves into an illuminating case study in ethnic interaction.<sup>77</sup> He works extensively with the archaeological record supplemented with inscriptions as the main avenue of investigation. Novák looks at how Aramean identity interacted with Assyrian identity in the Iron Age with specific reference, as the title makes explicit, to ancient Guzana. Following a more constructivist approach, Novák endeavors to show how the arrival of the Arameans and subsequent conquest by the Assyrians had a cultural impact on both groups. In terms of theories of ethnicity, Novák seems to loosely equate material culture with ethnic identity.

The significance of Novák's research on Guzana for this work is that he highlights in a compact, diachronic case study the different ways ancient people groups, not unlike

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<sup>77</sup> Mirko Novák, "Assyrians and Aramaeans: Modes of Cohabitation and Acculturation at Guzana (Tell Halaf)," in *Assyria to Iberia. Art and Culture in the Iron Age*, ed. Joan Aruz and Michael Seymour (New Haven, CT; London: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Yale University Press, 2016).

modern ones, responded to their neighbors and how these responses can be discerned in the archaeological record. Significantly, the inscriptional evidence is needed to provide context for the archaeological evidence. Changes in architecture, city planning, and artifacts lack meaning without the information from texts. Novák also demonstrates that the complexity of one's sense of belonging goes beyond a simple question of what people you belong to. One of the key issues he raises is the ways that uneven relations of power impacted (or failed to impact) the attitudes of the Aramaeans and the Assyrians toward each other. Moreover, the processes associated with conflict, acculturation, and assimilation all play a role in the eventual outcome.

### **2.2.5 Philistines**

Perhaps even more than the Phoenicians and no doubt owing to their starring role in Judges-2 Samuel, the literature on the Philistines is legion. The portion of that literature which concerns us is considerably narrower. While there are many works on specific aspects of either the language or material culture of the Philistines, only a few consider them in terms of their relationship, as an ethnic group, with other ethnic groups. Frequently, the debate among scholars concerns issues of chronology, whether strata in different sites should be correlated as belonging to the same period. Depending on the answer, one could posit a succession of groups, cultural assimilation, ethnic segregation, and ethnic hostility. The specific problem at issue is conflict over Israel Finkelstein's proposal of a low chronology for various sites in the southern Levant which challenged the prevailing paradigm. Also at issue in these works is the recognition of the need for a more sophisticated approach to ethnicity but a lack of clarity on how to apply it. The

groundbreaking work of Fredrik Barth is often cited with approval, but reliance on Barth does not produce any consistency or uniformity in the final results. Reference to Barth does not even necessarily break down the reflexive tendency to marry the almost-proverbial “pots and people.”

One of these works is an article by Bunimovitz and Faust in 2001 who contended that neither the proposal of Finkelstein nor Amihai Mazar are adequate explanations of the absence of Philistine and Egyptian artifacts in each other’s sites.<sup>78</sup> Finkelstein’s low chronology required that the absence of Egyptian artifacts in certain Philistine sites and vice versa should be explained as chronological separation.<sup>79</sup> These (literal) pots are missing because the corresponding people aren’t there. Amihai Mazar, in Bunimovitz and Faust’s presentation, argued for the two groups being contemporaneous but culturally separated.<sup>80</sup> In contrast to both, Bunimovitz and Faust argued for both the Egyptian and Philistine artifacts being contemporaneous and cultural contact.<sup>81</sup> Their thesis is that certain kinds of artifacts were regarded by the contemporaneous people as culturally significant. Whereas other kinds of artifacts flowed freely between the different people groups, these culturally significant artifacts were held back for in-group use. Relying on Barth, they characterized these artifacts as representing an ethnic boundary.

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<sup>78</sup> Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, “Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation, or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 322 (2001).

<sup>79</sup> Bunimovitz and Faust, 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Building on Bunimovitz and Faust is the article “Coexistence and Impermeability: Egyptians and Philistines in Southern Canaan during the Twelfth Century BCE” by Tristan Barako.<sup>82</sup> Like Bunimovitz and Faust, Barako rejects the basis for Israel Finkelstein’s so-called *low chronology* by introducing an explanation of the archaeological record that accounts for the profile of the material culture without it. He does so by means of a case study comparing Ashdod (Philistine) and Tel Mor (Egyptian), and in this, he is making a more specific application through a case study of the more general point made several years earlier by Bunimovitz and Faust. His thesis is “that two propinquitous sites can, indeed, be both contemporaneous *and* possess different material culture assemblages.” The explanation for this assertion is that, in this border area between the two groups, the arrival of the Philistines in formerly Egyptian territory created a social dynamic of conflict. One of the practical results of this political conflict was a social and/or economic barrier to obtaining each other’s goods.

Avraham Faust and Justin Lev-Tov wrote about the uneven development of Philistine acculturation to the Canaanite societies in Iron Age I.<sup>83</sup> They advance the thesis, again relying on Barth’s concept of defining ethnic groups by their boundaries, that distinctive aspects of Philistine culture took on the quality of being ethnic markers in

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<sup>82</sup> Tristan Barako, “Coexistence and Impermeability: Egyptians and Philistines in Southern Canaan during the Twelfth Century BCE,” in *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in The Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C. III - Proceedings of the SCIEM 2000- 2nd EuroConference, Vienna, 28th of May-1st of June 2003*, ed. Manfred Bietak and Ernst Czerny (Wien, Austria: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007).

<sup>83</sup> Avraham Faust and Justin Lev-Tov, “The Constitution of Philistine Identity: Ethnic Dynamics in Twelfth to Tenth Century Philistia,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 13–31.

their conflict with the state in the highlands (presumably Israel).<sup>84</sup> Faust and Lev-Tov considered these ethnic markers to be pottery, pork consumption, and the linear Philistine script.<sup>85</sup> Over the course of 150-200 years, according to them, these markers took on greater significance for the Philistines rather than less. A shift occurred in Iron II where these markers saw a sharp decline. Faust and Lev-Tov argue that the decline can be attributed to changes in their relations with their neighbors which had the effect of problematizing the boundaries associated with the markers.<sup>86</sup> This led, according to Faust and Lev-Tov, to the decline of their use. These finally result in a situation in which Philistine identity is retained but the ethnic markers have disappeared in favor of acculturation with Canaanite society. Though further critiques by others will follow, it should be observed at this juncture that, for Faust and Lev-Tov's thesis to work, they must envision a fairly simplistic dynamic between the Philistines and the highlands in the early stages as one of conflict.

Aren Maeir, Louise Hitchcock, and Liora Horwitz, in an article published two years later, sought to refute Faust and Lev-Tov's thesis.<sup>87</sup> They argued that Faust and Lev-Tov looked at too little of the archaeological evidence and dealt with it in too simplistic of a manner. Maeir *et. al.* criticize them for their lack of awareness of

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<sup>84</sup> Their thesis is a reapplication of Bunimovitz and Faust's earlier conclusion about the significance of certain cultural features.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>87</sup> Aren M. Maeir, Louise A. Hitchcock, and Liora Kolska Horwitz, "On the Constitution and Transformation of Philistine Identity," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 1-38.



developments in the field and for relying on older tropes of pottery and pigs.<sup>88</sup> What they contend instead is that the Philistines were not a uniform culture. It is evidenced by the diversity in the artifact assemblages on at least two levels. First, the artifacts recovered at Philistine sites do reflect a foreign origin, but the origin is not solely the Aegean. The artifacts have affinities to Mycenaean, Cypriot, Minoan, Anatolian, and south-central European cultures.<sup>89</sup> Secondly, the sites are different from each other. Maeir *et. al.* observe regional variation in pork consumption and hearth design and location among others.<sup>90</sup>

Methodologically, in addition to casting a wider archaeological net, they argue for “a critical stance that resists essentialist conceptions of identity, while emphasizing fluidity and taking into account that which is seemingly marginal.”<sup>91</sup> It is not clear, however, how Faust and Lev-Tov were making an essentialist argument. They were explicitly examining the archaeology in terms of ethnic boundaries rather than ethnicity as something inherent and essential to the person or people. Likewise, it is not clear that Faust and Lev-Tov would disagree that ethnicity is fluid. They do implicitly assume the *persistence* of ethnic identity through time (for which there is ample evidence in the case of the Philistines). That, however, is not the same as essentialism.

From a Barthian perspective, which emphasizes the fluidity of ethnicity, that fluidity can coexist with the persistence of ethnic identity. The continued existence of an

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 6-8.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 4.

ethnic identity does not make it static. Rather, the fluidity can be manifested in a variety of ways. At its most basic level, the cultural content associated with an ethnic identity may change over time or be different in different circumstances. Another way fluidity may appear is the boundary markers may change. Also, the relative importance of those boundaries can undergo development. These last two are where Faust and Lev-Tov's thesis places its emphasis. Fluidity can occur with regard to membership or, better put, who is accepted as belonging. Sometimes the boundaries can be porous allowing changes to occur more easily in who belongs as one of "us" and who does not. Seen from an individual perspective, opportunities to belong to a particular group may be open or rigidly excluded. Through all of these types of fluidity, a particular ethnic identity may persist. This is not to discount Maeir *et. al.*'s critique. Faust and Lev-Tov's analysis was faulty, but their implication that Faust and Lev-Tov assumed an essentialist understanding of ethnicity was mistaken.

They make the more pertinent point that Faust and Lev-Tov had interpreted the evidence in an ethnocentric way.<sup>92</sup> Maeir *et. al.* are, of course, themselves attentive to the ethnic dimension, yet they mainly do so with their focus on demonstrating the heterogeneous nature of Philistine culture(s) in contradiction to Faust and Lev-Tov's assumption of homogeneity. Elsewhere, they depart from ethnocentric explanations of artifact assemblages and identify other elements that need to be taken into consideration. For pig husbandry, for example, ecological and economic factors are potential influences for the variation seen not only in Philistine sites but in the entire eastern Mediterranean.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 6.

Variations in script, they argue, more probably relate “to the presence of a limited number of scribes of different ethnic origins, skill levels, and varieties of training, not to an ethnic group.”<sup>93</sup> The adoption of a “formalized alphabetic script” by the Philistines is attributed to international trade.<sup>94</sup> The significant point from this academic exchange for this study is that explanations that center ethnicity as the lens of interpretation are likely doing so in a reductionistic manner. This exchange emphasizes the need to look at factors beyond ethnicity.

Hermann Niemann also considered the Philistines from an archaeological point of view.<sup>95</sup> He, however, brought together three elements that distinguish his study from others and make it most relevant for the current one. First, he includes not only the archaeological assemblages but also those assemblages in the context of historical geography. Second, this information is brought together with the portrait of historical events presented in the HB. Finally, he is especially attentive to the question of the actual relations between the peoples of the coast (the Philistines), the Shephelah (undetermined), and the highlands (Judah). He does so explicitly centering the Philistine perspective. Niemann’s chapter in the Killebrew volume on the Philistines is one of the few that deal with the question of ethnicity and the Israelites’ relationships with their neighbors. Here, even more so than Maeir *et. al.*, Niemann seeks to interpret artifact

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>95</sup> Hermann Michael Niemann, “Neighbors and Foes, Rivals and Kin: Philistines, Shepheleans, Judeans between Geography and Economy, History and Theology,” in *The Philistines and Other Sea Peoples in Text and Archaeology*, ed. Ann E. Killebrew and Gunnar Lehmann (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

assemblages and relations among people groups while relying on factors other than ethnicity. If anything, except for the Hebrew Bible, Niemann seems to actively avoid employing ethnic differences as an explanation of the evidence.

It is here that Niemann's work shows considerable weakness. His nuanced handling of archaeology gives way to painfully simplistic, superficial, and sometimes outright mistaken analysis of the HB.<sup>96</sup> For instance, he cites Isa 11:14 as evidence that Israelites considered the inhabitants of the coastland "greedy," but this passage is discussing the destruction and plundering by the Israelite returnees *on* the Philistines. Somewhat paradoxically, Niemann demonstrates in the archaeology sections the central thesis of this study that it is necessary to look beyond ethnicity to find an adequate explanation for the attitudes of the ancient Israelites toward their neighbors. At the same time, however, he is inconsistent with his methodology. He often layers onto the HB an unwarranted interpretation that makes ethnicity and ethnic conflict the primary lens of the biblical authors. One of his sections claims the first biblical picture of the relationship between Israelites and Philistines is that of "the 'Evil' Philistine."<sup>97</sup> For this picture, he spares only six sentences before embarking on a lengthy discussion of geography and history from an archaeological perspective. He contends the biblical picture is that of enmity resulting in the institution of the monarchy. Little more can be said of his view because of the extreme brevity of his account. What can be added comes from the lead into this brief section where he articulates the view that the biblical portrayal of Israelite

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 248 n.16.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 244.

conflict with the Philistines serves “ideological and theological aims,” specifically that of “Davidic royal ideology.”<sup>98</sup> His second biblical picture does receive slightly more than four pages, and it contains an assorted mash-up of biblical texts often with no context, attention to genre, or evidence to support his claims.<sup>99</sup> Niemann at one point admits, “Of course, these are speculations based on the biblical ‘Saul-David-narrative.’”<sup>100</sup> In the end, Niemann’s sometimes compelling work with the history, geography, and economics of the southern Levant is positioned against a straw-man argument based on the HB.

Shirly Ben-Dor Evian revisited the evidence underlying the prevailing paradigm for the arrival and settlement of the Philistines in Canaan.<sup>101</sup> The new paradigm that she puts forward is that Monochrome pottery often identified as characteristic of the Philistines does not reflect Philistine settlement but rather unspecified “cultural exchange between the Levant (southern Canaan, Cilicia, and Syria) and certain Cypriot traditions.”<sup>102</sup> The Philistine settlement should be identified with the Bichrome phase that was accompanied by many other changes in the archaeological record.<sup>103</sup> Thus, in contrast to Barako’s position of ethnic impermeability, she argues that Philistine settlement occurred after the end of Egyptian control of the area.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 258-262.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>101</sup> Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, “Ramesses III and the ‘Sea-Peoples’: Towards a New Philistine Paradigm,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 36, no. 3 (August 2017): 267–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ojoa.12115>.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 278-279.

Ben-Dor Evian's proposal is compelling, but its main relevance for the present study is not the timing, location, or manner of Philistine settlement. Rather, her work offers an additional perspective on how archaeological data can or should be connected with the identity of people groups. As with Maeir *et. al.*, she argues for the presence of "deep change" as a better indicator of the presence of a people. On one hand, her argument breaks down somewhat the old 'pots and people' criterion, because the arrival of certain seemingly diagnostic 'pots' does not necessarily mean the arrival of the 'people' associated with the pots. On the other, the new, more demanding standard of "deep change" is still essentially the more nuanced, but standard, paradigm of equating an archaeological culture with a people.<sup>105</sup> What is not addressed methodologically is when and how "deep change" does not indicate a change in the people. As has been long recognized, in Iron II the Philistine material culture begins to incorporate "strong Levantine influences," but no one argues that the Philistines as a people group disappeared at this time and were replaced by others.<sup>106</sup> This is because our interpretation of the observed archaeological cultures, and their relationship(s) with other archaeological cultures, is strongly driven by texts, often but not exclusively the HB, that attribute certain people groups to certain locations and historical periods.

### **2.2.6 Egyptians and Cushites**

As stated earlier, the literature on Egyptian and Cushite ethnic identity will be treated together due to millennia of close contact between their cultures. Scholars are

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 271-272, 278.

<sup>106</sup> Maeir *et. al.*, 26.

becoming increasingly aware that it is difficult to speak of one without reference to the other. Exemplifying this awareness is *Ancient Egypt in Its African Context: Economic Networks, Social and Cultural Interactions* by Andrea Manzo.<sup>107</sup> It is a short work that was designed to condense a mountain of textual, iconographic, and archaeological data on this issue.<sup>108</sup> Manzo demonstrates through these three avenues the intensive interaction between Cushites and Egyptians throughout their shared history and the ways they each influenced the culture of the other. Manzo's work is noteworthy in two regards. First, it is intended to represent the present state of scholarship on Egypt in its African context, especially vis-à-vis the racially biased scholarship of the past. Second, Manzo does not reflect on questions of Egyptian and Cushite identity from an anthropological perspective or on ethnic boundaries in the Barthian mold. Rather, he gives his discussion theoretical cohesion through the concept of *entanglement*. In the case of Egypt and Cush, the contact through the bi-directional movement of people between them, the economic interdependence, and political rivalry resulted in a complex web of mutual influences. As this study will consider the perspective of Egyptians toward their neighbors, Manzo's and related works will be essential for providing nuanced context.

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<sup>107</sup> Andrea Manzo, *Ancient Egypt in Its African Context: Economic Networks, Social and Cultural Interactions*, electronic resource, Cambridge Elements. Elements in Ancient Egypt in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>108</sup> In describing this work as condensed, I specifically avoided the words *introductory* or *introduction* because this does not read like an introductory work. Several features of Cush, Egypt, their histories, and archaeology are left assumed. The expectation appears to be that the reader is already familiar with all the basic information, so Manzo builds from there.

The Egyptian context is also essential in a study of Israelite perspectives reflected in the Former Prophets because both Egyptians and Cushites are featured there. In 2 Kings 19:9, these are one and the same in the person of Tirhaka/Taharka of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt.<sup>109</sup> Within the larger domain of studies of Egypt and Cush, two monographs have addressed the subject of the Cushites in the HB. The first is *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* by R. S. Sadler.<sup>110</sup> Often cited in discussions of ethnicity and the HB, Sadler's contribution rests not only in his study of the identity and portrayal of Cushites and Cush in the Hebrew Bible but also his investigation of whether there is in the Israelite portrayal "elements indicative of racial thought" in the sense of viewing Cushites "as an essentially distinct human type in a manner that approaches a racial category."<sup>111</sup> Methodologically, Sadler's examination of the appropriateness of applying the concept of race complements Rainey's work (to be discussed) on ethnicity in that they provide analyses of two modern lenses for approaching the study of people groups.

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<sup>109</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty was the period of Nubian rule of Egypt. Tirhaka and Tarhaka are the Hebrew and Egyptian/Cushite versions of the name, respectively. At the time of the battle of Eltekeh in which the Egyptians clashed with the Assyrians, he was likely the crown prince. James K. Hoffmeier, "Egypt's Role in the Events of 701 B.C. in Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series ; No. 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 232.

<sup>110</sup> Rodney Steven Sadler, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (New York; London: T & T Clark, 2005).

<sup>111</sup> Sadler, 2.



Kevin Burrell, writing approximately fifteen years later, delves into nearly the same subject, the Cushites in the HB.<sup>112</sup> Burrell, conscious of this, distinguishes his work from Sadler's on methodological grounds and in terms of scope. He endeavors to ground his work more in the theory of ethnic identity and go into greater depth on the historical and theological context of biblical references to the Cushites.<sup>113</sup> His stated goal is to elucidate "how biblical writers *perceived* "the Cushite" as an ethnic Other."<sup>114</sup> He concludes that the biblical writers were not solely interested in ethnicity. Instead, ethnic categories, in the case of his study of the Cushites, were viewed through a theological lens that was grounded in the Israelites' ethnic self-consciousness. He terms this perspective as *ethnoreligious*.<sup>115</sup>

Burrell's work is significant on multiple levels. Not least of these is his sensitivity to the biases and limitations of Western epistemology and how that is reflected in the practice of academic research.<sup>116</sup> The result has been, and often continues to be, works

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<sup>112</sup> Kevin Burrell, *Cushites in the Hebrew Bible: Negotiating Ethnic Identity in the Past and Present, Cushites in the Hebrew Bible* (Brill, 2020). Though the difference in the publication of their books is only separated by fifteen years, Sadler's 2005 monograph is based on his 2001 dissertation.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 20. Italics are his.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>116</sup> Another scholar who addresses the intersection of Western scholarship and perceptions of Blackness and Africanness is Nyasha Junior. She deals with how those in the academy, both African-American and non-African-American, have interpreted the figure of Hagar in Genesis. Nyasha Junior, *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Discussion by scholars of the biblical writers' appraisal of a person's somatic qualities has gone beyond the confines of the academy to more informal, public platforms. cf. S. W. Crawford, "Moses' Black-Skinned Wife: What Does the Torah Think of Her?," *TheTorah.Com* (blog), 2021, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/moses-black-skinned-wife-what-does-the-torah-think-of-her>. and David M. Goldenberg, "Moses' Kushite Wife Was Zipporah the Midianite,"

shaped by ideas of race that negatively impact Africans and people of African descent. The second is Burrell's sophisticated application of theories of ethnicity to the HB. He demonstrates ways this can be done successfully and, in this, goes beyond the more word-study approach of Sadler. Perhaps most relevant, through historical and theological exploration, Burrell goes beyond ethnicity to look for explanations of the biblical writers' view of a particular ethnic Other. He arrives at the biblical authors' keen cognizance of ethnicity, but he also concludes that this cognizance was not the main consideration or even the primary one. All was subordinate to the theological conceptions of the authors.

The present study complements Burrell's work insofar as it broadens the scope of the ethnic Others considered even as it narrows the literary range to one corpus of the HB. Unlike Burrell, other historical and sociological explanations will be offered based on the portrayal of the biblical text. The theological views of the authors will be acknowledged but not pursued extensively.

### **2.2.7 Ancient Greeks**

Ancient Greek identity has also received sustained attention since the late 1990s. Numerous studies on various aspects of ethnicity and identity in ancient Greece could be discussed, but *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* by Jonathan M. Hall will be the primary focus here.<sup>117</sup> An older work in ancient Greek identity, it is nonetheless an often-cited

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*TheTorah.Com* (blog), 2022, <https://thetorah.com/article/moses-kushite-wife-was-zipporah-the-midianite>.

<sup>117</sup> Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). Other studies include: Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Catherine Morgan, *Early Greek States Beyond the Polis* (London: Routledge, 2003). Nino Luraghi, *The Ancient Messenians: Constructions*

methodological study. Instead of seeking to prove a specific point about ethnicity in ancient Greece, which would not be especially relevant for our purposes, Hall uses ancient Greece as a testing ground of sorts to explore how the modern concept of ethnicity may apply to an ancient setting and the challenges involved drawing conclusions from the available evidence. After laying an extensive theoretical foundation, he takes up literary, archaeological, and linguistic evidence in turn.

He argues first that defining *ethnicity* objectively has proven a futile endeavor. The core of the level of social organization that, in modern times, is referred to as the *ethnic group* depends on the perception of shared descent, usually in the form of myth, and the perception of shared territory, real or imagined.<sup>118</sup> Ethnicity is a phenomenon that is “defined by socially and discursively constructed criteria rather than by physical indicia.”<sup>119</sup> In practice, what he means is that most of the content of ethnicity that is normally taken to indicate an ethnic group or the presence of a separate ethnic group, where the people(s) are otherwise unknown, cannot be depended on for that purpose. In

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*of Ethnicity and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). S. Coussement, “*Because I Am Greek*”: Polyonymy as an Expression of Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2016). Lisa C. Nevett, ed., *Theoretical Approaches to the Archaeology of Ancient Greece: Manipulating Material Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017). Hans Beck, Kostas Buraselis, and Alex McAuley, eds., *Ethnos and Koinon: Studies in Ancient Greek Ethnicity and Federalism*, Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge Und Epigraphische Studien, Band 61 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019). Thomas Figueira and Carmen Soares, eds., *Ethnicity and Identity in Herodotus*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2020). Efstathia Papadodima, ed., *Ancient Greek Literature and the Foreign: Athenian Dialogues II*, Athenian Dialogues, II (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

<sup>118</sup> The contours of the concept of ethnicity will be discussed at greater length, and in conversation with Hall, in Chapter 3.

<sup>119</sup> Hall, 32.

the end, ethnic groups can only be discerned through texts because they are the only means to gain access to the emic perspective.

Archaeology is usually given pride of place in the scholarly literature on ancient peoples due to its perceived objectivity, in opposition to the perceived subjectivity and bias that characterizes ancient texts. This is all the more the case for ancient literature, such as the HB. Hall, however, attempts to reverse this priority. He demonstrates through numerous examples from the archaeology of ancient Greece that neither ceramics, funerary practices, artistic style, archaeological assemblage, nor any other criterion commonly appealed to as an ethnic indicator can be reliably tied to ethnic identity. The fundamental problem, which he also applies to language, is that these various archaeological features have no inherent ethnic significance. They only have the significance that an ethnic group or individual within the group assigns to them. To draw an example from one of the Israelites' neighbors, by Iron II, material culture and script largely ceased to be ethnically significant for the Philistines, and they began to conform in these areas to that of the surrounding peoples. We know, however, through texts the Philistines as an ethnic identity persisted well beyond this point until at least the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century around the time of the Babylonian invasion. Without the benefit of the HB and Assyrian texts, would we be discussing the people of the southern Levantine coast in Iron II as a new ethnic group, Canaanite invaders that pushed out the "Sea Peoples," or neo-Sea Peoples?

This is not to say that Hall is a historical positivist. This is a position toward texts that he explicitly rejects. Hall does not argue for looking for nuggets of historical truth

buried in the hazy memories reflected in myths. He rather sees texts as part of the construction of ethnicity itself.<sup>120</sup> Changes in the myths reflect changes in the strategies of ethnic identity construction. Thus, the present form, biases, and other limitations are no barrier to its usefulness for reconstructing ethnic sentiments in an ancient context.

Hall's analysis is not without its weaknesses. First, his methodology is not always transferrable to other ancient contexts. In part, this relates to his choice of ancient Greece as a testing ground for different approaches to understanding ethnicity in the ancient world. On the one hand, the number and variety of textual sources and archaeological data across more than half a millennium greatly facilitated his analysis. On the other, many parts of the ancient world are not so rich in the availability of data, especially textual data. For example, modern Israel is one of the most intensively excavated places on Earth, yet ancient textual sources from this region beyond the HB are quite scarce. Within the HB, where multiple accounts or duplication may occur, nearly every aspect of the texts from date of composition to authorship, literary unity, and historical context is contested. His methodology, when applied to the ethnic dynamics in the southern Levant, becomes more difficult to use. Second, Hall also makes plain his virtually ahistorical view of the texts that he works with. Instead of seriously considering the possibility of historical memory connecting to an external, independent reality, he leans into the constructed and mythological quality of the literature he examines. It does not seem, though, that an either/or choice is required. A literary text can both be socially constructed (and constructive) as well as reflect historical realities of which the author

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 41-42.

was aware or which the author's sources were aware. Consequently, Hall's insights should be carefully considered but are insufficient, in unqualified form, for the purposes of this study. This is particularly the case when moving from analyzing a group's self-identity to its view of others, which is our concern here.

### 2.3 Israelite Identity

In general, the literature on the subjects of ethnicity, Israelite interactions with other groups, and identity formation have focused on the formation or definition of ancient *Israelite* identity.<sup>121</sup> These works primarily follow one of two evidentiary trajectories, analysis of the HB or archaeology. Though the archaeology-focused works almost always refer to the HB in some manner, it is usually in service of the point being made about the archaeology, not a genuine two-track analysis.

Two of the earlier works in this area are a pair of monographs by E. Theodore Mullen, Jr. on the HB.<sup>122</sup> Mullen rejects both diachronic redaction criticism and synchronic literary criticism. He proposes instead to see the formation of the Pentateuch and the Narrative History in terms of their function in the society in which they were produced. He believes, in their transformation into scripture, that they are shaped by the community and shape the community.

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<sup>121</sup> For a treatment of issues in the Second Temple Period, cf. Ben Zvi and Edelman, *Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period*.

<sup>122</sup> Mullen, Jr., *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries*. and E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, The Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997).

Specifically, he sees the function of the Pentateuch and the Narrative History as part of the identity formation of the Judahites who returned from Babylon. It is, in short, an important part of the (re)creation of their ethnic identity. Mullen attempts to show how the Primary History (Genesis- 2 Kings) provides substance and legitimacy to each element of ethnic identity. He does so following the influential, six-fold definition of ethnicity set out by Anthony D. Smith in 1986.<sup>123</sup> Mullen argues from the constructivist perspective, relying explicitly on Fredrik Barth. The returnees constructed their past to explain and legitimate the present. The constructed past provides ethnic boundaries that distinguish the returning Judahites in Jerusalem from their neighbors. Without these boundaries, they were vulnerable to assimilation. These boundaries were constructed around a religious community with its center in the Temple. In some ways, Mullen's methodology can be likened to Hall's, in that both view texts as "cognitive artefacts" that are constructing ethnicity.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, neither are concerned with issues of the relative historicity of their texts.

Despite Mullen's contributions, the most notable study on Israelite ethnic identity is the seminal work *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel* by Kenton Sparks. Published in 1998, it has become the touchstone for most subsequent studies in the HB on whatever topic was in question. Sparks seeks to address, "(1) What varieties of ethnic sentiment and definition played important roles in ancient Israel's literature? (2) What does the literary discussion tell us about the origin and history of these identities? (3) What roles

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<sup>123</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: B. Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>124</sup> Hall, 41.

do other modes of identity (e.g., religious, political, etc.) play in relation to the various conceptions of ethnic identity?”<sup>125</sup> Sparks is primarily concerned with Israel’s ethnic identity and its development rather than Israelite attitudes toward non-Israelites. He examines ethnicity and identity in Neo-Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia for models by which to compare the ethnic sentiments of the Israelites. In many ways, his lengthy work is a sampling of numerous sub-topics within the field. Therefore, he does not draw a strong conclusion or set of conclusions but offers his study as a prolegomenon to further studies.<sup>126</sup>

The present study aims to advance beyond Sparks by applying a more nuanced approach to Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors. This is one area where Sparks’ work exhibits weaknesses. His presentation of Israelite ethnicity is nuanced, especially with regard to diachronic development and internal diversity of perspective. This also carries through his discussion of the ethnic identity of other groups such as the Egyptians and the Assyrians. When he turns to other groups for whom the group under discussion are outsiders, however, Sparks’ work tends to treat them in a generic and monolithic way. For example, in a discussion of Sparks’ concept of *oppositional ethnicity*, the Philistines and Arameans are portrayed as “long-standing enemies of Israel and firmly separated

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<sup>125</sup> Sparks, 13.

<sup>126</sup> Another work of much greater length by M. Sternberg focuses on Israelite identity and interactions with foreigners as they specifically relate to the term “Hebrew.” The opaque language, penchant for neologisms, and convoluted argumentation have prevented his work from gaining attention or acceptance. cf. Meir Sternberg, *Hebrews Between Cultures : Group Portraits and National Literature*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).



from it via ethnic traditions.”<sup>127</sup> While this was certainly true at certain periods in Israelite history, the depiction as long-standing enemies is far from an accurate picture of the relations of the Israelites with these groups.<sup>128</sup> The characterization of them as being separated from Israel by ethnic traditions does not seem to be entirely true for the period covered by the Former Prophets either.<sup>129</sup>

Many authors have taken an archaeology-focused approach to ancient Israelite identity.<sup>130</sup> Their efforts somewhat mirror the efforts of those discussed earlier who worked on the issue of ethnic identity with other people groups such as the Phoenicians. Unlike many of these studies, the authors must labor with an even greater paucity of inscriptions and art that have aided others. Roughly two groups may be distinguished

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<sup>127</sup> Sparks, 215.

<sup>128</sup> To note but two examples from archaeology, the Kurkh Stele of Shalmaneser III lists Ahab of Israel among the most prominent contributors to an anti-Assyrian coalition led by the Arameans. On the other hand, the fragments of the Tel Dan stele record the victory of the Arameans over the Israelites in that location, most probably, based on the reconstruction of the text, during the reign of Jehoram, Ahab’s son. Thus, in successive generations the Arameans were both ally and enemy of the northern kingdom of Israel. Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, “The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 45, no. 1 (1995): 1–18. Daniel David Luckenbill, *Historical Records of Assyria from the Earliest Times to Sargon*, vol. 1, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1926), 223.

<sup>129</sup> While this is certainly true on a general level, the Former Prophets reflect numerous cases of crossing ethnic boundaries in various ways or the elimination or ignoring of difference. The Philistine-Israelite interactions in the Former Prophets frequently cross these boundaries, and it may well be that, at a certain point in their history, the Philistines began to practice circumcision.

<sup>130</sup> e.g. works that focus on Israel’s ethnogenesis such as Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, eds., *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994). There are also works that address more specific issues in light of ethnic considerations. e.g. Ian Douglas Wilson, “Judean Pillar Figurines and Ethnic Identity in the Shadow of Assyria,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 3 (3/1/2012 2012): 259–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089212438002>.

based on the differences in their views on archaeological results.<sup>131</sup> The first group, including Ann Killebrew and Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, is epistemologically more confident about what historical and ethnic determinations can be made based on the archaeological record and a critical reading of the HB. The second group, faced with roughly the same evidence, takes an extremely minimalist view of what can be learned from either archaeology or the HB. This second approach leads to conclusions denying the designation *Israelite* to the population of the highlands in the Iron I period and even to the kingdoms of Iron II.

From the first group, Ann E. Killebrew in *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, And Early Israel 1300-1100 B.C.E.* has become one of the most significant scholarly works on the subject. Killebrew attempts a multi-disciplinary and multi-theoretical approach to the archaeology of the southern Levant for the end of the Late Bronze Age and Iron I.<sup>132</sup> She argues that Egyptians, Philistines, Canaanites, and Israelites are archaeologically distinguishable based on the evidence of their material culture with relevant support from texts. Despite the introduction's promise of a varied approach, Killebrew relies on three core concepts in her analysis: stylistic diversity, social boundaries, and ethnicity.<sup>133</sup> She uses the diversity of archaeological assemblages (not just ceramic types) to find evidence of social boundaries. These social boundaries are geographically defined, and they indicate the

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<sup>131</sup> To give a measure of focus to the discussion, the works discussed have been limited to exclude works before 2000.

<sup>132</sup> Killebrew (2005), 10.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

presence of distinct people groups. Since she adopts the general definition of “group identity” for the term “ethnicity,” the social boundaries, with one significant exception, distinguish ethnic groups. The assemblages by which Killebrew measures stylistic diversity include mainly what she refers to as “culturally sensitive indicators.”<sup>134</sup> She most often refers to diversity and uniformity in 1) type and number of pottery, 2) cultic sites, and 3) burial customs. While Killebrew’s contribution is important, her work chiefly establishes that there were these four cultural areas and that these areas correspond to different ethnic groups. In this respect, while using the language of boundaries, she is in effect following a culture-area model of archaeologically identifying an ethnic group. Ethnic groups are identified by the contents of their culture.

Elizabeth Bloch-Smith in the article “Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What Is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel's History” also seeks to integrate archaeology and text but with greater emphasis on the text than perhaps Killebrew does. In pursuing Israelite identity in the Iron I period, she adopts, citing Fredrik Barth, what she calls the Tell-Tale and Meaningful Boundaries approaches to the evidence.<sup>135</sup> From a practical perspective, the two appear to be nearly indistinguishable both in how she defines them and in how she applies them. Bloch-Smith captures her methodology succinctly, “Biblical texts confer significance on archaeologically attested traits; archaeology supplies a date and a context for specific features preserved in redacted texts.”<sup>136</sup> Applied to the Philistines, she affirms that Israel and the Philistines are

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>135</sup> Bloch-Smith, 412.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

archaeologically distinguishable by certain ethnically significant traits such as pork consumption. She does, however, take care to delineate the limitations of both the label “Israelite” and the data on pork consumption.<sup>137</sup> The Canaanites, according to Bloch-Smith, are archaeologically indistinguishable from the Israelites. Nonetheless, this does not render the biblical distinction and corresponding polemics completely invented. Rather she seems to endorse Karel Van der Toorn’s argument that the difference was not material culture but religion. The nature of the difference would be archaeologically invisible even as the HB makes it a prominent distinction.<sup>138</sup> This is entirely plausible as there is no compelling reason to require that all ethnic boundaries be archaeologically discernable. Put a little differently, the absence of archaeologically discernable differences does not mean those differences are not there. Given the emphasis in the HB on religion as a defining feature of Israelite identity, Bloch-Smith and Van der Toorn are likely correct in their assessment.

The second, minimalist group is best represented by two dissertations, by Pong Dae Im and Christopher Hinson, respectively.<sup>139</sup> Both break with the prevailing consensus on the settlers of the highland villages in Iron I in that they reject, with some qualifications, the notion that the settlers were an ethnic group that identifies itself as

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<sup>137</sup> As noted elsewhere, the data on who consumed pork and in what quantities is not uniform.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

<sup>139</sup> Christopher Glenn Hinson, “The Origin of Israelite Ethnicity and Quasi-National Consciousness” (Ph.D., Waco, TX, Baylor University, 2002). Pong Dae Im, “Social Identity in Early Israel: An Archaeological and Textual Study of Social Behaviors and Group Identity Among Highland Villagers in Iron Age I Palestine” (Ph.D., Berkley, CA, Graduate Theological Union, 2010).

Israelites. In general, their minimalism arises from relying on the lower limit of what may be gleaned from the available data while maximizing the epistemological problems associated with both archaeology and the study of the HB. This leads them, as with Nancy Meyer on the Phoenicians, to speculate from the minimum of information that they accept as valid.<sup>140</sup>

A useful example is pork consumption. Im, in explicit dialogue with Bloch-Smith's article, emphasizes the variability of pork bones geographically and chronologically and minimizes the relative absence of them in areas conventionally identified as Israelite.<sup>141</sup> Bloch-Smith emphasizes the absence of pork consumption in the highlands and minimizes the variability of pork consumption elsewhere. In the end, Bloch-Smith, as stated above, saw in pork consumption an Israelite ethnic marker with qualifications about variable geographic distribution.<sup>142</sup> Im concludes pork consumption was not likely an ethnic marker with the qualification that the post-exilic prohibitions from the HB may reflect an earlier negative reaction to the Philistines.<sup>143</sup> Both point out there was a significant difference in pork consumption between the highland villagers and the Philistines of the lowlands. In the end, both Im and Bloch-Smith arrive at positions that are much closer to each other than they appear at first glance. The differences lie in which part of the data they see as decisive for the question of pork as an ethnic marker.

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<sup>140</sup> e.g. Hinson, 130-131.

<sup>141</sup> Im, 147-148.

<sup>142</sup> Bloch-Smith, 423.

<sup>143</sup> Im, 149.

The central issues for Im's work are two-fold. He is operating with what appears to be a loose understanding of what ethnicity is. At times, his work seems to assume a culture-area approach or a primordial or kinship perspective on ethnicity.<sup>144</sup> Second, when he does define ethnicity, he defines it as, "'Ethnicity' simply means a sense of differentness."<sup>145</sup> This does not resolve the problem but rather intensifies it. This definition surfaces the fundamental weakness of Im's use of a strictly archaeological approach coupled with a dismissal of the HB. The non-textual material culture that is the focus of research is incapable of identifying an ethnic group as Im defines it. In order to perceive a group's "sense of differentness," the emic perspective, texts are required. Thus, Im must resort to explanations for the identity of the highland villagers in the political and economic realms.<sup>146</sup>

Hinson, for his part, makes the incapability of archaeology to independently identify an ethnic group called "Israelites" his central thesis. While Im's research is stronger in many ways, Hinson does rely on a more nuanced definition of ethnicity and nationalism. From there, he proceeds along similar lines as Im and with a similarly skeptical view of the HB.<sup>147</sup> Like Im, he also concludes on an indigenous urban-to-rural migration model to account for the appearance of new villages in the highlands during

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 127-128, 193, but see also p.138.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>147</sup> Hinson, however, is quite inconsistent on this. At times, he seems to dismiss the information in the HB out of hand. At other times, he resorts to a straightforward reading of a text he has just dismissed as ahistorical.

Iron I.<sup>148</sup> He also adopts the same position as Mullen in believing the HB itself to be the source of Israelite ethnogenesis.<sup>149</sup>

Some works focus on biblical legal material, especially Deuteronomy, as they pursue questions of identity and ethnicity. Carly L. Crouch addresses the formation of Israelite identity in the context of Deuteronomy and the period from the late eighth to the early sixth centuries B.C.E.<sup>150</sup> In a 2021 monograph, Crouch examines biblical literature, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to analyze the ways involuntary migration and trauma inform Israelite and Judahite self-understandings.<sup>151</sup> Her approach to the subject is interdisciplinary — bringing to bear the insights of studies of modern involuntary migration, trauma, and post-colonial perspectives.

A specialized subset of the works on Israelite identity and law concerns the identity, role, and rights of the *gēr* (גר). Traditionally translated as *sojourner* or the like, the word *gēr* appears in Genesis concerning Abram's status in Canaan and prophetically the Israelites' status in Egypt (Gen 15:13, 23:4). Most prominently, however, *gēr* occurs in the law collections as one of the categories of people to whom certain laws apply. Most of the occurrences fall into one of two categories. In the first, the *gēr* is one of the stereotyped vulnerable classes of people, along with the widow, orphan, the poor, and

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<sup>148</sup> Again, confusingly, Hinson simultaneously argues for the presence of Israelites in the highland villages and that there was no Israelite identity. Hinson, 154.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy*.

<sup>151</sup> Carly L. Crouch, *Israel and Judah Redefined: Migration, Trauma, and Empire in the Sixth Century BCE*, Society for Old Testament Study Monographs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108579797>.

slaves, that are given special protections (e.g. Exod 23:9; Lev 19:10; Deut 5:14, 10:8, 14:29). The second category of occurrences are part of a characteristic expression (variations of *the native and the sojourner*; האזרח והגר) meant to encompass all inhabitants of the land (e.g. Lev 17:15, 18:26; Num 9:14, 15:15).<sup>152</sup> Mark Awabdy in *Immigrants and Innovative Law* examines the place of the *gēr* in Deuteronomy.<sup>153</sup> Christiana van Houten and Christoph Bultmann, in their respective works, take a similar line with some attention to all the biblical legal corpora.<sup>154</sup> Niggemann analyzes the legal corpora to ascertain the status of Ruth and the potential for her to become an Israelite under the law.<sup>155</sup>

Glanville examines the possibility of a *gēr* becoming an Israelite in Deuteronomy.<sup>156</sup> His definition of a *gēr* highlights both how this body of literature may inform our understanding of Israelite attitudes toward their non-Israelite neighbors and its limitations. Glanville defines a *gēr* in Deuteronomy as, “The noun *gēr* in Deuteronomy refers to a vulnerable person who sought sustenance within a new kinship group that was not the *gēr*’s own... We might say, the *gēr* is a *dependent stranger*.”<sup>157</sup> Glanville’s definition raises two issues relevant to this study. The law collections may offer insight

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<sup>152</sup> A possible exception is the foreigners who are not inhabitants. Some variations substitute *native* with some direct reference to Israelites.

<sup>153</sup> Mark A. Awabdy, *Immigrants and Innovative Law: Deuteronomy’s Theological and Social Vision for the [Gēr]* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

<sup>154</sup> Christiana van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991). Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde Im Antiken Juda*.

<sup>155</sup> Andrew J. Niggemann, “Matriarch of Israel or Misnomer? Israelite Self-Identification in Ancient Israelite Law Code and the Implications for Ruth,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 41, no. 3 (March 1, 2017): 355–77.

<sup>156</sup> Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy*.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



into Israelite attitudes toward those they viewed in some ways as out-group. As such it may offer insight into a wider Israelite perspective outside of the law collections. That insight, however, must be tempered with the observation that a *gēr* need not be an Israelite according to Glanville. So long as the individual is away from their kinship network and dependent on others, they are a *gēr* even if they are an Israelite. Therefore the legal status of the *gēr* is not directly transferable to the issues addressed in this study and will not be given significant consideration.

## 2.4 The Hebrew Bible and Ethnicity/Identity

In addition to publications on Israelite identity, since the late 1990s the HB has proven a fertile ground that has produced a number of studies that involve issues of ethnicity and identity. They are diverse in subject matter, methodology, and period. Several are concerned in one way or another with women, especially exogamous marriage or the prohibition thereof.<sup>158</sup> Another group focuses on reader-oriented, feminist, or postcolonial readings of the text.<sup>159</sup> Others take a multidisciplinary approach

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<sup>158</sup> Willa Mathis Johnson, “The Holy Seed Has Been Defiled: The Interethnic Marriage Dilemma in Ezra 9-10” (Ph.D., United States -- Tennessee, Vanderbilt University, 1999). Karen Strand Winslow, “Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Ziporah,” *Women in Judaism; Thornhill* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 1–13. Tan, *The “Foreignness” of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9*. Katherine E. Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10: An Anthropological Approach*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Katherine E. Southwood, “Will Naomi’s Nation Be Ruth’s Nation?: Ethnic Translation as a Metaphor for Ruth’s Assimilation within Judah,” *Humanities; Basel* 3, no. 2 (2014): 102–31, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h3020102>. Rey, “Reexamination of the Foreign Female Captive.”

<sup>159</sup> Nyasha Junior, “Powerplay in Potiphar’s House: The Interplay of Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in Genesis 39” (Ph.D., United States -- New Jersey, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2008). Amanda Mbuvi, “Belonging in Genesis: Biblical Israel and the Construction of Communal Identity” (Dissertation, Duke University, 2008). Robert S.

that incorporates anthropology or sociology.<sup>160</sup> Beyond this, there is an assortment of publications on various aspects of the text or individual corpora.<sup>161</sup> Since most are not directly relevant to the concerns of this study, only a few will be discussed here.

The first of these is a methodological study by James C. Miller.<sup>162</sup> Miller ably summarizes much of the literature surrounding ethnicity and the HB. He organizes his review according to historical period: pre-monarchic, monarchic, exilic/post-exilic. What is significant for our purposes is his conclusion as to the major limitations for studies of the Hebrew Bible and ethnicity. The first is the lack of consensus on the dates of the biblical texts.<sup>163</sup> Without being able to date the texts, “the social settings reflected by

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Wafula, “Biblical Representations of Moab: A Kenyan Postcolonial Reading” (Ph.D., New Jersey, Drew University, 2013).

<sup>160</sup> Donald Bruce MacKay, “Ethnicity and Israelite Religion: The Anthropology of Social Boundaries in Judges” (Ph.D., Canada, University of Toronto, 1997). Emanuel Pfoh, ed., *Anthropology and the Bible: Critical Perspectives* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). Jürgen van Oorschot and Andreas Wagner, eds., *Anthropologie(n) des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015). Harvey E. Goldberg, *Anthropology and Hebrew Bible Studies: Modes of Interchange and Interpretation* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2018).

<sup>161</sup> Friedrich Huber, *Jahwe, Juda Und Die Anderen Völker Beim Propheten Jesaja* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1976). Peter Machinist, “Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, no. 4 (1983): 719–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/602231>. James W. Flanagan, *David’s Social Drama: A Hologram of Israel’s Early Iron Age*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Almond, 1988). Daniel Timmer, “Jonah’s Theology of the Nations: The Interface of Religious and Ethnic Identity,” *Revue Biblique (1946-)* 120, no. 1 (2013): 13–23. Daniel C. Timmer, *The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve: Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic Relationship in the Minor Prophets* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015). G. Kyle Essary, “The Death of Israel? A Narrative Analysis of Jacob and Cultural Identity in Genesis 37-50” (Ph.D., United States -- Texas, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2017). C. L. Crouch, “Migration, Political Power and the Book of Jeremiah,” *Political Theology* 19, no. 6 (September 2018): 457–59.

<sup>162</sup> James C. Miller, “Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible: Problems and Prospects.”

<sup>163</sup> This was briefly discussed in Chapter 1.3.3.

them” cannot be determined with certainty.<sup>164</sup> This inhibits the historical contextualization of the production of the text. Second, the alternative source of data, archaeology, as has been discussed above is limited in its capacity to offer insight into the emic perspective which is essential in determining ethnic identity. Last is the problem of defining ethnicity itself.<sup>165</sup>

Cynthia Edenburg’s chapter in the volume *Collective Memory and Collective Identity: Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History in their Context* addresses the treatment of the Other in the book of Joshua with reference to other biblical texts.<sup>166</sup> Edenburg’s thesis is the author of Joshua used the Other, i.e. non-Israelites, as a literary device to shape Israelite identity. Several premises are used to undergird this conclusion. Referring to the archaeology of the Iron I period, the first is that the conquest accounts in the book of Joshua are fictive. The same is also true of the identities of the peoples that the Israelites were to drive out which numbered in different lists from seven to ten. Edenburg, reflecting a material culture-area approach to identifying ethnicity in archaeology, supports this idea based on the continuity in material culture in the highlands from the Late Bronze Age to Iron I. From this, she asserts that “the Israelites were none other than resettled Canaanites.”<sup>167</sup> Second, moving from archaeology to the literary sphere, Edenburg further develops her thesis based on a complex reconstruction

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<sup>164</sup> Miller, 205.

<sup>165</sup> The problem of defining ethnicity will be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>166</sup> Edenburg, “Construction of Identity by Marginalizing an Imaged Other”.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 87.

of the redaction of the text which she situates historically in part during the Babylonian period and in part the Persian period.<sup>168</sup>

From the assumption of a fictive account and her specific reconstruction of Joshua's compositional history, Edenburg concludes that the images of the non-Israelite Other in Joshua were a projection into the past of the situation then-current in Persian period Yehud.<sup>169</sup> The returning exiles, which she refers to according to a hybrid Hebrew-English designation, the *Golah community*, came from outside the land and encountered a mixed population. The projection of the image of the Canaanites onto the current inhabitants accomplished two objectives. It created a past around which the returning Golah community could unite and form its self-identity. Edenburg sees in Ezra-Nehemiah the tightening of ethnic boundaries for the Golah community that she posits in the book of Joshua.

The other objective was to set this self-identity in contrast with the peoples who were already in the land and who also, according to Edenburg, were worshippers of Yahweh. The image of the Canaanites allowed the Golah community to portray the inhabitants of the land as, "both indigenous and somehow "foreign" as well as deviant" compared to themselves.<sup>170</sup> Because of their foreignness and deviancy, the Golah community could delegitimize them as orthodox worshippers of Yahweh. By the same token, they could justify their own claims to the land and elite status.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 97.

As to the present study, it is worth noting that there is a hidden assumption underlying Edenburg's reconstruction of the redaction history of Joshua and her subsequent conclusions. This assumption, shared by many scholars engaging in redaction criticism, is texts belonging to a single redactional layer must be homogenous, at least according to the perception and standards of the scholar. Perceived differences in point of view are, therefore, indicative of different editorial hands and, accordingly, different redactional layers.<sup>171</sup> According to Edenburg's reconstruction, the basic conquest narrative from the reign of Josiah was edited and supplemented to include the religious heterodoxy of the Canaanites and the justification for their destruction. Because the Rahab and Gibeonite stories reflect a friendlier or more nuanced perspective of the indigenous peoples of Canaan, she deems it to be not only a different redactional layer but also a dissenting voice from within the Golah community that uses "satirical polemic" to reject the ideology of the *herem*.<sup>172</sup> In this way, Edenburg, addresses the Israelite (or in this case, the post-exilic returnee) perspective on ethnic others in one aspect of the Former Prophets. She, unlike many interpreters, acknowledges the complexity of perspective evident in the text and resolves it through a redaction-critical solution. Thus, the explanation for a potentially complex or, in her view, contradictory portrayal is that it is actually two simple portrayals edited together. It is unclear, however, why the two contradictory perspectives were written to stand together or why later

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<sup>171</sup> Following the logic of the assumption, redactional layers in turn may be distinguished where different points of view are perceived. The logic is circular.

<sup>172</sup> Edenburg, 97.

redactors/scribes allowed it to remain that way. This study will advance an alternative explanation in Chapter 5.

When the concept of nationalism is in view, the scope of the literature tends to be extremely narrow. These works are distinct from those that concern ethnicity because the term *nation* usually includes a connection with a state or, at a minimum, a political dimension that is not necessarily present with ethnicity. Grosby examines the concept of *nation* and the different ways that term might be understood concerning ancient Israel.<sup>173</sup> Hostetter analyzes the biblical lists of nations, and Samuel Boyd, in a 2014 dissertation, surveys the traces in the Hebrew Bible of linguistic contact with other cultures.<sup>174</sup> Levtow considers the icon parodies in the Hebrew Bible and their relationship to iconic ritual in Mesopotamia and politics.<sup>175</sup> Timmer performs a primarily canonical reading and analysis of the Book of the Twelve.<sup>176</sup> *Ethnicity and the Bible*, rather than a thorough study of the subject, is a collection of essays edited by Mark G. Brett.<sup>177</sup> Although a few

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<sup>173</sup> Steven Elliott Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

<sup>174</sup> Edwin C. Hostetter, *Nations Mightier and More Numerous: The Biblical View of Palestine's Pre-Israelite Peoples* (N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1995). and Samuel Lanham Boyd, "Contact and Context: Studies in Language Contact and Literary Strata in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D., Chicago, IL, The University of Chicago, 2014).

<sup>175</sup> Nathaniel B. Levto, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008).

<sup>176</sup> Timmer, *The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve*.

<sup>177</sup> A similar point can be made about *Data and Debates: Essays in the History and Culture of Israel and Its Neighbors in Antiquity*. The suggestiveness of the title notwithstanding, it is a collection of works by Ernst Axel Knauf, and the title is meant to encompass the wide range of his scholarship. Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996). Ernst Axel Knauf, *Data and Debates: Essays in the History and Culture of Israel and Its Neighbors in Antiquity*, ed. Hermann Michael Niemann, Konrad Schmid, and Silvia Schroer, *Alter Orient Und Altes Testament*, Band 407 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013).

chapters provide a useful discussion of the problem of the academic study of ethnicity, none significantly deal with the questions that concern this work.

Of the works most pertinent to the present study is the monograph *Biblical Narratives of Israelites and Their Neighbors: Strangers at the Gate* by Adriane Leveen published in 2017.<sup>178</sup> Leveen covers narratives in Joshua through 2 Kings as well as Exodus. The narratives are arranged according to broad sections of the biblical story and, where appropriate, particular groups of strangers. Methodologically, she engages in a close literary reading of representative texts from her corpus rather than a historical reading. This close literary reading takes the form of a running commentary that is often insightful, and this study will return to these insights as it touches on many of the same texts.

A notable feature of this work, as Leveen makes explicit in her introduction, is the special attention given to narratives of violence. They are highlighted and reevaluated where they appear in her chosen corpus. The motivation is to address the needs of the present because sacred texts, including the HB, can be and have been used as to support acts of violence. Leveen, however, does not follow the simplistic route of only analyzing narratives of violence or negative views of strangers but also gives attention to countervailing voices in the text that present a greater willingness to peacefully coexist with strangers. For example, she examines the ways strangers are both valorized and subject to a violent attack in the Rahab story (Joshua 2 and 6). Likewise, the present

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<sup>178</sup> Doak's work *Ancient Israel's Neighbors* will not be covered here because its primary is an introductory text, so Doak is not attempting to cover new ground or advance a thesis that requires discussion.

study will follow a similar approach in that texts with varied perspectives, both positive and negative, will be integral to the analysis.

One of the differences, though, is Leveen approaches the text in a historically isolated manner. The final form of text, in her treatment, is mostly disconnected from any relationship it may have to the events it describes.<sup>179</sup> To the extent the text is related to historical realities, it is to the time of the writer.<sup>180</sup> For instance, Leveen writes, “Strangers new to the scene, such as the Aramaeans, may create novel dilemmas and dictate innovative responses in the writer’s own time. As such, biblical stories provide additional and complementary data to historical and/or archaeological records for an understanding of the Israelite attitudes toward other peoples and should be analyzed in their own right.”<sup>181</sup> This approach is, of course, legitimate, and it is indeed true that texts are not produced in an ahistorical, bias-free manner. In many ways, they are a reflection of the time, culture, and the author(s) that produced them. Nevertheless, the HB, and especially the Former Prophets that draws our attention here, is often the best available textual source for the periods which it describes. All too often it is nearly the only source. As these issues have already been discussed, they will not be revisited at length here. Suffice it to say at the moment, the Former Prophets is a literary work that is historically oriented and manifestly relies upon earlier sources in telling its history. This study’s

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<sup>179</sup> Occasional references to external history are, at times, brought into the discussion. For instance, when discussing the formation of Israelite identity, Leveen contextualizes it by noting that the consensus among scholars of the Hebrew Bible is that the Israelites were indigenous to Canaan and did not arrive from outside it. *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>180</sup> In this, Leveen’s perspective in *Biblical Narratives of Israelites and Their Neighbors* is not far removed from Hall.

<sup>181</sup> Leveen, 17.



approach will depart from that of Leveen in that it will seek to discover what the Former Prophets may contribute to our understanding of the Israelites' views of their neighbors for the periods it covers and not only for the time of the authors.

A second work, Brian Rainey's *Religion, Ethnicity, and Xenophobia in the Bible: A Theoretical, Exegetical, and Theological Survey*, published in 2019, is an adaptation of the author's 2014 dissertation.<sup>182</sup> Rainey, after a lengthy theoretical discussion, addresses the main subject of the book. The theoretical discussion is an exploration of the modern definition of "ethnicity" and, its applicability to the ancient world. The second focuses on negative characterizations of foreigners in the Deuteronomistic tradition and in Mesopotamia which is then carried forward into later literature. He describes this later literature as "the after-life of biblical xenophobia."<sup>183</sup>

At first glance, this work, alongside Leveen's, should require the most sustained engagement from this study. Rainey's discussion of the theories related to ethnicity and the ancient world is sophisticated, and his coverage of the relevant literature is excellent. The deep engagement with biblical attitudes toward ethnic foreigners should also warrant consideration. The work suffers, however, from a fundamental weakness. Owing to the narrow scope of the original research question from the dissertation, Rainey only examines biblical texts that offer negative caricatures of foreigners and a similarly selective review of ANE texts.<sup>184</sup> There are indeed negative, and even xenophobic, characterizations of foreigners in the HB, but these texts are not the whole of what is

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<sup>182</sup> Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible*. and Rainey (2014).

<sup>183</sup> Rainey (2019), 213.

<sup>184</sup> Rainey (2019), 54, 58, 138-139, 207.

there, nor do they even necessarily represent the majority of the texts. The selections are not representative of the larger pool of data and, more importantly, appear to be chosen thematically. As a result, the kinds of conclusions Rainey can draw are predetermined from the outset. This selectivity limits the utility of the work for the study of Israelite perspectives toward non-Israelites. This does not mean that it is without value. Even as this present study seeks to show the lens of ethnicity is ultimately inadequate to explain the range of attitudes and behaviors exhibited in the Former Prophets, ethnicity must indeed be part of the explanation. Furthermore, this study does not suggest that ancient Israelites were somehow immune to sentiments of ethnic discrimination and hatred. For the picture to be complete, the kinds of examples Rainey adduced in his research must be included.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter has surveyed the scholarship on the problem of ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE. Unlike other research areas concerning either the HB or the ANE, studies on ethnicity are multidisciplinary, and relevant studies may appear in a wide range of subject areas. They also do not lend themselves to a linear development of scholarly consensus. Drawing, however, on the works surveyed here, certain themes do emerge. The first is the different problems associated with archaeological and textual studies, respectively. Archaeological studies are challenged methodologically by the discernment of ethnic groups using material culture. They consistently encounter the hurdle that, without texts providing an emic perspective, discerning which aspects of material culture are significant for ethnic boundaries is nigh impossible. This is further

complicated by historical examples of ethnic groups whose material culture is identical to the surrounding majority culture. As such, these ethnic groups would be archaeologically invisible.

Textual studies have the opposite problem. Archaeology has the benefit of the historical certainty that there was something *there*, but it often lacks the ability on the basis of the material culture alone to know its significance. Textual studies have the benefit of knowing the significance of something from an emic perspective, but they lack the ability on their own to have any certainty of how well this perspective does or does not correspond to historical reality. An emic perspective is just that, a perspective. The agendas and biases of inscriptions and especially literature, like the HB, challenge scholars to discern historically “how it essentially was.”

The apparent solution would ideally be a marriage of text and artifact where that is possible. Even this, though, can be fraught with problems. The case of Israelite identity is a glaring example. There is ample evidence from the HB of the idea that the Israelites were an ethnic group. According to the HB, their heartland in the initial phases of their settlement in Canaan, presumably during Iron I, was in the highlands. Nevertheless, despite Israel being among the most extensively surveyed and excavated places in the world, this remains difficult to demonstrate. Many have used the strong continuity between LBA material culture and Iron I material culture in the Judean highlands as evidence that no settlement by Israelites occurred and that the “Israelites” are simply internally displaced indigenous peoples of unknown composition. They may not be distinguished from other indigenous peoples as a group perhaps well into the

development of the state in the following centuries. Others contend based on some differences in material assemblages with the peoples of the coast (presumed to be Philistines in this period) and based on the Merneptah stele that the Israelites *were* a distinct ethnic group in the Iron I period. For those who adopt this position, differences exist in the degree they are willing to accept the information provided in the HB. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to adjudicate this dispute. This example merely serves to illustrate the problems that remain even when both textual and archaeological data are available.

Another theme is the common appeal to the work of Fredrik Barth. This appeal is made in various studies due in no small part to the recognition that the old model of ethnicity as being primordial has little basis in reality. The other older model, instrumentalism, has few converts among scholars on the ANE or the HB. Barth's theory of ethnicity being defined by its boundaries has captivated scholars with its heuristic potential. The ways in which scholars have actually applied his theory of ethnicity, however, have varied widely, and scholars appealing to Barth frequently arrive at opposite conclusions on the same topic. Barth's theory, an approach now labeled *constructivism*, and the competing older models will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another theme is the tendency to discuss the people group that is the focus of study with nuance but discuss their neighbors monolithically. Israelites, Phoenicians, and Philistines may be acknowledged by the scholars studying them to be heterogeneous in composition and their motives complex. By the same token, their neighbors are generically characterized as perennial enemies, subjects, overlords, trading partners, etc.

Differentiation across time or circumstances often does not make it into the analysis. As the above survey has shown, few consider a complex web of motivations in these interactions.

Those works with a focus on the HB consider many different issues and concepts. A general trend with these works is to approach the issue of Israelites and their neighbors through a primarily negative lens. Those who give attention to the positive portrayals are likely to attribute these portrayals, positioned alongside negative ones, to other redactors who disagreed with the prevailing view. No explanation is offered for why this should be the case other than the circular assumption that a different view must represent a different redactional layer. In terms of literary production, why did not the dissenters produce their own works from their point of view? Assuming that these dissenting works were lost over time or did not exist, why did redactors and the scribes responsible for the transmission of the text accept such contradictory perspectives together in the same narrative?<sup>185</sup>

Redactional questions in the Former Prophets were discussed in Chapter 1. What is not usually considered is that the Israelites' relationships with their neighbors were complex and resulted in different responses to changing circumstances and actors. It is that possibility that this study will focus on within the framework of the newer anthropological model of belonging.

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<sup>185</sup> A partial explanation is that the ancients did not share the same standards for historiography as post-Enlightenment, western scholars. Inclusion of multiple, contradictory accounts, as Van Seters has shown for Herodotus, may have been acceptable or perhaps thought to be good form. John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 31, 39.

## Chapter 3: Ethnicity and the Ancient World

### 3.1 Introduction

At the core of many of the studies and scholarly debates throughout the decades and across disciplines has been the question of the identity of ancient peoples. The question is one that needs an answer if other work, such as research into intergroup relations, is to proceed in any meaningful way. One cannot hope to understand the relationships between groups if they cannot be identified in the first place and their identity characterized in the second. After World War 2, the default point of departure in biblical studies and archaeology shifted from the concept of *race* to *ethnicity*.<sup>186</sup> This shift, in turn, led to the question of how to define ethnicity and its related terminology. Interestingly, there is little controversy in biblical studies about the *applicability* of ethnicity to either ancient or modern contexts.

The point of difficulty that has emerged is deciding what this elusive concept is whose application is so uncontroversial.<sup>187</sup> It is almost as if the understood approach among scholars is that they will “know it when they see it.”<sup>188</sup> As a result, each, in an

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<sup>186</sup> Anthropology has made two additional shifts since that time in terminology. Considerations of ethnicity became subsumed under the category of *identity*. Identity has more recently been subsumed under *belonging*. I will return to these developments below.

<sup>187</sup> Of the literature reviewed, Nestor is the lone dissenter. He objects to the notion of bounded groups at all. Dermot Anthony Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 519 (New York; London: T & T Clark International, 2010).

<sup>188</sup> The phrase was coined by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart who famously wrote in reference to defining hard-core pornography, “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. *But I know it when I see it.*” (emphasis mine). *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 US 184 (1964).

attempt to grapple with this issue, adopts their own definition of ethnicity. The problem, as Brian Rainey points out, lies in the fact that nearly every criterion or combination of criteria must negotiate two opposite risks.<sup>189</sup> The first is the criteria are so broad that they are either heuristically useless or encompass social groupings that few would consider *ethnic*, such as London stockbrokers.<sup>190</sup> On the other hand, criteria that are too narrow will exclude many of the varied forms that ethnicity takes in both modern and ancient societies.

Another question, raised indirectly in the literature, is the level of social organization implied by the term *ethnicity*. In biblical studies, discussions often rely on distinguishing different levels of social organization: the **בית־אב** (extended family), **משפחה** (clan), **שבט** or **מטה** (tribe), and **עם** people.<sup>191</sup> It is typically expected, and will be assumed for the purposes of this study, that ethnic relationships happen at medium to large levels of social organization such as that of a people, clan, or tribe. For example, it

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<sup>189</sup> Rainey (2019), 4-13.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>191</sup> There are, of course, other terms used for the different levels of social organization in the HB. Those given here are common and serve to illustrate the point. S. Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies 7 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1996). For discussions of kinship and relatedness, cf. David Murray Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (USA: University of Michigan Press, 1984). Janet Carsten, "The Substance of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malays in Pulau Langkawi," *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 2 (1995): 223–41. Janet Carsten, *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Janet Carsten, *After Kinship* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). Janet Carsten, "What Kinship Does—and How," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 2 (June 2013): 245–51, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.2.013>.

is entirely possible to characterize the conflicts between Israelite tribes in the Former Prophets as ethnic conflicts.<sup>192</sup>

### 3.2 Race or Ethnicity?

Before dealing with ethnicity solely, it is worthwhile to consider the concept of race and its relationship to ethnicity. Which terminology should be used to discuss differences in people groups? Prior to the Second World War, it was common in Western scholarship to speak of differences among peoples in terms of their race. Burrell defines race as:

...a discrete set of inheritable, immutable attributes which all members of a putative subdivision of the human species were believed to possess ... These attributes, of which skin colour, hair texture and somatic features were supposed to be the most visible manifestations, determined not only the intellectual capacity and moral tenor of individual and collective identity; they also determined the place of each race within a strictly defined social hierarchy, their capacity for “civilization,” and even the ultimate destiny of a racial group.<sup>193</sup>

Racial thinking often construes this imagined hierarchy as one in which white Europeans are placed at the top. The use, however, of this intellectual framework by Nazi ideology to justify the Holocaust, made the term *race* and all that is implied by it unpalatable to Western scholars in the years following the war.<sup>194</sup> In search of a new term, scholars settled on *ethnic group* as a replacement for race. According to Hall, however, the substitution of *ethnic group* for *race* “was purely cosmetic, and that the basic conceptual

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<sup>192</sup> Especially pertinent is the slaughter of the Ephraimites by Gileadites who relied on a small linguistic difference to distinguish members of the two groups (Judges 12:1-6).

<sup>193</sup> Burrell, 26.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 55.



apparatus of ‘race’ had remained, despite a change in terminology.”<sup>195</sup> Even so, advances in anthropological theory began to distance the concept of ethnicity and ethnic group from a direct equation with *race*. Anticipating the discussion to follow, the intellectual shift from seeing ethnicity as something inherited and unchangeable (like race) to a flexible, socially constructed phenomenon created a more significant conceptual break with race. While it is generally recognized that race is socially constructed too, the construction is that one’s race is ontologically significant and immutable.

Returning to the choice of terminology for discussing people groups, this study will use ethnicity in preference to race. First and most obviously, the concepts denoted by race have no basis in reality. Second, the *social* construction of race is comparatively modern and had as its primary purpose the perpetuation of systems of oppression. The connotations produced by its long, historical usage taint any effort to use the concept in another context. On none of these grounds, then, is race acceptable for an academic discussion of ancient societies.

Ethnicity does suffer from being an even more recent invention and of contested definition. It has the advantages, though, of both what it doesn’t have and what it has. What ethnicity *does not have* is the burden of the historical usage that race does, so the possibility of using it in ways that are constructive and helpful remains. What it *does have* is a connection, though somewhat tenuous, to the ancient world in that Herodotus employs the word from which ethnicity is derived, ἔθνος, for a variety of groupings,

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<sup>195</sup> Hall, 19.

including people groups.<sup>196</sup> Without assuming that ethnicity meets every need of research, the term is nevertheless far superior to race for discussing people groups at the medium to large level of social organization.

### 3.3 Definition of Ethnicity

As mentioned above, a consensus on the definition of ethnicity is still elusive, yet this study cannot refer endlessly to the term without making some effort to define it. A commonly cited one is that of Anthony D. Smith.<sup>197</sup> He sets out six “dimensions of ethnies.”<sup>198</sup> These include a:

- collective name
- common myth of descent
- shared history
- distinctive shared culture
- association with a specific territory
- sense of solidarity<sup>199</sup>

This definition provided a useful beginning to research on ethnicity, but it runs into the problem that not every group that would be recognized as an ethnic group would meet all six of these criteria. For example, the term *Hispanic*, at least in the United States, refers to peoples of diverse cultures across at least two continents, but is often considered to refer to a single ethnic group. A sense of solidarity may also be difficult to justify as not

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<sup>196</sup> C. P. Jones, “Ἔθνος and Γένος in Herodotus,” *The Classical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1996): 315–20.

<sup>197</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.

<sup>198</sup> Some scholars, like Smith, prefer to use the French *ethnie* in lieu of *ethnic group* because they believe *ethnie* more closely matches the semantic range of the Greek ἔθνος. Ibid., 21–22.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 22–30. For additional explanation and history of the idea of ethnicity, cf. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., “Introduction,” in *Ethnicity*, 1st ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6–7.

every member of an ethnic group necessarily feels a sense of solidarity with others of the same group. They may, but this is not required.

These six criteria become more challenging when examining ancient people groups. A collective name may be uncertain. As discussed in the relevant literature, those who in modern scholarship are called *Phoenicians* seem to share a common language, culture, and territory, but it is completely unknown whether they had any sense of solidarity, a collective name, or a myth of common descent. The Canaanites are likewise deemed to be a heterogeneous group, but because of shared language, culture, territory, and history (as a region), scholars find it useful to discuss them as a single group.<sup>200</sup> A group-by-group analysis here is both unnecessary and goes beyond the scope of this study. Smith's criteria, while they have sharpened the scholarly discussion, ultimately do not hold up to scrutiny except in a general way. To be fair to Smith, however, no definition of ethnicity yet adduced does so perfectly.

To summarize a vast number of discussions on ethnicity, ethnic groups do seem to have at least three characteristics. First, ethnicity is socially constructed. Ethnic identity is not immutable or fixed at birth. What it means to be a Philistine or an Israelite may change over time and according to different circumstances. Second, there is usually a myth of common descent. Without prejudging how well the myth compares to external realities, the most important aspect of the story of common descent is that it is believed to be true. It represents part of the collective memory of the group. Third, the group is, or

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<sup>200</sup> Following Barth, to be discussed below, another aspect of ethnic identity is not only self-ascription but ascription by others of a particular identity. In the eyes of the later writers of the HB, the term *Canaanite* was thought to be a useful collective name.

believes itself to be, associated with a common territory. Again, there are no doubt exceptions, but these elements are present far more often than not and may help distinguish ethnic groups from people groups of another kind like the London stockbrokers mentioned above.

Consequently, this study will adopt a perspective on ethnicity that follows that of Katherine Southwood which was also adopted by Rainey. Southwood argues:

First, ethnicity is a culturally constructed, rather than a biological, phenomenon. The contents of an ethnic identity are defined situationally, on an emic level, according to the subjective criteria and requirements of the group in question and in relation to other groups with whom interaction occurs. Numerous cultural features, such as religion, class, caste, or language may be symbolically manipulated by ethnic groups in accordance with such identities. Unlike other identities, the sense of ethnic solidarity and cultural uniqueness crystallizes around putative myths of descent, associations with territories, and shared 'historical' memories.<sup>201</sup>

This perspective encapsulates current scholarship on how ethnicity should be defined while allowing flexibility for significant variations in the features manifested by ethnic groups. It also highlights another feature of ethnicity – that it functions situationally. Depending on the circumstances and the large number of factors that shape those circumstances, ethnicity may or may not be particularly relevant to the behavior of either individuals or groups. That situational-ness is an underlying premise of this study.

I contend that the pages of the Former Prophets furnish numerous examples of ancient Israelites, Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, and Phoenicians strengthening, weakening, and crossing ethnic boundaries in ways and for reasons that cannot be explained by an understanding that assumes a rigid dichotomy and hostile othering

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<sup>201</sup> Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10*, 40.

between ethnic groups. Just as in modern times, these peoples shared borders and made frequent contact with each other. Additionally, these groups interacted with Arameans, Egyptians, Assyrians, and others who engaged in trade, travel, and conquest. The distinctive identities of those who lived in or passed through the Levant persisted for centuries despite this contact, and the contact was not usually antagonistic.

This perspective on ethnicity is an enormous advancement beyond notions of race. It is also an important step beyond older and often widespread conceptions of ethnicity as fixed at birth. This understanding of ethnicity has the virtue of anticipating and allowing for a broader range of motivations for human actions. It, however, does not take the next step of explaining what those motivations might be. Another theoretical framework is needed to make sense of the available literary and archaeological data. It is suggested here, and will be discussed below, that the concept of *belonging* is a helpful framework for taking that next step.

### **3.4 People Groups in the Ancient World**

The question is whether taking that next step is appropriate for people of the ancient world. Along with many scholars working across numerous sub-disciplines covering the ANE and the ancient eastern Mediterranean, I conclude that it is. This study takes as an *a priori* assumption that human nature has remained essentially unchanged across the millennia and rejects presentist assumptions that modern peoples are in some way fundamentally more sophisticated than the people of ancient times. Despite Nestor's critique, human beings tend to form groups, and a commonly repeating form of social organization across time has been a group based on the belief in common descent and a

common territory. This closely approximates the modern understanding of an ethnic group.

The ancient Israelites as portrayed in the HB provide a ready example. In the HB, the Israelites evince a group identity that can reasonably be described as ethnic. The arc of Genesis-2 Kings revolves around the identity of the Israelites as descendants of Abraham and Isaac, but especially of Jacob to whom is attached the name Israel. This makes him the eponymous ancestor of the people. The story follows the relationship of these descendants of Jacob with not only their God but also the land of the southern Levant. The story chronicles the promise of the land by God to the ancestors, the ancestors' departure from the land, the return to the land with Moses and Joshua, the struggles to settle in the land, their unsuccessful attempts to hold on to the land, and ending in the people's exile from it. The group demonstrates boundaries around circumcision and the worship of Yahweh. Whatever decisions one wishes to make as to authorship, dating, and historicity, the ancient author articulated in his history what is recognizably an ethnic group in the modern sense of the word while setting out to advance his theological perspective.

This perspective has not gone entirely unchallenged for other ancient peoples. As was noted in the previous chapter, cases can and have been made that other groups in the ancient world should be considered ethnic groups. What is lacking to fully solidify these positions is the kind of access to the emic perspective through texts that are available for the Israelites, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and others. This opens the way for more skeptical scholars to challenge these conclusions. One frequent ground for rejecting the

designation of *ethnic group* for an archaeologically and/or historically known people is the charge that the people in question are in fact a heterogeneous group. They should not be grouped under the single label that, very often, others have given them.

For example, Paul Collins, in a short article oriented toward a non-specialist audience, argued that the Sumerians as a homogenous people group may be more a product of scholarly imagination than reality.<sup>202</sup> Collins does not accept a common language and culture area as significant indications of an identifiable ethnic group. Rather, he asks, “Indeed, could it be that the Sumerians are in some sense an invention of modern scholarship, a homogenizing concept rooted in attempts to essentialize and classify population groups based on language?”<sup>203</sup> Many of the indications of a common ethnic identity for Collins were not produced by the Sumerians themselves but were produced at a later time when Sumerian had ceased to be a spoken language by all but a core group of highly educated Akkadian-speaking elites who valued Sumerian as a language of prestige. He seems to imply that, instead, the region of southern Mesopotamia represented a kind of Akkadian-Sumerian cultural hybrid or perhaps two coexisting, permeable cultural spheres.

The differences in academic receptiveness to ethnic identity in the ancient world represent the different ways researchers approach similar kinds of data (e.g. material culture, language, and literature). They also represent the challenges of scholarly efforts to wrestle with the issue of identity. On the one hand, the assumption of a reasonably

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<sup>202</sup> Paul Collins, “Were There Sumerians?,” *The Ancient Near East Today*, February 2022, <https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2022/02/were-there-sumerians/>.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

unified Phoenician people, for instance, may be over-generalizing. After all, the maritime trade of the peoples on the eastern Mediterranean coast necessitated frequent contact with other cultures, and there is no evidence the Phoenicians ever considered themselves a people. On the other, questioning the existence of the Sumerians because of extensive contact and coexistence with Akkadian culture may not be giving sufficient credit to the persistence of identity and culture especially in situations of intensive cultural contact.

This study will accept the modern concept of ethnicity as having heuristic value for describing the different people groups of the ancient world, specifically the ANE and the ancient Mediterranean. To the extent evidence is available, ancient people did form kinship-based groups usually attached to a particular territory. According to David Schloen, so fundamental was the concept of kinship (real or constructed) to group identity that larger units of social organization worked within the metaphor of kinship.<sup>204</sup> In short, the modern use of the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* adequately approximates the social realities under consideration.

### **3.5 Models of Ethnicity in Cultural Anthropology**

#### **3.5.1 Primordialist**

The way of perceiving ethnicity that has been adopted for this study is rooted in developments in cultural anthropology. Historically, ethnicity has been, and often still is, understood in *primordialist*, *instrumentalist*, or *constructivist* terms. The pioneering anthropologist Clifford Geertz is perhaps the best-known proponent of the primordialist

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<sup>204</sup> Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol*.



view. In his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he sets out social factors such as perceived kinship, race (defined along phenotypical rather than essentialist lines), language, and custom as “primordial attachments.”<sup>205</sup> These “are seen to have an almost ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves... But virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural — some would say spiritual — affinity than from social interaction.”<sup>206</sup>

Noteworthy in this work is that Geertz uses the term *ethnic* as an adjective, but he does not attempt to define ethnicity except, at best, inferentially. Ethnicity for Geertz appears to be some larger-scale amalgamation of culture and kinship. In this, he perhaps reflected the common assumption of the time that ethnic identity and cultural identity are essentially the same.<sup>207</sup> Ethnic identity was maintained by “geographic and social isolation” and consequently was undermined in contexts of intensive interaction with other cultures.<sup>208</sup> As such, an ethnic group could be studied as a discrete subject in distinction from surrounding ethnic groups. In summary, ethnic groups as subjects of anthropological inquiry were viewed almost as hermetically sealed units that could be studied and analyzed in isolation. On the individual level, primordialist approaches emphasize kinship as the *sine qua non* of ethnicity. This creates the implication that one

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<sup>205</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 259.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 259-260.

<sup>207</sup> For the commonness of this assumption, cf. Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*, The Little, Brown Series in Anthropology (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969), 9.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

is born into an ethnic group and that this is an inherent quality of each person.<sup>209</sup> One of the many problems with this view is that it is hardly distinguishable from race. There is also ample evidence in both ancient and modern times of ethnic groups persisting in contexts of intensive contact. Moreover, the boundaries that distinguish ethnic groups change over time and, viewed synchronically, may not be rigid or impermeable.

### 3.5.2 Instrumentalist

The instrumentalist view treats ethnicity as not in any way intrinsic to the person or group. It is instead a structure or strategy for gaining advantages in the social environment. For instance, writing in the early twentieth century, Max Weber sees the use of ethnicity in the form of notions of race in the post-Emancipation U.S. as a social strategy by whites for “the monopolization of social power and honor.”<sup>210</sup> Not only this, he argues that nearly any difference of habit “as much as inherited racial characteristics” can be used to advance this strategy.<sup>211</sup> The strategy, not the inherited characteristics, is primary. Similarly, Abner Cohen argued that, in modern societies, ethnicity “is the result of intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions of power within the structure of the new state...”<sup>212</sup> Later, Irving Allen also argued that politics was driving the behavior of “secondary ethnic formations” with the Italian-Americans who were the

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<sup>209</sup> For the view that ethnicity is an exterior quality, cf. A. D. Smith, 22. For the implications of this view, cf. Patrick Geary, “Power and Ethnicity History and Anthropology,” *History & Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (February 2015): 12.

<sup>210</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 386.

<sup>211</sup> Weber, 387-388.

<sup>212</sup> Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 1974), 96.

subject of his study.<sup>213</sup> For instrumentalists, contemporary power dynamics and related goals were the primary drivers that shaped ethnic attitudes and behaviors rather than the reverse as primordialists would contend. Instrumentalists and primordialists alike can support their views with empirical data. Both approaches, however, have proven overly simplistic. As a result, nearly every aspect of both primordialism and instrumentalism has been severely criticized, significantly qualified, or completely abandoned.

### 3.5.3 Constructivist

Beginning with the seminal essay on the study of ethnicity by Fredrik Barth in 1969, an approach to ethnicity was introduced that is now called constructivism. The recognition grew in anthropology that ethnic groups are not discrete, self-contained units whose continued distinctiveness depends on social isolation.<sup>214</sup> Rather, ethnic identity persists in situations of intensive social interaction with other groups. According to Barth, an examination of only the *cultural content* (e.g. practices, values, symbols) associated with ethnic groups and distinguishing them by the sum of those differences is insufficient. This objectivist view derives from the perspective and the categories of the researcher without due consideration for the views of the members of the ethnic group.

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<sup>213</sup> Irving Lewis Allen, "Variable White Ethnic Resistance to School Desegregation: Italian-American Parents in Three Connecticut Cities, 1966," in *Culture, Ethnicity, and Identity: Current Issues in Research*, ed. William C. McCready (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 3.

<sup>214</sup> The description *seminal* is not used lightly. Though published in 1969, this work is explicitly referenced, discussed, and/or relied upon for a methodological starting point in nearly all of the literature on ethnicity in the fields of cultural anthropology, archaeology, and biblical studies that I have reviewed. A collection of essays in 1994 was published as a direct follow-up to assess the impact of this book after 25 years. cf. Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, eds., *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (Amsterdam, Hague, Netherlands: Het Spinhuis, 1994).

Instead, he argued for a subjectivist view in which one must also examine ethnic boundaries and how those boundaries function to understand how ethnic identity is maintained by groups and individuals.<sup>215</sup> By *ethnic boundaries*, he meant those means by which members of a group distinguish themselves from others. As he argues in a follow-up article twenty-five years later, “The cultural differences of primary significance for ethnicity are those that people use to mark the distinction, the boundary, and not the analyst's ideas of what is most aboriginal or characteristic in their culture.”<sup>216</sup> He concluded that ethnic boundaries “do not depend on an absence of [geographic] mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories” (emphasis in the original).<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, ethnic boundaries do not depend on a lack of social acceptance between groups. Instead, Barth concluded that “vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries.”<sup>218</sup> By rejecting the objectivist focus on cultural content in favor of analyzing ethnic groups according to their subjective boundaries, he also broke down the linkage, to the point of identification in other anthropological literature, between ethnic and cultural identity. Rather than cultural content defining ethnic groups, members

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<sup>215</sup> Barth, 9-10.

<sup>216</sup> Fredrik Barth, “Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity,” in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond “Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,”* ed. Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers (Amsterdam: Hague, Netherlands: Het Spinhuis, 1994), 12.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. Modern examples from different continents were discussed in the volume where individuals can and did change ethnic groups under particular circumstances.

<sup>218</sup> Barth, 10.

of the same ethnic group in response to living in different physical, economic, and social environments may embrace very different sets of cultural practices.<sup>219</sup>

For Barth, ethnic groups and ethnic identity are a form of social organization.<sup>220</sup> Since it is social, rather than fixed at birth as the primordial view would suggest, ethnicity is also socially constructed.<sup>221</sup> As social constructions, ethnic groups and their boundaries can prove to be quite fluid and situational. Barth's view of ethnicity, as a result, can be understood in instrumentalist terms. For example, individuals and collectivities can put in place processes to form their group identity in ways that maximize their social advantages. In this way, their ethnic group identity has no relationship to anything innate or natural but is purely a strategy to navigate social power dynamics. Later scholars qualify Barth's earlier formulation. Vermeulen and Govers state, "Ethnic identities are products of classification, ascription and self-ascription and bound up with ideologies of descent."<sup>222</sup> The element of ascription and self-ascription that was already prominent in Barth's theory with the addition of the close connection between ethnicity and ideologies of descent recognizes that the construction of ethnicity is closely bound up with the social structures in which it occurs and cannot be simply reduced to a social strategy.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>221</sup> For this reason, the Barthian view has also been referred to as the *constructivist* view, but the term has not been universally adopted.

<sup>222</sup> Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, "Introduction," in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (Amsterdam, Hague, Netherlands: Het Spinhuis, 1994), 4.

<sup>223</sup> A major point of Rainey's work is to address the question of what makes a group identity "ethnic." The core of his answer is that a belief in common descent and territorial origins are "conspicuously important components of ethnic group conceptualization." Rainey, 4.

One of the problems with the constructivist approach in the study of ancient peoples is that what constitutes an ethnic boundary is open to the interpretation of the analyst. Since there can be no living members of the societies being studied and texts in the Levant are few, scholars are compelled to evaluate for themselves what these societies considered their ethnic boundaries. As in the case of Faust and Lev-Tov, scholars are tempted to effectively return to older culture-area models of identifying ethnic groups in the guise of Barthian constructivism by reinterpreting aspects of cultural content as ethnic boundaries. This adaptation of the constructivist approach lacks meaningful controls on interpretation and ultimately does not advance our understanding of the society being studied.

A second, more fundamental, problem with the constructivist approach to ethnicity is that it only addresses questions of identity or is usually only employed in this manner. Scholars in anthropology and other disciplines such as feminist studies came to recognize that identity is not the only relevant factor for understanding individual or group behavior. Other factors like social location and normative values play an important role and, depending on circumstances, sometimes a determinative role in shaping people's views and behavior. For this reason, the constructivist approach, while an important development, is ultimately inadequate as a framework for the study of ethnic groups.

### 3.6 Current Model: Belonging

An important refinement regarding the concept of ethnic identity has developed since Barth first laid out what is now called the constructivist position. That refinement is to not consider collective identity, including ethnicity, in isolation. This idea was beginning to be articulated in the late 1970s by A. L. Epstein,

In its most immediate sense, that is to say, ethnicity is a matter of classification, the separating out and pulling together of the population into a series of categories defined in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’... the essential point for present purposes is that none of us has just a single identity; as members of a society each of us carries simultaneously a range of identities just as each of us occupies a number of statuses and a variety of roles.<sup>224</sup>

According to Epstein, we must look beyond just one identity, like ethnic identity, to fully understand human interactions. Also important is Epstein’s characterization of groups as “defined in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’.”<sup>225</sup> This is a precursor to later theoretical developments in anthropology that will shift the focus from a person’s identity to their sense of *belonging*.

Belonging, in the specialized use that it has here, has a much broader scope than identity alone, offering the potential for greater and more nuanced explanatory power for individual and group dynamics. Before proceeding, *sense of belonging* needs to be defined. *Sense* in this context is being used to capture the idea of perception without confining it strictly to either the sensory or intellectual domain. Emotional, intuitive, and other components of perception are included. As to *belonging*, Nira Yuval-Davis defines

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<sup>224</sup> A. L. Epstein, *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity* (Transaction Publishers, 1978), 100.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

belonging according to Ghassan Hage's definition of *home* "as an affective construct."<sup>226</sup> Hage defines feelings of *home* as being built on "security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope."<sup>227</sup> Noteworthy in this definition is the connection maintained between the personal and collective in this understanding of belonging. Marco Antonsich builds on Yuval-Davis' work and defines two types of belonging. They are "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)."<sup>228</sup> The first type, as Antonsich's definition suggests, has a locus in the individual and their feelings and attachments to people, places, and things. The second type of belonging, the politics of belonging, shapes whether and to what degree someone or some group is part of *us* or *them*.<sup>229</sup> Yuval-Davis makes this kind of distinction in application but not, as mentioned above, in definition.

Just as important as the perception of attachment or connection is to the concept of belonging, its opposite is equally important. As Antonsich's definition indicates, there are forms of exclusion (or alienation) as well as inclusion. In the ancient world as well as the modern, texts and iconography will often advance forms of exclusion as the primary

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<sup>226</sup> Yuval-Davis (2010), 276.

<sup>227</sup> Hage, 2.

<sup>228</sup> Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework," *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 645, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x>. Antonsich's categorizations will be discussed below.

<sup>229</sup> Many variations of oppositions, including I/us, may be explored through the lens of belonging. Since this study is on Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors as groups, the collective dimension will be kept in focus where possible.



focus of the work. In the Hebrew Bible, the call for the extermination of the Canaanite population represents one of the most extreme examples. In ancient Egypt, royal monumental inscriptions and other texts reflecting royal ideology strongly emphasize exclusion as part of its elevation of the status of the king. A common iconographic trope in ancient Egypt is that of the Pharaoh with raised mace in a position to strike foreign captives. These need to be taken into account when evaluating the totality of the attitudes and behaviors portrayed. Accordingly, both belonging and alienation will be considered where appropriate.

This study will at times shift between the politics of belonging and the more personal dimensions of belonging. This will be done in large part because the narratives of which the Former Prophets are composed often switch freely between an individual focus and a collective one. In some cases, the individuals that are the point of focus may be used as a lens to present ideas concerning the collective. The stories of Rahab and Samson are two examples. They, strictly speaking, are about individuals. They stand, however, in relation to larger collectivities that are in conflict, and their stories cannot be properly understood without keeping those connections in view. In other cases, the line between the individual and the collective becomes ambiguous. The books of 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings, as with many ancient accounts, center the stories of kings, but the story of a king in ancient literature is also a story of the kingdom for which the king acts as a proxy.

In addition to definition and focus, the means of articulating and analyzing belonging also needs to be considered. Belonging can be conceptualized as deriving from

the intersection of multiple strands of influence along different axes, including identity, to shape one's experience of the world. The determination of the nature of that confluence is typically done through intersectional analysis. Intersectional analysis originally arose in the 1980s in feminist scholarship to address the fact that a woman's experience in society is not influenced by gender dynamics only but also those of race and class.<sup>230</sup> The intersection and mutual influence of these three factors were seen as more accurately reflecting lived experience. From this starting point, the concept of *intersectionality* has made its way into other disciplines, including anthropology and discussions of belonging.<sup>231</sup> The concept of belonging, viewed through the lens of intersectional analysis, has become in anthropological literature a common and, in some cases, assumed framework for discussing questions of group identity.<sup>232</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the concept of belonging was first applied to ethnicity.<sup>233</sup> One of the earlier scholars to address belonging in connection with

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<sup>230</sup> Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York; London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>231</sup> In speaking of other disciplines, I do not mean to imply that academic disciplines should be conceived as discrete entities, walled off from others. They are very often institutionally separated in academic settings.

<sup>232</sup> cf. Veysel Apaydin, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Cultural Memory and Heritage: Construction, Transformation and Destruction* (UCL Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xpsfp>.

<sup>233</sup> According to Nira Yuval-Davis, underlying belonging is an intersectional analysis which first came about in feminist scholarship studying the mutually constitutive relationship of race, class, and gender for identity. Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging*, 4–5. Intersectionality was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

ethnicity is Jeanette Edwards in a chapter on identity in the English town, Alltown.<sup>234</sup> In her evaluation of the interplay of relationships among the different categories of people of the town, she concluded that ethnic identity defined by ethnic boundaries in the Barthian sense was inadequate to explain the nature of the relationships.<sup>235</sup> The inadequacy, in part, came from the fact that the people did not consider themselves to be an ethnic group despite possessing some of the qualities “integral to ethnic identity.”<sup>236</sup> They perceived their interconnectedness, but not in terms of ethnicity. Thus, the self-ascription aspect of the constructivist model of ethnicity, in this example, does not apply. Secondly, the people of Alltown could not be described in terms of “bounded social groups that act with a common identity.”<sup>237</sup> This occurred because “particular kinds of identity and belonging” were brought “in and out of focus” depending on the context.<sup>238</sup> In short, the ethnic boundaries, if such they were, kept changing among the same collections of people at different times and circumstances.

Moreover, Edwards critiqued how *ethnicity* has been used more generally in anthropology. Just as *ethnicity* had become a substitute for *race*, *identity* was sometimes a substitute for *ethnicity*.<sup>239</sup> In either case, Edwards objected that *ethnicity* and *identity* were “overused and overdetermined as if they were unambiguous.”<sup>240</sup> Additionally, both were

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<sup>234</sup> Jeanette Edwards, “The Need for a ‘Bit of History’: Place and Past in English Identity,” in *Locality and Belonging*, ed. Nadia Lovell, European Association of Social Anthropologists (Routledge, 1998), 147–67.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–163.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 162–163.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

typically associated with a minority or marginalized status. This leaves open, in her view, the question of how to describe the majority. For the case of the residents of Alltown, Edwards argues a sense of belonging to a locality (or lack thereof) is the factor that explains the ways the social boundaries in different contexts shift. It also accounts for the observed relationships and social interactions that do not fit a model of ethnic identity with clear ethnic boundaries. In this way, Edwards highlights how the analytical usefulness of the constructivist approach diminishes where ethnic boundaries and self-ascription becomes murky. Belonging, however, provided a framework that could account for the observed data.

As mentioned above, belonging has since increasingly become an accepted paradigm for discussing both individual and collective identity.<sup>241</sup> A leading scholar on

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<sup>241</sup> cf. Claudio Bolzman, Laura Bernardi, and Jean-Marie Le Goff, “Introduction: Situating Children of Migrants Across Borders and Origins,” in *Situating Children of Migrants Across Borders and Origins: A Methodological Overview*, Life Course Research and Social Policies (Cham: Springer Nature, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1141-6>. Claudine Attias-Donfut and Joanne Cook, “Intergenerational Relationships in Migrant Families: Theoretical and Methodological Issues,” in *Situating Children of Migrants across Borders and Origins: A Methodological Overview* (Springer Nature, 2017), DOI: 10.1007/978-94-024-1141-6. Ingrid Tucci, “Analyzing Second-Generation Trajectories from a Life Course Approach: What Mixed Methods Can Offer,” in *Situating Children of Migrants Across Borders and Origins: A Methodological Overview* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1141-6>. Rosa Aparicio and Andrés Tornos, “National Identity and the Integration of the Children of Immigrants,” in *Situating Children of Migrants across Borders and Origins: A Methodological Overview* (Springer Nature, 2017), DOI: 10.1007/978-94-024-1141-6. Matei Candea, “Anonymous Introductions: Identity and Belonging in Corsica,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. n1 (2010): 119–37. Nandini Das et al., *Keywords of Identity, Race, and Human Mobility in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1t8q92s>. Susana de Matos Viegas, “Can Anthropology Make Valid Generalizations? Feelings of Belonging in the Brazilian Atlantic Forest,” *Social*

the theoretical aspects of belonging, identity, and intersectionality is Nira Yuval-Davis.<sup>242</sup> Yuval-Davis has proposed that the components of belonging can be described along three analytical dimensions or facets: identities, social locations, and normative values.<sup>243</sup> Antonsich contended that, though Yuval-Davis acknowledged both the personal and collective aspects of belonging, her analytical dimensions were really focused only on the politics of belonging.<sup>244</sup> Antonsich's emphasis on place-belongingness, however, has caused him to overstate the distinction. While place-belongingness is an important aspect, the personal, affective aspects of belonging cannot be so neatly separated from the belonging a person does or does not feel toward other individuals or collectivities. Belonging is at its heart relational with relationships to other people being the most significant.

When examined in light of these three analytical dimensions, ethnicity directly belongs only to the identities component. Because of self-ascription, ascription by others, and boundaries in the constructivist model, ethnicity, as it is typically understood, is conceived of as an identity. This is so much so that scholars in multiple disciplines freely use the phrase *ethnic identity* in discussing questions of ethnicity. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that Yuval-Davis characterized this component as *identities* rather than

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*Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 53, no. 2 (2009): 147–62.

<sup>242</sup> Beyond her monograph and other works cited above, may be included: Yuval-Davis, "Theorizing Identity."

<sup>243</sup> Yuval-Davis in different publications refers to these three components as either *dimensions* or *facets* in explicit rejection of *levels* because it inappropriately suggests a hierarchy. Yuval-Davis (2010), 267-268. and esp. Yuval-Davis (2015), 94-95.

<sup>244</sup> Antonisch, 647.

*identity*. As Epstein did earlier, she is explicitly recognizing that no person or group has just one identity. These multiple identities vary in relevance depending on the situation, and a sense of belonging may attach to one or more of these identities at any given time. Thus, even when identity is directly under consideration, ethnic identity may not be relevant to every circumstance that people in either modern or ancient times confront.

The second component, social locations, does not include ethnicity but is very often directly connected to it. A person or group's social locations may be very strongly influenced, at times even determined, by ethnic identity. The examples from the modern world where people of the lower or upper economic classes are disproportionately composed of people of particular ethnic identities are legion. Perhaps more salient for this study, removing the influence of ethnicity does not remove the significance of social location for explaining the behavior of either individuals or groups. Economic status, membership in prestige or marginalized occupations, hereditary or acquired social position, and any number of other factors will influence to whom people have a sense of belonging and the relative strength of that influence.<sup>245</sup>

Though the social locations envisioned by Yuval-Davis are no doubt more nuanced and complex than economic status, occupation, and social position, this study will, when analyzing social locations, focus on these because this is the kind of information that is more often available for the ancient world. The relative lack of information compared to modern societies with which scholars must work, in general,

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<sup>245</sup> By social positions, I am referring to kings, governors, lords, officials, citizens, commoners, slaves, dislocated migrants, and the like.

also entails some paring down of the complexity of the analysis than can be employed. Moreover, Yuval-Davis has argued herself that in any given circumstance not every facet of belonging is relevant in all circumstances.<sup>246</sup>

The third component of belonging is normative values. According to Yuval-Davis, “Normative values relate to the ways specific belonging/s are evaluated and judged.”<sup>247</sup> The Hebrew Bible, including the Former Prophets, and the ANE generally is replete with expressions of normative values. In biblical and ANE scholarship, these are often discussed in terms of ideologies both political and religious. The normative values expressed in ideologies may certainly relate to the issue of ethnicity or collective identity. For instance, the law collections of the HB are concerned to delineate who should be accepted among the Israelites as one of their own. For example, Deut 23:2-9 lists various categories of people who may and who may not be admitted into the assembly of Yahweh. The list addresses and differentiates between those of specific neighboring ethnic groups: the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Egyptians. Nevertheless, normative values cannot be exclusively related to ethnicity.

Anticipating later discussions, a prominent set of values that motivates and explains Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors (as well as many other areas of life) is royal ideology. These values arise mainly out of the social position of kingship and not merely Egyptian ethnic identity. Kingship, of course, encompasses much more than social position. Attendant with being at the top of the social hierarchy is wealth, military

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<sup>246</sup> Yuval-Davis (2006), 202-203.

<sup>247</sup> Yuval-Davis (2010), 268.

power, and very often a place in the structure of religious authority. For much of Egyptian history, kingship also meant deification. In the HB, religious values do not always take on the exclusive and limiting character that would be expected of ethnic boundary formation. Rather, it at times reflects universalizing tendencies that include non-Israelites.<sup>248</sup> As will be seen concerning some texts, religious values that are meant to define ethnic boundaries in religious terms may be inconsistently applied within the same text (Joshua 2, 6).<sup>249</sup>

Fundamentally, the problem with studies that analyze ancient peoples exclusively or even primarily in terms of ethnic identity is that they reduce explanations for complex behavior patterns to the analytical dimension of identities — and just one identity at that. Current anthropological research, both theoretical and applied, shows that the complexity of patterns of human behavior requires a more robust analytical framework such as belonging. It incorporates other important dimensions of self-understanding and worldview. These in turn influence the wide variety of attitudes that people express and behaviors that people engage in.

Belonging treats identities, social locations, and normative values as significant, irreducible to each other, and yet mutually constitutive of the person or the people so

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<sup>248</sup> e. g. Isa 19:19-25; That is not to imply religious values elsewhere do not have the same tendencies. The painting in the tomb of Seti I, with which this study began, also reflects a universalizing aspect of Egypt's religious values — at least from the perspective of a specific social position (the king) in a specific historical period.

<sup>249</sup> Those who apply redaction-critical methods to the HB would see in this inconsistency different redactional layers. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the assumptions of this procedure are questionable at best.



described.<sup>250</sup> These three dimensions are significant in that they can account for a much wider range of motivations and behaviors. As discussed above, there is no reason to *automatically* suppose that identity is a primary motivator in any given circumstance or that people with the same identity (e.g. Israelite or Philistine) will feel the same connection to that identity or will respond the same way.<sup>251</sup> None of the three dimensions can simply be subsumed under one of the others. Normative values, for instance, can be held quite apart from any identity or social position to which a person might belong.<sup>252</sup> One's position as a wealthy landowner or peasant may have little to do with one's identity as an Egyptian or Israelite or values as a worshiper of this deity or that. The reverse is also true. Likewise, none of the three dimensions can be universally placed in an analytical hierarchy under either of the other two. Even as they cannot be reduced to one another, however, the sense of belonging of a person is also not merely the three dimensions added together or three compartments in the psyche. They intersect and interact in the functioning of the whole person.

This is not to suggest that belonging is an analytical panacea that answers all questions and solves all problems. The mutually constitutive aspects of belonging may not be easily demonstrated from the limited information available for ancient contexts or a very rich literary corpus like the Former Prophets. Also, belonging is enormously complex in the fullest articulation given by Yuval-Davis. In addition to the three

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<sup>250</sup> Yuval-Davis (2010), 268.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> In 21<sup>st</sup> century American politics, the independent operation of normative values can sometimes lead to people belonging to certain identities or social positionings voting in ways that defy common assumptions about which party they “should” vote for.

analytical dimensions of identities, social locations, and normative values, belonging can also embrace narrative, performative, and dialogic theories of identity construction.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, belonging can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. Among the possibilities, she identifies ‘me’ and ‘us;’ ‘me/us’ and ‘them;’ ‘me/us’ and the many ‘others;’ ‘me’ and the transversal ‘us.’<sup>254</sup> These theories of identity construction and multiple perspectives are difficult to apply to an ancient context. It is not because the ancients were somehow different, but because the answers to the questions posed by these aspects of theorization are very often not available from the kinds of data that we have. Finally, as with any theoretical framework, even as we seek to gain an emic perspective, belonging cannot eliminate the influence of the perspective of the modern researcher. The use of the framework itself imposes modern questions, biases, and constructions on the ancient past.

This does not diminish the utility of belonging for the study of the ancient world. Ancient authors were often keen to depict the stratification and other social positionings of their societies, especially where it could be deployed for literary effect.<sup>255</sup> Ancient authors were also not reticent about fully expressing their values. Unburdened by the value placed in the modern era on objectivity, ancient authors freely interpreted events and defined their relationships with one another in terms of their religious, political, and

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<sup>253</sup> Yuval-Davis (2010), 266-271.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, 275-277.

<sup>255</sup> The Egyptian Middle Kingdom tale of The Eloquent Peasant is a prominent example. The tale of Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6 places emphasis on her status as a prostitute. The fact that David and Jephthah were, at certain times in their lives, displaced migrants was used in the Former Prophets as important plot points. The numerous stories in the HB and the ANE of kings and their servants also attest to this.

cultural values. One of the defining characteristics of the Former Prophets is the authorial interpretation of history through the lens of loyalty to Yahweh alone in the form of Torah observance. For example, each king of Judah and Israel is judged according to this standard. Finally, the ancients often made clear distinctions among ethnic groups and at times even included ethnographic data in either texts or iconography. Identity was no less important to them than to modern people. The Former Prophets is careful to distinguish the various people groups that come within the scope of its account of the past. Whether scholars wish to question the historicity or the accuracy of different parts of the account does not negate the fact that, accurate or not, the ancient author was concerned with the issue of identity.

### **3.7 Summary**

The modern concept of ethnic identity is applicable and useful for the study of the ancient world. With that said, ethnic identity must be seen in the context of a wider analytical framework that accounts for more factors than identity while also including it. The concept of belonging can be analyzed in terms of the intersection of the three dimensions of identities, social locations, and normative values. Defined and analyzed in this way, the sense of belonging, within some limitations, does bring into consideration a much wider range of factors and permits greater levels of nuance because each dimension can be analyzed in relationship with the others. These three dimensions are useful for research on the ancient world because ancient texts often make them explicit or are left barely below the surface. In this regard, the Former Prophets are no different. Identities, social locations, and normative values frequently appear throughout the corpus. Thus,

analyzing the Former Prophets in terms of belonging, using these three dimensions, offers greater heuristic value than considering ethnic identity alone.

## Chapter 4: Egyptian Attitudes Toward Their Neighbors

### 4.1 Introduction

The thesis of this work is that *belonging* offers a more useful analytical framework for analyzing Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors than ethnicity alone. Prior to that analysis, it is important to situate these attitudes in their ancient context. With few inscriptions available from the southern Levant, and few, if any, that are relevant to the present study, it is necessary to look further afield to cultures that have left a substantial body of textual and/or iconographic evidence. Of these, two stand out for their wealth of both texts and iconography — Egypt and the Assyrian empire. While Assyria was more distant from Israel, its empire reached to and beyond the southern Levant in the Iron Age (ca. 1200-540 B.C.E.). Egypt, on the other hand, had been regionally significant throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages. Its New Kingdom empire only receded from the southern Levant in the Iron Age.<sup>256</sup> Even afterward, its military ambitions would be felt in the biblical text itself.

For this study, and owing to the limitations of space, the scope of contextualization will be restricted to ancient Egypt. Though Assyrian texts are abundant, it is the Egyptians who most often expressed their attitudes toward their neighbors in the surviving material. Those expressions also come to us in a greater number of genres and

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<sup>256</sup> Killebrew indicates that the archaeological presence of Egyptians in Canaan disappears by the end of the reign of Rameses VI (1143-1136 B.C.E.). Killebrew (2005), 83. Van De Mieroop also notes that no expeditions for mineral resources in southern Syro-Palestine occurred after this time. He strongly implies that the loss of access to resources in the very south of Canaan marks the end of Egyptian control in the area. Van De Mieroop, 255.

contexts than those of Assyria. Moreover, the available material reflects a wide variety of perspectives whereas the Assyrian literature primarily reflects that of the king. Even narrowing the scope of analysis to ancient Egypt, however, it must be recognized that the information available in texts, iconography, and archaeological assemblages is still vast. An exhaustive examination of any of these categories will not be attempted here.

The evidence is abundant that there is a stark contrast between the image of Egypt's neighbors in texts and iconography and the practical acceptance of these same neighbors in reality at all levels of Egyptian society. This contrast has been documented and discussed at length by many scholars, so there is no need to repeat their efforts. For example, one of the more influential ways of conceptualizing this gap has been through *topos* and *mimesis*. *Topos* and *mimesis* as a compound concept applied to Egyptian texts was originally proposed by Antonio Loprieno.<sup>257</sup> It is a literary-critical approach that seeks to distinguish meta-literary, socially normative themes (*topos*) from individual, and intentional, departures from these themes (*mimesis*) in a text. As an illustration of the concept, the Egyptian treatment of foreigners was used as a prime example.<sup>258</sup> The thematic use of foreigners as stereotyped and anonymous props for the expression of Egyptian norms across many texts represented for Loprieno a clear *topos*. Contrasted

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<sup>257</sup> Antonio Loprieno, *Topos und Mimesis: zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen, Bd. 48 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1988). Also, Antonio Loprieno, "Defining Egyptian Literature," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Antonio Loprieno, 10 vols., Probleme Der Ägyptologie (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 39–58.

<sup>258</sup> *Foreigners* is used here to both follow Loprieno's terminology and to emphasize the intentional othering its neighbors from the Egyptian perspective. Where this othering or exclusionary perspective is prominent, non-Egyptians will be described as foreigners rather than neighbors.

with this, those texts that broke from the socially approved standard set by the topos were examples of mimesis. Mimesis could take the form of giving a foreigner an individual identity and/or favorable treatment. Redford critiqued this approach because it disconnects texts from their historical context.<sup>259</sup> The concept would also imply that texts that embrace topoi would not at the same time include mimesis, but Redford in his review pointed to examples where strongly topical texts by Loprieno's definition also contain significant mimetic elements.<sup>260</sup> For his part, Loprieno does not see these contrasting elements as mutually exclusive.<sup>261</sup>

Most studies focus on identifying archaeologically known points of interaction, cooperation, and co-habitation in contrast to rhetorical hostility. Bettina Bader diachronically presents archaeologically attested contact situations between Egyptians and their neighbors. She also includes some postmodern reflections on archaeological theory.<sup>262</sup> Burrell shows the depth of interaction and lack of racial awareness between

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<sup>259</sup> Donald B. Redford, review of *Review of Topos und Mimesis: Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur*, by Antonio Loprieno, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, no. 1 (1992): 134–35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/604597>.

<sup>260</sup> Redford, 135.

<sup>261</sup> Loprieno (1996), 46.

<sup>262</sup> Bettina Bader, “Children of Other Gods: Social Interactions,” in *Pharaoh's Land and Beyond: Ancient Egypt and Its Neighbors*, ed. Pearce Paul Creasman and Richard H. Wilkinson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 61–77. cf also, Pearce Paul Creasman and Richard H. Wilkinson, eds., *Pharaoh's Land and Beyond: Ancient Egypt and Its Neighbors* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017). Uroš Matić, *Ethnic Identities in the Land of the Pharaohs: Past and Present Approaches in Egyptology*, Cambridge Elements. Elements in Ancient Egypt in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). For a briefer approach oriented toward a non-specialist audience, see Juan Carlos Moreno García, “Coping with Ethnicity in Pharaonic Egypt,” *Ancient Near East Today*, May 2020, <https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2020/05/ethnicity-pharaonic-egypt/>.

Egyptians and Cushites.<sup>263</sup> Susan Cohen approached the problem with a diachronic analysis of inscriptions mainly from the Sinai in the Old and Middle Kingdoms.<sup>264</sup> In the same volume, Gaëlle Chantrain, in a departure from most, used a lexical analysis of texts in an attempt to add contextualized nuance to Egyptian attitudes when specific lexemes were employed.<sup>265</sup>

What this chapter will do is illustrate the productivity of belonging in explaining the gap between rhetoric and reality through a representative sample of the wider body of evidence and literature that has already been adduced by others. Although Egyptian culture remained largely stable for most of its millennia-long existence, it did evolve including the Egyptian construction of kingship. The examples presented here, except for the Tale of Sinuhe and arguably the Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, will come from the New Kingdom (1550- ca.1070 B.C.E.).<sup>266</sup> We will see how the expressions of anti-foreigner sentiment start with Egyptian identity but are in fact driven by strong sets of normative values connected to particular social locations. The two sets of normative values at work are royal ideology and religious ideology. These will be examined in turn. Afterward, texts and iconography where these sets of normative values are either absent

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<sup>263</sup> Burrell, 60-103.

<sup>264</sup> Susan Cohen, “Not so Vile? Rhetoric and Reality in Egyptian-Levantine Relationships in Sinai during the Old and Middle Kingdoms,” in *A Stranger in the House -- the Crossroads III*, ed. Jana Mynářová, Marwan Kilani, and Sergio Alivernini (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts, 2019), 73–90.

<sup>265</sup> Gaëlle Chantrain, “About ‘Egyptianity’ and ‘Foreignness’ in Egyptian Texts: A Context-Sensitive Lexical Study,” in *A Stranger in the House – the Crossroads III*, ed. Marwan Kilani, Jana Mynářová, and Sergio Alivernini (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts, 2019).

<sup>266</sup> Dates are taken from Van De Mieroop, 241.



or less pronounced will be analyzed. These examples tend to reflect more strongly the influence of social locations in connection with identities rather than the judgments about belonging enforced by the normative values of royal ideology and religious ideology. This is not to suggest that this categorization is fixed or self-evident. As will be seen, texts and iconography will rarely fit into just one of these categories. Nonetheless, genre constraints and the intersecting matrices of belonging will typically give more emphasis to one than the others. These differences in emphasis provide useful divisions for our analysis.

## **4.2 Royal Ideology**

Ranging from didactic literature and royal monumental inscriptions to tales, many texts emanate from the monarchy or strongly emphasize the role of the king. They proclaim the greatness and power of the Pharaoh over Egypt's enemies and establish his place in the natural and supernatural worlds. These types of texts are naturally fertile sources of references to and comments on their non-Egyptian neighbors. Without them, there would be no enemies to defeat and no foreign lands to subdue. There would be no vassals to bring tribute to increase the wealth of Egypt. It is the texts that promote the values of royal ideology that most often present the widespread and oft-repeated image of unremitting Egyptian hostility and contempt for their neighbors. A few of the most significant examples of these texts will be reviewed, and the major features of the texts will be highlighted to the extent they are relevant to Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors. Understood within the framework of belonging, the analysis will show that the normative values of royal ideology, which exist to support the needs of the social

locations of the king, are the primary source of the extreme, hostile attitudes observed in the texts.

#### 4.2.1 Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage

A useful entry point for discussion of royal texts and ideology would be Egyptian didactic literature. Unlike royal monumental inscriptions, these are not oriented toward a public audience. As with other literary works, the most likely audience would be the highly literate elite.<sup>267</sup> Loprieno argued that this literature, which he termed “Instructions,” constituted, “the most representative literary shape of *topos*, of the ideological expectations of Egyptian society as transmitted to its officials.”<sup>268</sup> It provides an avenue into the self-understanding of the elite. Rather than the ideology of the text sitting in the background filtering the ostensible primary purpose of the text, communicating ideology is its main purpose.

One example is the Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, also known as the Admonitions of Ipuwer (hereafter the Admonitions). This text is known from a single example from the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Papyrus Leiden 344, in hieratic.<sup>269</sup> There are many issues with this text, not least of which is its poor state of preservation. The beginning has been lost. There are numerous lacunae, and in Gardiner’s judgment, the scribe’s handwriting was careless.<sup>270</sup> In addition to these difficulties, the dating of the text is also contested.

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<sup>267</sup> As the discoveries at Deir el-Medina have shown, at a minimum, there were periods in Egyptian history where a certain degree of literacy extended well beyond elite circles.

<sup>268</sup> Italics are his. Loprieno (1996), 45.

<sup>269</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage From a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1909), 1.

<sup>270</sup> Gardiner (1909), 2.

According to Lichtheim, Gardiner's proposal, that this text was written in the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty about the social upheavals of the First Intermediate Period, is the dominant view in scholarship.<sup>271</sup> Lichtheim herself rejects this view in favor of a date in the late Middle Kingdom.<sup>272</sup> Nili Shupak recognizes both possibilities but declines to adjudicate between the two.<sup>273</sup>

Another issue presented by the text, and often connected with its dating, is the question of whether or not it represents a real historical situation or is entirely literary fiction. Part of what leads Gardiner to argue that the Admonitions reflect the time of the First Intermediate Period is his belief that it is the historical period that best corresponds to the circumstances described in the text. Miriam Lichtheim, operating on the basis of literary considerations, rejects the earlier date and the exercise of trying to discover the historical period that best fits the text. For her, the Admonitions is purely literary fiction.

The focus for the purposes of this study is on the frequent expression of the author's attitudes toward Egypt's neighbors. While it would greatly improve the analysis to contextualize it more definitely through at least a general date of composition, the only relatively secure date is the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty origin of the only available copy. Too great a weight cannot be placed on any kind of historical reconstruction, and genre considerations are still a matter of debate. For example, the editors of *The Context of*

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<sup>271</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 149. (AEL)

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Nili Shupak, "The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage: The Admonitions of Ipuwer (1.42)," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 93–98.

*Scripture* categorize the Admonitions as “Prophecies” in quotation marks intimating that this description is applied with considerable reservations. Shupak believes it to be a work of social criticism.<sup>274</sup> Lichtheim simply categorizes it under “Didactic Literature.” To the extent some sort of context is assumed, Lichtheim’s genre categorization and a New Kingdom date will be adopted. In the end, its chief value for this study is as a general, but representative, example of Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors from the standpoint of royal ideology.

The expectation that the text reflects the views and priorities of royal ideology is established by the text’s premise. It is presented as a dialogue between Ipuwer, a sage, and a king. The sage laments the current situation in which the exact reversal of the desired social order now prevails. Also characteristic of the Admonitions is that its rhetoric is “more extreme in its use of hyperbole” than similar works.<sup>275</sup> The flat reversal of the social order and the tendency toward extreme hyperbole as a characteristic of the whole work therefore must temper the evaluation of the statements within the text.

In the poorly preserved introduction, we have the statement, “Foreigners have become Egyptians everywhere.”<sup>276</sup> In Gardiner’s understanding, foreigners have so overrun Egypt that they have become like Egyptians or have taken the place of Egyptians. By implication, true Egyptians are missing or have become foreigners or *like*

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>275</sup> Lichtheim, *AEL* 1, 149.

<sup>276</sup> Admonitions 1.9; Foreigners (Eg. *h³styw*) and Egyptians (Eg. *Rmṯ*) Shupak, COS 1.42, 94. Lichtheim, *AEL* 1, 161 n.1. Egyptians = people. The term can be translated either way.

foreigners.<sup>277</sup> If Lichtheim is correct and “Egyptians” should be translated as “people,” then the author regards Egypt’s neighbors as subhuman in some way. The expression also implies a civilized-versus-barbarian type dichotomy. A similar sentiment is expressed later in section 3.1 of the Admonitions though using a different, but pejorative word *pḏtyw*, meaning “foreigners,” “bowmen,” or “a foreign tribe” based on the determinative. In this instance, the author complains about the intrusion of these foreigners into Egypt. The text also implies by reversal that it is expected that Egyptians are skilled in crafts, but foreigners are unskilled.<sup>278</sup> In its immediate context, this situation is juxtaposed with other loathsome social problems.<sup>279</sup>

Toward the end of the Admonitions is a brief rendition of what good times in Egypt should look like. In this description, the author portrays the security of Egypt in terms of repelling the classic trio of foreigners: Asiatics, Libyans, and Cushites.<sup>280</sup> This placement deserves further comment. Though the Admonitions is lengthy and covers many topics, the fact that both the introduction and conclusion include comments against foreigners is significant. It creates a kind of *inclusio* and elevates the importance of these ideas in the overall work.

Throughout the Admonitions, foreigners are to be feared and rejected. They have no place in Egypt, and they certainly should not be in a position to replace Egyptians to the detriment of the Egyptians themselves. The idea of Asiatics becoming skilled in

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<sup>277</sup> Gardiner, *Admonitions*, 21.

<sup>278</sup> Admonitions 4.8; Shupak, COS 1.42, 95.

<sup>279</sup> It appears in this section that Shupak passes over with an ellipsis a particularly difficult portion of the text that is covered by Gardiner.

<sup>280</sup> Shupak, COS 1.42, 98.

Egyptian crafts is also an unwelcome reversal of the ideal order envisioned in the text.

The attitude of the Admonitions is one of unqualified contempt for Egypt's neighbors and an equally unqualified sense of Egyptian superiority.

Within the framework of belonging, the values, needs, and priorities of Egyptian kingship drive the ideology that is being transmitted within elite circles. These normative values lead to a literary shape in the Admonitions is the very picture of exclusion and ethnic hatred. What is missing is any explanation for why these normative values yield this particular result. Within the conceptual world of the Admonitions, the underlying rationale is taken as understood.

#### **4.2.2 Gebel Barkal Stele of Thutmose III and The Battle of Qadesh (Poem) of Rameses II**

Royal monumental inscriptions make the rationale explicit and have come to set the standard for expressions of Egyptian royal ideology. Two of the most prominent are Thutmose III's Gebel Barkal Stela (ca. 1479-1425 B.C.E.) and the poetic version of the Battle of Qadesh in the reign of Rameses II (after ca. 1275 B.C.E.).<sup>281</sup> Though separated by more than a century and half, there is a high degree of overlap in themes, content, and other literary qualities. For this reason, they will be considered together.

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<sup>281</sup> The translations of the Gebel Barkal Stele will largely follow that of Hoffmeier. James K. Hoffmeier, "Gebel Barkal Stela of Thutmose III (2.2B)," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 14–18. For another translation, John A. Wilson, "The Asiatic Campaigns of Thutmose III," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 234–41. Transcription based on, Adriaan de Buck, *Egyptian Readingbook*, 4th ed (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1977). The Battle of Qadesh was fought around 1257 B.C.E. The text exists in multiple copies on temples across Egypt and on papyrus.

The introduction of the Gebel Barkal Stele, which gives the titles of the king, sets out the epistemological framework for the inscription. Thutmose III is “Lord of Every Foreign Land” (*nb n ḥꜣst nb*). From this perspective, the king of Egypt is the rightful ruler of everything, especially in the context of the Egyptian belief that the Pharaoh has the responsibility of establishing and maintaining *Ma‘at*. According to James P. Allen, the concept of *Ma‘at* within the scope of human affairs embraces the ideas of order, justice, truth, correct behavior, and right.<sup>282</sup> On the cosmic level, it was “the natural order of the universe” and “the way things ought to be.”<sup>283</sup> The king, especially, had a responsibility to maintain *Ma‘at* for the land of Egypt.<sup>284</sup> Failure in this respect was a failure in their most basic duty. If one adopts this position, the only question that remains is the extent to which the Pharaoh can gain actual control over what royal ideology contends is rightfully his. By logical extension, those who oppose the king’s rule not only deny the king his rights but also oppose *Ma‘at*. In this way, the epistemological framework of royal ideology creates the conditions for automatic hostility to foreigners (or, at times, Egyptians) who resist the king’s domination. Their opposition makes them evil by definition, and the king’s military campaigns are then merited and righteous.

What follows in the inscription is rhetoric that revels in its bloody hostility to Egypt’s neighbors. To begin with, the name of the fortress of the king is “Destroying

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<sup>282</sup> James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, 2nd edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

Foreigners.”<sup>285</sup> The praise of Amun-Re amplifies the idea of universal rule. Amun Re is said to enable the victories of the king in which he seizes Southerners (presumably Cushites) and Northerners (presumably Asiatics and/or Libyans). The latter is said to happen according to his (i.e. the god’s) “governance” or “guidance” (*sšm.f*). The next portion, which gives more detail on how the king is said to have carried this out, is worth quoting in full.

He created the Son of Re, Thutmose, Ruler of Thebes, may he be granted life like Re forever, the good god who captures with his powerful arm, smiting southerners and beheading northerners, who shatters the heads of evil characters, slaughtering Asian Bedouin and overthrowing defiant desert dwellers, who subdues the marshlands and strikes down the tribesmen of Ta Seti, and vanquishes the foreign lands who attacked him.<sup>286</sup>

The rhetoric has progressed from seizing southerners and northerners to smiting and beheading them. By implication, they are the evil characters whose heads the king shatters.<sup>287</sup> The noncompliant Bedouin of the desert will be slaughtered, the king will subdue the marshlands, and he will strike down the tribesmen of Ta Seti. The emphasis here seems to be on tribal enemies across a variety of directions and topographies.

Beyond propagandistically exalting the king’s military success, these kinds of descriptions serve a further, literary purpose. Egypt’s neighbors provide the foil

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<sup>285</sup> This reminiscent of the Tale of Sinuhe where “the Wall-of-the-Ruler” is described as being “made to repel the Asiatics and to crush the Sandfarers.” Lichtheim, COS 1.38, 77-78.

<sup>286</sup> Hoffmeier, COS 2.2B, 14.

<sup>287</sup> The choice of “shatter” as the verb is likely a reference to one of the more common iconographic motifs of ancient Egyptian art. The image is of the pharaoh with an upraised mace about to deliver a killing blow on captured enemies. This motif is strongly symbolic of the might of the pharaoh and is also connected to the literary metaphor of “his powerful arm” in this passage.



necessary for the king to demonstrate his personal strength and prowess in combat. The characterization is hyperbolic and given an epic scale. The foreigners are united into a massive horde against whom the pharaoh stands enraged. So mighty is he that the king defeats them single-handedly.

He is a king who fights alone, without a multitude to back him up. He is more effective than a myriad of numerous armies. An equal to him has not been, (he is) a warrior who extends his arm on the battlefield, no one can touch him. He is one who immediately overwhelms all foreign lands while at the head of his army, as he shoots between the two divisions of troops, like a star he crosses the sky, entering into the throng, [while a bl]ast of his flame is against them with fire, turning into nothing those who lie prostrate in their blood.<sup>288</sup>

Generally, the praise of Thutmose III in the Gebel Barkal Stele is unconcerned with the particulars of who is being killed, or perhaps more accurately, the particulars are deliberately ignored. The rhetorical impact of the king standing alone against foreigners is enhanced if they are reduced to an innumerable, faceless mob of evil people. Attention to their humanity in any way would spoil the effect. It is for similar reasons that the foreigners, a little later identified as Mitannian, are characterized as not being cowards (lit. fugitives).<sup>289</sup> There is no altruism or openness to others expressed here. The king's courage is diminished if he merely succeeds in intimidating and defeating cowards. Their fear is only useful after their encounter with the Pharaoh.

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<sup>288</sup> Hoffmeier, COS 2.2B, 14.

<sup>289</sup> The Mitannian empire flourished for a time in the region of upper Mesopotamia from the 16<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was known to neighboring empires as Ḫanigalbat. Situated in between the Assyrians, Hittites, and the outer fringes of the Egyptian empire, it found itself in competition with each. The 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt fought with Mitanni for control of Syria west of the Euphrates.

Though written approximately a century and a half later, the poetic version of the Battle of Qadesh (hereafter “the Poem”) in the time of Rameses II employs many of the same motifs.<sup>290</sup> For example, like the Gebel Barkal Stela, Rameses II makes use of characterizing his foreign opponents as in some way evil. Muwatallis II, the king of Ḫatti, is called, “the despicable Fallen (chief) of Hatti” or some variation multiple times.<sup>291</sup> Throughout, Rameses II, as with Thutmose III, revels in his bloody onslaught against the enemy. More significantly, the motif of foreigners attacking in an innumerable horde is repeated here. The king of Ḫatti is said to have brought with him, “all foreign countries to the (furthest) limits of the sea... Their rulers were there with him, each man with his forces; their chariotry was vast in extent, unequalled; they covered hill and valley, they were like the locust-swarm in their multitude.”<sup>292</sup> The imagery of the locust-swarm is especially evocative of the faceless horde.

The motif of the king fighting alone found in the Gebel Barkal Stela is not only found in the Poem, it is one of the most prominent, and oft-repeated, features of the work. Though it is introduced much earlier, it gets its fullest elaboration here.

See, Amun has given me his victory,  
no troops being with me, and no chariotry.  
He has caused every distant land to see my victory  
by my strong arm,  
I being alone, no high officer with me,  
no charioteer, no soldier of the infantry, no groom.  
The foreign lands that beheld me shall tell of my fame (“name”)  
as far as distant lands yet unknown.  
As for any of them that escaped my hand,  
they stood, turning back, looking at what I had done.

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<sup>290</sup> The battle itself took place around 1275 B.C.E.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>292</sup> Kitchen, COS 2.5A, 34.

If I penetrated amid millions of them, their legs  
could not stay firm, and they fled.  
All those who shot in my direction, their arrows  
then scattered when they reached me.<sup>293</sup>

As with Thutmose III, the foreigners in question are not important in themselves. The king is centered in the story, and the foreigners, in this case, the Hittites, only serve to provide an enemy for the king to defeat with his personal might. While the characteristics, numbers, and organization of the Hittites were crucial to the course of the actual battle, rhetorically, none of these mattered in the glorification of Rameses II.

There are a few features of the Poem that are not also present in the Gebel Barkal Stela. They do not break with the elements of royal ideology found in the stela, but rather they elaborate and go deeper into the thinking behind the ideology. First, part of the reason for the rejection and dismissal of their neighbors is ethno-religious. Rameses raises this in the story when he finds himself in a difficult and dangerous spot. He calls to Amun-Re as his father and pleads for his aid. Part of his plea is to ask, “What are they to you, O Amun, these Asiatics, despicable and ignorant of God!” The Asiatics should not be favored by Amun-Re because they are ignorant of him and do not do anything for him unlike the virtuous Rameses (in his own estimation).

A second feature is the Poem makes explicit what may otherwise be implicit in royal inscriptions; namely the purpose of demonstrating the king’s superhuman feats. In the account of Rameses facing the Hittite army alone, he sends them fleeing, and the account has them exclaim,

One cried out to another amongst them, (saying):

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

He is no mere man, he that is among us!  
(it's) Seth great of power, (very) Baal in person!  
Not the acts of a mere man are the things that he does,  
they belong to one utterly unique!<sup>294</sup>

These superhuman feats serve the purpose of demonstrating the divine nature of the king. Reversing the logic, since he is divine, the king should be demonstrating his superhuman power on behalf of Egypt. The image of the fleeing Asiatics and the superhuman military power of the Pharaoh serve to reinforce his image in Egypt as a god.

A third area of difference with the Gebel Barkal Stela is the direct expression of a deep affinity for Egypt over foreign lands. Rameses, amid his rebuke of his army for not fighting with him, laments,

As the spirit of my father Amun endures, O that I  
were in Egypt!  
Like the Forefather of my forefathers, they who  
saw no Syrians,  
(who never fought Him, even remotely!)  
And not one of you having come to boast of your  
(his') service, in the land of Egypt.  
How much better, (just) to raise many monuments  
for Thebes, city of Amun!<sup>295</sup>

This longing for Egypt is not mere homesickness or national pride. Egypt is the place on earth that is good and where things are as they should be. The ideal state is where Egyptians may remain in Egypt without the need for foreign adventures, and foreigners are not even present. It reflects a very deep sense of what Antonsich refers to as place-belongingness.<sup>296</sup> An integral part of Egyptian belong is tied to geography. Though the

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 35. This is not the only expression of its kind in the text, but it is representative.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>296</sup> Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework," 645.

sense of the jab at his officers and chariotry is not clear, it leaves the impression that it would have been better to stay in Egypt. Then, the king would not have to listen to them boast of their service, which he deems to be nonexistent, and could content himself with raising monuments for the city of the national god. More noteworthy, the value of the comment is that, in its context, the remark is almost incidental. Nothing that had to be carved in stone is truly incidental, written as an afterthought, but the comment seems to be an aside. It does not very substantially advance the author's point that the army was woefully negligent in their service to the king in battle. Not wholly losing its propagandistic flavor, the sentiment serves to project the king's religious zeal while also yielding insight into the Egyptian perspective on their neighbors. That this sense of place-belongingness is not an isolated perspective will be seen in Sinuhe's longing to return to Egypt despite his many successes in Retenu. It was not just a matter of returning home or of the king's favor. The Egyptian characters in the story viewed it as essential that even in death he should not be separated from Egypt.

The Poem of the Battle of Qadesh repeats and amplifies many of the themes of Egyptian royal ideology. The aggressive desire for slaughter is expressed. The motif of Egypt's neighbors to masses of wicked hordes is also present. Also repeated is the complex motif of the king standing alone in battle and repulsing the enemy single-handedly. The Poem adds another motif. Indirectly linking not to the Gebel Barkal Stela but the Tale of Sinuhe, the Poem reflects a deep-seated longing for, and sense of belonging to, Egypt.

Looking at the view of royal ideology on Egypt's neighbors, the source of hostility and contempt for Egypt's neighbors could be analyzed in multiple ways. Loprieno's framework of *topos* and *mimesis* leaves consideration of the text at the literary level without reference to its historical context. While Brian Rainey analyzed biblical and Mesopotamian texts, if his approach were adapted to Egyptian royal monumental inscriptions like those of Thutmose III and Rameses II, one would likely conclude the text is a manifestation of undisguised Egyptian xenophobia. Many scholars would adopt a political-historical explanation. For instance, Egypt under Thutmose III and Rameses II was in a stage of empire-building, and monumental inscriptions with the accompanying iconography served a propagandistic purpose at home and, shorn of hyperbole, reflected Egypt's actual hostile ambitions toward its neighbors.

Without diminishing the merit of these approaches, belonging contributes the idea that these particular expressions must also be understood in light of the social locations of the king and the normative values of Egyptian kingship.<sup>297</sup> Pharaoh's unique position at the pinnacle of Egyptian society is not simply the highest rung on the social ladder. During the stronger dynasties, the power of the state was highly centralized in the hands of the king. In addition to this internal social location, the Pharaoh was not just any king in the web of external relations of power. Unlike others who claimed the title *king* but may only govern a small kingdom or just a city, the king of Egypt ruled one of the great powers of the world known to them and was historically, and at the time, dominant in its

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<sup>297</sup> The issue of identity is set aside for the moment. In the specific case of a king, especially Pharaoh, social location and identity are so closely intertwined that they may be indistinguishable. Kingship is internalized and essentialized in the person of the king.

region. The intersection of the supreme place of the king within the state and the preeminent place of Egypt in regional and supra-regional affairs sets the conditions for the development of normative values that are designed to reinforce and maintain these twin social locations.<sup>298</sup>

Royal ideology serves that function. By the New Kingdom, the place of the Pharaoh in Egyptian society was justified by proclaiming him to be divine as the living Horus. Royal ideology turns disobedience to a king into defying a god. The Pharaoh was also understood as the son of Amun-Re and highly favored by the god.<sup>299</sup> With this role as a divine king comes the responsibility to maintain *Ma'at*. Internally, this makes the Pharaoh's supreme power over the Egyptian state a socio-religious imperative. Chaos is restrained from without and within by his mighty power.

Externally, this is more complicated since those outside Egypt are less interested in the proclamation of the Pharaoh's divinity than the size of the army they can muster. For Egypt's neighbors, Egyptian royal ideology and the king's internal social locations had little relevance for their sense of belonging at the intersection of their own identities, social locations, and normative values. They were, after all, not Egyptian. What matters for them is not the Pharaoh's ideas about himself but the size of the army he can muster. In this sphere, royal ideology is oriented toward an internal audience. It supports the place of the king in society through their ability to project Egyptian strength abroad

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<sup>298</sup> I do not use the term *international* here in order to avoid importing modern understandings of the nation-state. The debate over the concept of nationhood in antiquity is not germane to this study.

<sup>299</sup> Though not all pharaohs were men, even Hatshepsut found it expedient as her reign progressed to present herself in a masculinized way.

through military victory. The projection of Egyptian strength abroad is justified by resort to the king's prerogatives as the son of Amun-Re, the living Horus, and the establisher of *Ma'at*. In these roles constructed by royal ideology, the king of Egypt is the rightful ruler of the world.

Certain normative values that directly impact Egyptian views of their neighbors arise as a logical consequence of this ideology. If the king was the rightful ruler of the world, then Egypt's neighbors should show due deference and submission to his will. Those who have no desire to welcome the domination of the king of Egypt and fail to do so are evaluated negatively by those normative values. Grouped into the traditional categories of Asiatics, Libyans, and Cushites, they are labeled as morally evil and deserving the just wrath of the Pharaoh. Thus, it becomes entirely appropriate to engage in conquest and to slaughter foreigners *en masse*. Foreigners become an acceptable target for demonstrating the Pharaoh's divine power through superhuman feats on the battlefield. Though the army cowers and runs, the king stands tall and repulses the enemy. The submission and/or symbolic execution of foreigners represents the king's success in bringing into reality his rule of the world and the preservation of *Ma'at* according to the will of the gods. Looking through the lens of royal ideology, the submission of foreign lands is the ultimate affirmation of the Pharaoh's right to rule.

As we have seen, texts produced by the royal administration or for a royal audience are, as a consequence, replete with portrayals such as these. Its persistence across time allowed for the development of literary and iconographic tropes. These tropes then become available to be redeployed by kings to connect themselves to the expected



image of a king. It allows them to assert, in their own way, that they belong. They belong to the long line of illustrious kings that preceded them. They are claiming their place in the story. Whether or not that story has a connection to the actual historical past is less relevant than the meaningfulness of the royal narrative for the present.

Without dismissing other factors such as ethnic prejudice or cultural chauvinism, the normative values generated by royal ideology play a leading role in giving shape to texts produced in the royal sphere. As acknowledged above, the textual and iconographic phenomena that we have observed cannot be exclusively tied to royal ideology as if it were sealed off from Egyptian religious ideology. The divinity of the king, his favored position with Amun-Re, and his role in preserving *Ma'at* all closely connect royal ideology to religious ideology. The difference from other texts that will be attributed to religious ideology is one of focus. Religious ideology in texts with a royal focus is only invoked insofar as they serve the priorities of royal ideology, which is the glorification of the king.

#### **4.2.3 The Tale of Sinuhe**

In addition to texts that are explicitly didactic or propagandistic in their promotion of the king, the normative values of royal ideology can also impact works of literature. The Tale of Sinuhe from the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2055-1650 B.C.E.) is particularly relevant in this regard in that one of the central themes behind the various movements of the plot is the favor of the king (or lack thereof).<sup>300</sup> The titular Sinuhe is a royal official

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<sup>300</sup> The two main sources of this story come from P. Berlin 3022 (abbreviated B) and P. Berlin 10499 (abbreviated R). English translations will be taken from Miriam

on campaign with the then-crown prince Sesostri I. Sesostri is tasked with attacking foreign lands, specifically a tribe of Libyans.<sup>301</sup> The catalyst for the action of the story is the death of the king (presumably Amenemhat I) and Sinuhe's flight in fear of the now-king Sesostri's response. Other than general panic, little explanation is given for this.<sup>302</sup> As a consequence of his flight and fear of returning home to the palace, the action of the story revolves around Sinuhe's efforts to navigate a life of self-exile in foreign lands.

A characteristic of the Tale of Sinuhe is that it reflects something of the overall pattern of Egyptian perceptions of their neighbors and not just those presented by royal ideology. Whenever the king or the kingdom is concerned, the story hews to the kinds of language featured in royal propaganda. At each opportunity, Sinuhe and other characters meticulously offer deference to the king as if each utterance was meant for royal reading (and perhaps was). The opening of the story depicts "the good god Sesostri...smit[ing] foreign lands."<sup>303</sup> When discussing foreigners in royal context, hostility and contempt is expressed. For example, when Sinuhe arrives at the border of Egypt in his outward-bound flight, the place called "Walls of the Ruler" is described in the typical language of royal ideology. They "were made to repel the Asiatics and to crush the Sandfarers."<sup>304</sup> No room for anything other than alienation and hostility to foreigners is provided.

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Lichtheim, "The Tale of Sinuhe (1.38)," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 77–82.

<sup>301</sup> According to Lichtheim, the two terms used, *Tjemeh* and *Tjehenu*, refer to two different tribes but are used interchangeably in the story. COS 1.38, P.77, n.2.

<sup>302</sup> One could argue that he panicked because the author wanted to advance the plot in a particular direction rather than a specific reason.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 77-78.

Nevertheless, the tone of the story almost immediately shifts. In Sinuhe's moment of desperation, Asiatics come to the rescue. The narrator/Sinuhe points out that the leader of the Asiatics he met had been in Egypt. He is cared for by not only giving him water to treat his immediate need of thirst but also giving him boiled milk. Sinuhe was further extended hospitality by being taken to the tribe rather than sending him on his way. Sinuhe raises no objection to the hospitality of these foreigners.<sup>305</sup> Instead, the account of this encounter ends with the summary statement, "What they did for me was good."<sup>306</sup> All at once, within the space of a few lines, the contempt of royal ideology gives way to a sympathetic attitude toward foreigners. While the portrayal of Sinuhe is highly idealized and that of the foreigners is glowing, the popularity of the story in ancient Egypt suggests this element to some degree coheres with the attitudes and expectations of its ancient Egyptian audiences.<sup>307</sup>

What also makes the positive portrayal of the Asiatics work is the issue of social location. In the context of the story, Sinuhe is no longer an official attending the princess, Nefru. He is a displaced migrant or refugee. With the change in social location comes a change in attitude toward foreigners. No longer are they groups to be destroyed. They are people who have friendly relations with the Egyptians and who show kindness. His prior sense of belonging to the Egyptian court has been temporarily submerged by his change in social location. Now, a new sense of belonging is developing that includes attachments

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<sup>305</sup> I am using *foreigners* here to emphasize the otherness of Egypt's neighbors because that aspect is especially relevant for the action of the story.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>307</sup> The tale of Sinuhe's popularity is attested by the discovery of several copies or fragments of copies.

to the very Asiatics that the “Walls of the Ruler” were meant to repel. While Sinuhe was no doubt motivated by the need to survive and desire to thrive in his new environment, belonging does help to explain the inner logic of the attitudes expressed in the story toward Asiatics.

The double attitude (royal and non-royal) toward foreigners presented in germ form with the initial encounter is further developed in the story. After additional travel, Sinuhe, at last, arrives in Qedem (sometimes translated as Kedme). Here, Ammunenshi, the ruler of Upper Retenu/Retjenu, is either an Asiatic chieftain with an Egyptian name or the Egyptian scribes are translating an Amorite name into Egyptian.<sup>308</sup> Ammunenshi encourages Sinuhe that he will hear his native language and that there are Egyptians with him. Once again, Sinuhe is taken in by the Asiatic chieftain, and he begins to establish himself on a more permanent basis. In summarizing his intentions, Ammunenshi repeats the refrain from the first encounter with Asiatics, “What I shall do for you is good.”<sup>309</sup> The hospitality shown in the first encounter is now far exceeded. Sinuhe is favored even compared to Ammunenshi’s children. Sinuhe is given his eldest daughter in marriage. He is made a chieftain himself over a tribe and given Ammunenshi’s best land which is portrayed as exceedingly abundant. Sinuhe has children and makes them chieftains over their own tribes.

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<sup>308</sup> John A. Wilson, “The Story of Si-Nuhe,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 19 n.11. Lichtheim, COS 1.38, 78 n.4

<sup>309</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.38, 78.

The portrayal of the Asiatic Ammunenshi and those associated with or allied to him is not merely positive. It is idealized. No hint of a negative attitude toward them is found. It should be noted at this point that Sinuhe's personal qualities and achievements are also consistently aggrandized. To no small extent, this includes his rise to prominence in the Asiatic social structure. Since this aspect of the story only tangentially relates to the purposes of this study, it will be passed over without further discussion. The primary concern is that Asiatics *could* receive such idealized treatment in such a quintessentially Egyptian story.

Sinuhe's sense of belonging is cultivated and intensively attached to these Asiatic group(s). His identity as a Egyptian becomes supplemented with a new identity as son-in-law to an Asiatic chieftain and eventually father to other Asiatic chieftains. His social locations create further entanglement with the Asiatics. He remains displaced from the Egyptian royal court, but at the same time, he becomes a chieftain among the Asiatics and a war leader. With the birth of his children and their assumption of prominent roles in the tribal structure, Sinuhe is deeply enmeshed along multiple dimensions in his belonging to these Asiatics. His normative values of unflagging loyalty to the Pharaoh permit these new developments and his attachment to the Asiatics because the author characterizes Ammunenshi as equally loyal to the king of Egypt.

The hostile, contemptuous attitude characteristic of royal ideology is interwoven with this uniformly positive portrayal. The first chosen vehicle for the insertion of royal ideology is the initial meeting between Sinuhe and Ammunenshi. While Sinuhe is initially concerned to vindicate his behavior, Ammunenshi takes up the mantle of the

consummate, loyal subject of the Pharaoh. Upon recognizing Sinuhe, he immediately inquires about the welfare of the Residence as a metonymy of the king and his household. When given the news of the king's death, Ammunenshi replies in language more reminiscent of a royal inscription than dialogue. "How then is that land without that excellent god, fear of whom was throughout (45) the lands like Sakhmet in a year of plague?"<sup>310</sup> Sinuhe responds with even greater adulation of the king in the form of a lengthy and elaborate paean extolling his virtues. This exposition reflects, consequently, the more contemptuous attitude toward foreigners characteristic of royal ideology. "He was the smiter of foreign lands," and "The Bowmen flee before him." This is a reference to the Nine Bows, the generic designation of the enemies of Egypt.<sup>311</sup> Finally, Sesostris is:

Enlarger of frontiers,  
He will conquer southern lands,  
While ignoring northern lands,  
Though made to smite Asiatics and tread on Sand-farers!<sup>312</sup>

The irony of this conclusion to the poem is passed over without comment in the story. It is the sensibilities of the audience of the literary work, not of the characters, that are being satisfied even at the sacrifice of realism.

Furthermore, as often as this interweaving of positive and contemptuous portrayals of Egypt's neighbors occurs, the contrast is allowed to stand without comment

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid. The number in the quotation represents the line number inserted into Lichtheim's translation.

<sup>311</sup> Stuart Tyson Smith, "Ethnicity and Culture," in *The Egyptian World*, ed. Toby Wilkinson (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 228.

<sup>312</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.38, 78.

or apparent awareness of the clash. Amid Asiatic tribes, Sinuhe's depiction is of an unstoppable warrior who has won the hearts of his Asiatic kin and allies. As soon as royal messengers or the king appears in the story, there is an automatic diminution of all things foreign even to the extent that this applies to Sinuhe himself. After Sinuhe's return to Egypt, Sesostris declares of him, "Here is Sinuhe, (265) come as an Asiatic, a product of nomads!" The royal daughters voice their prayer for his return and poetically say of him, "Grant us the son of north wind, Bowman born in Egypt!" One characteristic of the Tale of Sinuhe is a love of reversals and other contradictions. In this case, Sinuhe represents the archetypical foreign enemy and yet was born in Egypt. The author shortly afterward creates the image that the removal of his foreign clothes and his beard (characteristic of Asiatics but not of Egyptians) is also the removal of the shame of his former existence. Despite his family and status in Retenu, once in Egypt, he immediately expresses a strong sense of belonging to Egypt and Egyptian ways. He radically distances himself from his life among the Asiatics. The radical change corresponds to a radical change in his social location. No longer an exile, tribal chieftain, and champion of the Rulers of the Hill Country, he is a courtier in the palace of the Egyptian king once again. While the story never depicts him as ever leaving behind his strong sense of Egyptian identity, he is quick to leave behind his identities among the Asiatics such as son-in-law, husband, and father when they are no longer significant in his new circumstances.

There are a few places in the tale of Sinuhe where the intersection of king and foreigners does not neatly follow royal ideology. The most notable occurs on Sinuhe's return journey to Egypt. The king sends ahead to him boatloads of royal gifts which are

not given to Sinuhe but to the Asiatics traveling with him.<sup>313</sup> One might suppose some connection to royal ideology in this act, such as honoring Sinuhe by generosity to his traveling companions. What connection there may be, however, is not made obvious by the author who never misses an opportunity to be obvious where the king is concerned. Other moments in the story are less prominent and clear-cut. While living in Retenu, Sinuhe conscientiously shows hospitality to royal officials who are traveling through the king's foreign possessions.<sup>314</sup> Here a subject matter that has a direct association with the king is introduced without some kind of a diminution of foreigners, but the reference is brief. Shortly afterward, Sinuhe's exploits on behalf of the ruler of Retenu includes military campaigns to kill and plunder Asiatics. In this case, no direct reference to the king or kingdom is made but hostility toward neighboring tribes conceived as foreigners is brought to the fore.<sup>315</sup> In both cases, the primary aim is the literary transformation of Sinuhe from a cowardly official to a courageous military leader.

The Tale of Sinuhe has the double virtue for the present study of both being a literary classic in its own time, the popularity of which endured for centuries, and placing an archetypical Egyptian elite in a well-known foreign land. The aspect of being a literary classic indicates that its point of view is representative of Egyptian cultural attitudes. How much of ancient Egyptian society is represented by these attitudes is uncertain. On one hand, the high level of literacy required to read Sinuhe would suggest an audience of the very elite. The careful attention to royal sensibilities may suggest a primary audience

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.



in the palace. On the other hand, the main copies are written in the more simplified script of hieratic, and it is unknown to what degree written texts were read aloud to less literate audiences. An investigation into these matters goes well beyond the concerns of this study. It is sufficient, however, to observe the existence of multiple copies across approximately eight centuries strongly suggests the story's attitudes toward Egypt's neighbors are not an idiosyncratic outlier.<sup>316</sup>

Placing the story's protagonist in a well-known foreign setting provides ample opportunity for the portrayal of a fairly wide variety of interactions with non-Egyptians. As such it is an invaluable window into what Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors were. What emerged is the presence of the normative values of royal ideology which, as in other literary genres, is characteristically hostile and contemptuous of Egypt's neighbors. These royal values were not alone, but they were juxtaposed, often with little art or subtlety, with a more positive image of Egypt's Asiatic neighbors. They could be kind, generous, loyal, wise, and intelligent. They are more often portrayed in the story this way than with negative characterizations where royal ideology is not in view. So it is that the Tale of Sinuhe encapsulates within itself the conflicting tendencies seen between values-driven rhetorical hostility and the widespread acceptance of foreigners in practice.

The conflicting tendencies between royal ideology and the positive portrayals can be explained by the changing dynamics of Sinuhe's sense of belonging throughout the story. To be clear, this does not assume that this is an accurate portrayal of a historical

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<sup>316</sup> Wilson places the known copies of Sinuhe in a range from approximately 1800-1000 B.C.E. Wilson, 18.

Sinuhe or even that there was a historical Sinuhe. The success of Sinuhe as a character depends, though, in part on the realism of his portrayal within the constraints of the literary conventions of the time. Sinuhe and his actions have to, on some level, make sense and be believable to an Egyptian audience. Simply put, Sinuhe need not be a historical person for the story to offer a realistic portrait of human behavior, specifically Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors in this era.

At a foundational level, his sense of belonging is to Egypt because his ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity is Egyptian. His former social location as a royal official also figures prominently in his attachment to Egypt. The royal ideology frequently put in his speech places his normative values firmly in the royal sphere. It is only with geographic and social distance from Egypt and a radical change in his social location that he develops identities and social locations that create a sense of belonging to the Asiatics. Within the story, only as long as and only to the degree that these were salient did Sinuhe accommodate himself to the Asiatics, and their image was positive.

The sense of belonging to Asiatics developed in the story was always tenuous and situational, however. This was almost inevitable since the only fitting climax to the tale, from the Egyptian standpoint, was the full restoration of Sinuhe and the bestowal of royal honor on him. In spite of the years of kindness offered by the Asiatics, in the end, they were just “bowmen” whose hands and land were deemed inferior even for the burial of his body.<sup>317</sup> The Tale of Sinuhe reflects in its conclusion Yuval-Davis’s observation that,

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<sup>317</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.38, 81.

“Normative values relate to the ways specific belonging/s are evaluated and judged.”<sup>318</sup>

The royal ideology that was at the heart of Sinuhe’s normative values was the benchmark against which his specific ‘belongings’, both Egyptian and Asiatic, were judged. His sense of belonging to the Asiatics failed to conform to these values and was abandoned at the first opportunity. His sense of belonging to Egypt and the royal house met the highest ideal of his normative values and was embraced wholeheartedly just as quickly.

In summary, from the Tale of Sinuhe emerges a seemingly contradictory double attitude toward Egypt’s neighbors. On the one hand, the hostility and contempt of royal ideology are expressed directly and with the usual stereotypical images of Egypt’s neighbors as foreigners. On the other, the Asiatics among whom Sinuhe comes to dwell are frequently depicted positively, and both of these attitudes coexist side-by-side emerging and being submerged repeatedly throughout the story. The presence and continuation of these attitudes arise due to the dual senses of belonging developed by the protagonist as a consequence of his living in exile in a foreign land and among a foreign people. These competing senses of belonging are not equal in strength, and one conflicts with the normative values imputed to him — rigorously orthodox Egyptian royal ideology. The tension created by this situation is resolved predictably in favor of the sense of belonging that conforms to the normative values of both the protagonist and the author. While the ancient author certainly did not have modern anthropological categories in mind, an analysis along the intersecting axes that make up a sense of belonging does

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<sup>318</sup> Yuval-Davis (2010), 268.

explain the inner logic of the story, much of which was assumed by the author as not requiring further explanation.

### **4.3 Religious Ideology**

The normative values of royal ideology were not the only ones that made themselves felt in the texts and iconography of ancient Egypt. At the same time that the normative values of royal ideology resulted in the expression of hostility and contempt toward Egypt's neighbors, other texts and iconography were doing the opposite. These works expressed universalizing themes that freely brought together foreigners and Egyptians into a common whole. Rather than extreme exclusion, culturally significant texts and iconography were sounding notes of inclusion. The works that did so are distinguished by their religious emphasis. This, of course, does not mean they were entirely free of other influences including royal ideology. It only means that the greatest emphasis lies in the domain of religion. This difference in emphasis, between royal and religious ideology, results in a difference in the set of normative values that find expression. With two sets of normative values arising from two different ideologies concurrently at work, it becomes possible for contradictory expressions concerning Egypt's neighbors to be produced and coexist.

Two of the most famous of these works are the Great Hymn to the Aten from the Amarna period (1352–1336 B.C.E.) in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the Book of Gates whose text and iconography adorned the tombs of Seti I, Rameses II, and Rameses III in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Both prominently feature universalist themes. What these works have in common is a concern with the religious aspects of Egyptian life and death. When

contextualized by the normative values of Egyptian religious ideology, these universalizing themes will be seen as their logical outworking.

#### 4.3.1 The Great Hymn to the Aten

The expression of universalizing views of different peoples did not begin with the Great Hymn to the Aten. For example, a precursor can be found in the Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re. It envisions “all foreign lands” as worshipping Egypt’s national deity.<sup>319</sup> The Great Hymn to the Aten expounds it, however, in greater detail. At this juncture, it is worthwhile expanding the quote originally referenced at the beginning of this study.

How many are your deeds.  
Though hidden from sight,  
O sole God beside whom there is none!  
You made the earth as you wished, you alone,  
All peoples, herds, and flocks;  
All upon the earth that walk on legs,  
All on high that fly on wings,  
The lands of Khor and Kush,  
The land of Egypt.  
You set every man in his place,  
You supply their needs;  
Everyone has his food,  
His lifetime is counted.  
Their tongues differ in speech,  
Their characters likewise;  
Their skins are distinct,  
For you distinguished the peoples.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Robert K. Ritner, “The Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re (1.25) P. Cairo 58038 (P. Bulaq 17),” in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>320</sup> COS 1.28

This hymn has several significant features. First, the Aten, as is typical of this period, is given monotheistic expression. Consequently, it takes on the role of the creator of all things “as you wished.” This is followed by a brief expansion to include all land creatures. Humans are placed at the head of the list. The text then transitions to the ordering of the human world with the allotments of the human race according to the threefold schema of Khor, Kush/Cush, and Egypt. This schema very roughly approximates the Egyptian world with Egypt itself supplemented by its northern and southern neighbors. Also included in the Aten’s beneficent ordering is the provision of the needs of all.<sup>321</sup> Beyond the geographical distribution of the human world, the Aten is credited with its chronological distribution in terms of the human lifespan. Following this, the texts make generalized ethnographic observations. It recognizes the different languages that people speak and in a vague way their different characters. It takes a step beyond this and remarks explicitly on skin pigmentation. Rather than praise the superiority granted to Egyptians, the differences are subsumed under the divine ordering of the Aten. Put a little differently, the Egyptian author organizes human difference within the religious framework of the Aten being the sole deity.

The order of both the natural world and the human world are significant points because maintaining *Ma ‘at*, as was observed earlier, was important in ancient Egyptian thinking. Here, the Aten is being praised for providing *Ma ‘at* at both the cosmic and the

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<sup>321</sup> Later, the hymn describes the Aten as, “A Hapy from heaven for foreign peoples...” Lichtheim comments that “Hapy, the inundating Nile, emerges from the netherworld to nourish Egypt, while foreign peoples are sustained by a “Nile from heaven” who descends as rain.” COS 1.28, P.46, n.6.

human levels. This implicitly supersedes the king's role because the king could only directly affect the human level. Incorporated within the Egyptian understanding of the all-encompassing *Ma'at* is the whole of humanity and all of its differences including somatic ones.

In one sense, the hymn's outlook is universal in scope, but that sense of universalism is, as a practical matter, much more limited. To begin with, the universal scope is created within a particularly Egyptian frame of reference. The god that rules over all and orders all is the chief *Egyptian* deity. The concept according to which the Egyptian deity operates is the *Egyptian* concept of *Ma'at*. The Great Hymn to the Aten is not unique in this. The Great Hymn to Osiris from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, through its telling of the Osiris myth, tells of his son Horus's elevation to kingship over Egypt in place of his father.<sup>322</sup> The relationship to *Ma'at* is made explicit when the "Council of Maat," also termed "the Lords of Maat," are the ones who confer the kingship of Egypt on him.<sup>323</sup> The other peoples in both hymns do not stand on their own but are understood from the Egyptian perspective. In the Great Hymn to Osiris, Horus' kingship over Egypt also includes,

Sky, earth are under his command,  
Mankind is entrusted to him,  
Commoners, nobles, sunfolk.  
Egypt and the far-off lands,  
What Aten (20) encircles is under his care,<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, ed., "The Great Hymn to Osiris," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The New Kingdom*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 81–86.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 84. For the quotations, Lichtheim's spelling and formatting of *Ma'at* was followed.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, the universal allotment to and provision for the peoples in the Great Hymn to the Aten does not imply that the provision is in any way equal or should be equal. That is not part of the concept. Inequalities are regularly accepted between social positions and classes as well as people groups — so long as those inequalities are the way things are supposed to be from the Egyptian point of view.

What the Great Hymn to the Aten does do, however, is make a break with typical Egyptian royal ideology. Royal ideology casts the greatness of the just and right Pharaoh against the evil hordes of vile foreigners. The religious ideology represented by the hymn, though influenced by the then-current royal view of religion, abandons denigration of foreigners and neighbors in favor of wrapping them into the Egyptian worldview. It remains strongly ethnocentric, but it is a considerably less hostile version.

#### **4.3.2 The Book of Gates from the Tomb of Seti I**

Perhaps one of the most famous cases of apparent Egyptian universalism is the text and iconography from the Fifth Hour of the Book of Gates painted on the wall of Pillared Chamber F in the tomb of Seti I (1294 – 1279 B.C.E.).<sup>325</sup> It depicts the so-called “four races” representing the totality of humanity going together into the Egyptian afterlife. These stylized “four races” are Egyptians, Asiatics, Cushites, and Libyans. Each can be identified by the stereotyped manner of their portrayal characteristic of Egyptian artistic conventions. Egyptians have reddish-brown skin, are beardless (or have a false beard), have a black wig, and wear a linen wrap or kilt around the waist. The Asiatics

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<sup>325</sup> Erik Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates* (Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publications, 2013), 136–85.



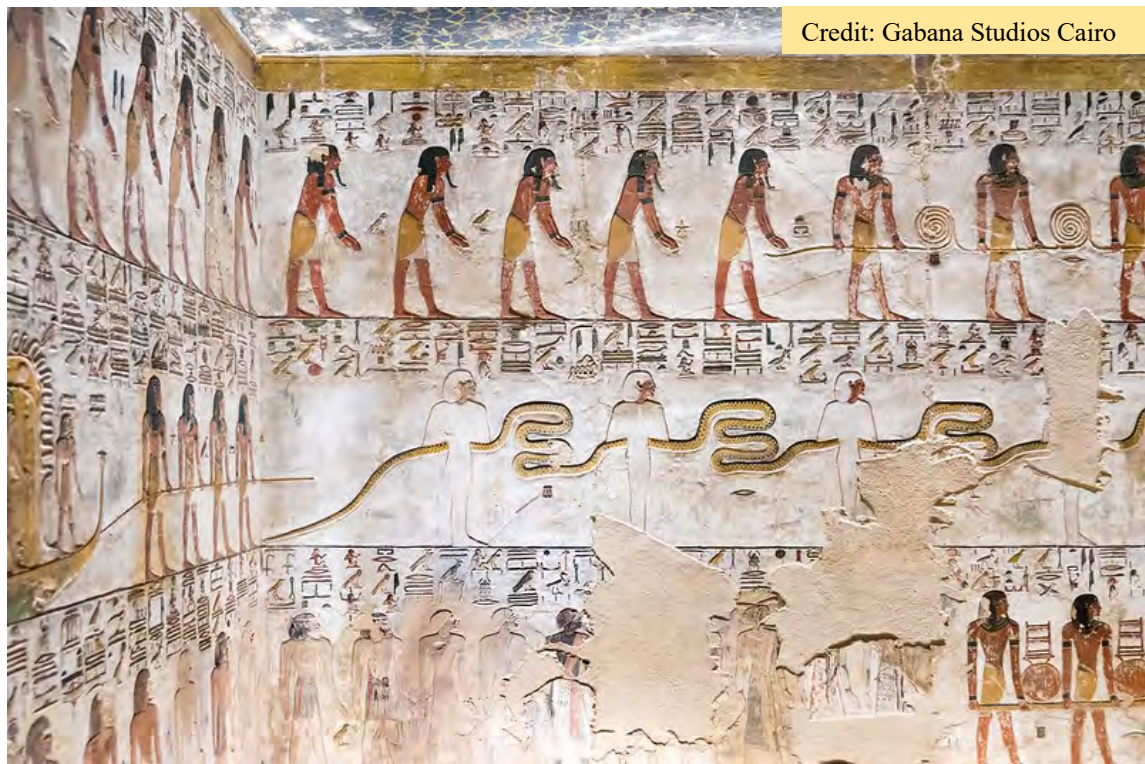
have long hair secured by headbands and prominent beards. They are of a lighter brown skin color that varies, and their garments are colorful with tassels dangling from the hem. While the kinds of clothes Asiatics are depicted as wearing vary, in this tomb, the colorful, tasseled garments are in the form of kilts like the Egyptians. Cushites are portrayed with black skin, no beard, and short braids or wigs that may vary in color. Their garments may be patterned or plain, long or short, but they usually consist of a wrap around the waist with some sort of sash or strap that extends over the shoulder. Libyans are generally given the lightest skin, beards, and more elaborate headdresses. The headdresses usually include a large feather on either side of the head. Their garments are colorful and cover the torso as well as the lower half of the body. Tattoos are a common feature.

In Scene 30, the lower register, which extends around a corner of the room, shows four Egyptians following four Asiatics, four Cushites, and four Libyans. The four Egyptians and two of the Asiatics are visible on the wall in Figure 1. The other two Asiatics and the others are visible on the adjacent wall shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 1: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, overview of lower register:  
Egyptians and Asiatics**



**Figure 2: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, overview of lower register  
Asiatics, Cushites, and Libyans**



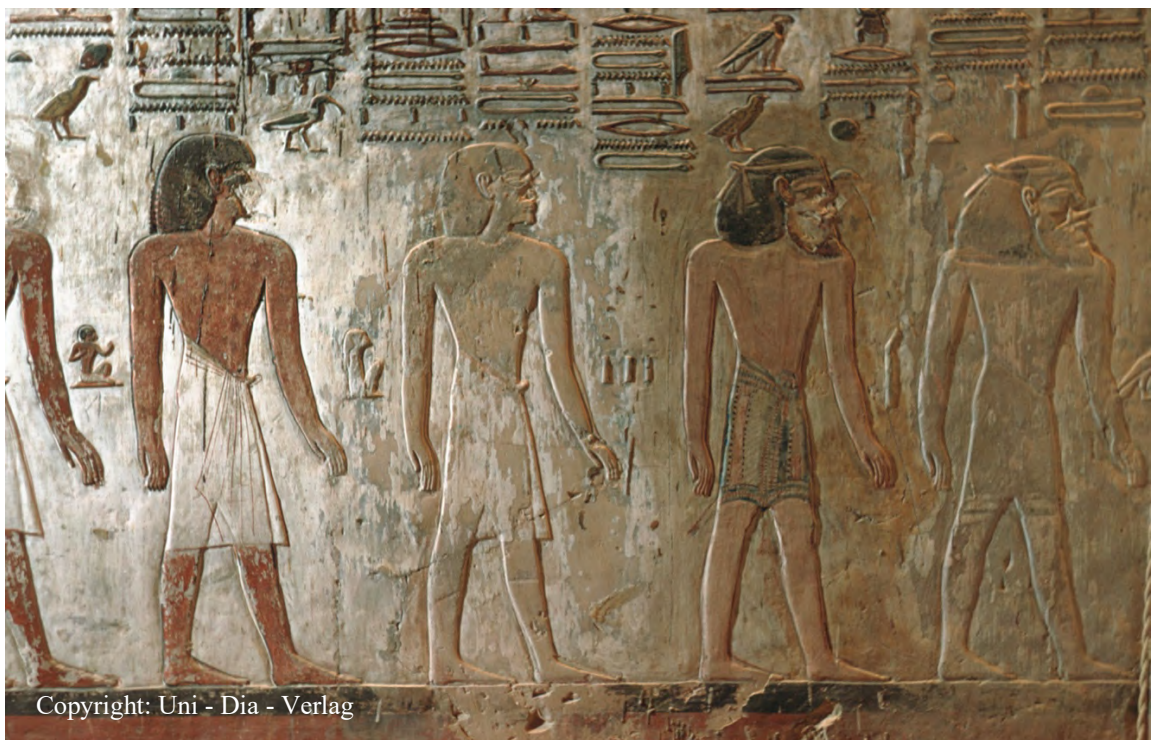


Below are detailed views.

**Figure 1a: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, detail – Four Egyptians**



**Figure 1b: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, detail – Last two Egyptians and the first two Asiatics**



**Figure 2a: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, detail – Third and Fourth Asiatics**



Credit: Gabana Studios Cairo cropped



**Figure 2b: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, detail – Four Cushites**  
(The fourth in the damaged area can be identified by the sash and kilt emerging below the damage.)



**Figure 2c: Tomb of Seti I, Pillared Chamber F, Scene 30, detail – Four Libyans** (The first in the damaged area can be identified by the fringe emerging below the damage. The third and fourth are identified by their long, colorful garments and their tattoos.)



The iconography on its own is strongly suggestive of a perspective that includes all of humanity from the Egyptian frame of reference. The artistic conventions of ancient Egypt often related the size of the figure to their importance. The figure of the Pharaoh typically looms like a giant over everyone else in a scene. Other high officials will be smaller than the Pharaoh but larger than lesser officials. The tomb of Huy, the viceroy of Cush, (TT40), which will be discussed below for other reasons is an example of this. The largest figure in the scene is Pharaoh Tutankhamun sitting on his throne. Smaller, but still large, is the figure of Huy. The Nubians bringing tribute are smaller yet. On royal monuments, captives or other insignificant people may be reduced in size to appear below the feet of the king. In the images in this scene of the Book of Gates, by contrast, depict all four groups with figures of equal size. Likewise, the Egyptians do not seem to enjoy special placement at the head of the group but are shown last. The Egyptians and the three groups of foreigners are also entering into the same afterlife. Based on the iconography, Egyptians do not look forward to a better fate in the afterlife than the non-Egyptians.

The accompanying text, though obscure, supports this understanding of the iconography with minor qualifications. Following scenes where those who are blessed in the afterlife are assigned positions in the court and are given provision, the text says:

Horus  
 The Egyptians (*rmṯw*), the Asiatics (*ʿmw*),  
 the Cushites (*nḥsyw*), the Libyans (*ṯmḥw*),

Horus says to the cattle of Re,  
 which are in the Duat,  
 in Egypt and in the Desert;

Transfiguration to you, cattle of Re,  
which came into being through the Great one who is in heaven!  
Breath for your noses  
loosening for your mummy-wrappings!

You are the tears for my Brilliant Eye,  
in your name of Egyptians,

Great is the water of him who created  
You say in your name of Asiatics,  
For them Sakhmet came into existence; she protects their Ba-souls.  
You are these against whom I struck,

I am content with the millions who came from me,  
in your name of Cushites.  
They came into existence for Horus, and he protects their Ba-souls.

I searched for my eye when you came into existence,  
in your name of Libyans.  
For them Sakhmet came into existence; she protects their Ba-souls.<sup>326</sup>

Both text and iconography (except for the obscure reference to striking) in context present all of humanity in a unified, positive scheme. Moreover, the text explicitly envisions that, in the afterlife, the *ba* of these foreign groups are under the protection of Egyptian gods.<sup>327</sup> This presentation is consistent with the Egyptian religious ideology of the New Kingdom, especially in the Great Hymn to the Aten several decades earlier. This consistency was maintained despite the fact that pharaohs almost immediately after

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<sup>326</sup> Hornung, 160-162. The translation has been modified from Hornung's for consistency of terminology and of translation. The word *rmṯw* can be translated either as human being or as Egyptian. Hornung in this passage translated it one way and then the other for no reason that can be discerned. I also changed Syrian to Asiatic and Nubian to Cushite both for greater accuracy and for consistency with how these groups are referred to elsewhere in this study.

<sup>327</sup> The *ba* is the spiritual component of a human being that contains their individuality. This is the part of human existence that continued into the afterlife. It has similarities, but is not equivalent, to the Western notion of a soul. Allen, 79.



Akhenaten made a special point of rejecting the Aten-only worship that he promoted and re-embraced the traditional worship of Amun and the rest of the Egyptian pantheon. The great convulsions in religion that characterized the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the transition to the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty did not alter this aspect of religious ideology.

Perhaps one reason for this was the wider political, economic, and social context of the era. These representations in the Great Hymn to the Aten and the early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty pharaohs occurred in an international age when Egypt was looking beyond its own borders to build an empire and secure their territory from foreign control.<sup>328</sup> The reversal in social location from being the subjects of foreign control during the Second Intermediate Period to being in control of an empire may well have sparked a reconsideration of how foreigners should be integrated into the Egyptian worldview. Vincent Tobin argued, “There can be no doubt that universalism did eventually appear in Egyptian religious thought, but only during the New Kingdom after Egypt had expanded into an empire of such an extent that it became necessary for her to give due recognition to the place held by foreign nations in the universal scheme.”<sup>329</sup> In other words, the advent of imperial ambitions may have precipitated changes in how belonging was evaluated. In the area of politics, little changed. The normative values of royal ideology

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<sup>328</sup> Egypt’s shift from a more insular to a more imperialistic approach to the outside world occurred after the end of Hyksos control of northern Egypt ca. 1650-1550.

<sup>329</sup> It is uncertain in context what exactly the *universalism* is to which Tobin was referring, though his overall point is clear. The universalism in question seems to be a universal conception of the cosmic order and the gods that was applied to the whole world rather than just Egypt. Vincent Arie Tobin, “Mytho-Theology in Ancient Egypt,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 25 (1988): 181, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40000877>.

continued to evaluate non-Egyptians negatively. This translated into rhetorically positioning non-Egyptians as targets of unrelenting hostility through mass slaughter and conquest among other things. In the domain of religion, however, religious ideology's normative values in the New Kingdom evolved to view including non-Egyptians with Egyptians positively. It could do so because its priorities were different than royal ideology. The most fundamental, normative value of Egypt's religious ideology was not the exaltation of the king but of the gods. Rhetorically, it accomplished this task by taking the opposite position as royal ideology. It presented a universalist image of humanity in which all peoples are the beneficiaries of divine creation and ongoing goodwill. This did not, of course, entail any generosity or magnanimity on the part of the Egyptians. Returning to Tobin, he states,

It would be rash, however, to make any claim that the Egyptian mind was now [i.e. during the New Kingdom] holding to any philosophical concept of the unity of all men or to the oneness and equality of all nations. Egypt's own outlook still held that she was herself the center of the universe; and little, if any, altruistic interest was evident as regarded foreign nations.<sup>330</sup>

The Book of Gates, like other similar expressions, elevated the Egyptian point of view for Egyptian purposes. This is likely the reason it was deemed fitting for the tomb of Seti I and subsequent pharaohs despite the apparent clash with royal ideology. This Egypt-centric lens provides a common point of departure for the normative values of the two most important centers of power in Egypt even while they radically diverge in their

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

expression. It should be observed, however, that neither says anything about what actual Egyptian attitudes were beyond these ideological spheres.

#### 4.3.3 The Report of Wenamun

The Report of Wenamun describes events during the reign of Rameses XI.<sup>331</sup> Lichtheim takes the position that it was composed shortly after the events in it during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>332</sup> According to Van de Mieroop, however, the papyrus dates to more than a century later, approximately 950 B.C.E., which is toward the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.<sup>333</sup> The Report of Wenamun, like Sinuhe, recounts the adventures and, perhaps more accurately, the travails of an Egyptian official in the Levant.<sup>334</sup> As Lichtheim notes, whereas the Middle Kingdom setting of Sinuhe reflects a time of political power, the Report of Wenamun reflects a time of political decline in the New Kingdom.<sup>335</sup> For example, the monarchy experiences in this period a significant loss of power relative to religious authorities, especially the priesthood of Amun of Thebes.<sup>336</sup> One of the ways this difference manifests itself is in the dynamics of the relationships between Wenamun

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<sup>331</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, "The Report of Wenamun (1.41)," in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 89.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Marc Van de Mieroop, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 252.

<sup>334</sup> To clearly differentiate between the work and the titular character of Wenamun, the work will be referred to in full as the Report of Wenamun.

<sup>335</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 89.

<sup>336</sup> Van de Mieroop, 248.

and the various non-Egyptians that he encounters. The second is the type of rhetoric that the author places in the mouths of the characters, especially the titular character.<sup>337</sup>

There are at least three driving forces behind the plot of Wenamun. The first is the initial catastrophe that struck Wenamun when the money for his mission was stolen by one of the ship's crew. This gets the drama of the plot moving. The second is the disdain with which Egypt's neighbors treat Wenamun while on his official mission. Rather than facilitate his mission, the non-Egyptians resist him at nearly every turn and usually adopt postures toward him that range from indifference to contempt. The third driver of the plot is Wenamun's behavior is completely out of touch with reality. He is imperious in his demeanor and presumptuous in his demands. He behaves as if the Egyptian empire still reached the Euphrates as in centuries past. The reactions of local people at all levels demonstrate an absolute lack of fear, respect, or sense of obligation. Thus the protagonist repeatedly worsens his situation, heightening the drama and, quite probably, the humor of the story.

The interplay of the second and third drivers of the plot put on display how much the relationships have changed even as Egyptian attitudes, or more likely elite attitudes, toward their neighbors have stayed the same. Wenamun represents the old imperialist

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<sup>337</sup> It is unclear if the Report of Wenamun has a historical basis in light of the nearness in time of the writing compared to the events it relates or if it is purely fictional. For the purposes of this study, resolving the ambiguity is not necessary since the portrayal, fictional or otherwise, is meant to be realistic. For the sake of simplicity, those who appear in the story will be referred to as characters without comment on their historicity. For an extended discussion of this issue, cf. Jean Winand, "The Report of Wenamun: A Journey in Ancient Egyptian Literature," in *Ramesside Studies in Honour of K. A. Kitchen*, ed. Mark Collier and Steven Snape (United Kingdom: Rutherford Press Limited, 2011).

attitudes toward Egypt's neighbors in a manner resembling the hostility, contempt, and general sense of superiority of royal ideology except that he does so explicitly based on religious grounds. Before he experiences rejection or resistance, Wenamun tends to make demands to the effect that all will automatically be done in his favor simply because of who he is, an official of the god Amun of Thebes. His sense of entitlement is at its most blatant when he takes some unknown action, probably the theft of gold and silver, that enrages the local Tjeker such that they pursue him north to Byblos to both arrest him and seize his ships.<sup>338</sup>

The Tjeker, for their part, are initially courteous, but neither the Tjeker nor the Byblian prince is willing to go beyond basic obligations.<sup>339</sup> They reject Wenamun's unreasonable expectations. For example, it was customary for the local ruler to financially restore those who had been robbed in their territory. Beder, the local Tjeker ruler, rejects Wenamun's demand for restoration because Wenamun has been robbed by one of his own men on his own ship. For this reason, Beder feels no obligation to pay Wenamun anything. The reaction by local rulers goes so far as to reject Wenamun in ways that "would have been unthinkable in earlier times."<sup>340</sup> Beder in Dor exclaims, "Are you serious?" to Wenamun's demand for restitution.<sup>341</sup> Zakar-Ba'al flat out refuses to see

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<sup>338</sup> Lichtheim speculates that he stole money from a Tjeker ship based on a broken portion of the text. Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 90.

<sup>339</sup> The Tjeker are one of the groups that Rameses III describes as one of the Sea Peoples. Van de Mieroop, 251.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>341</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 90.

him, and through his harbor master demanded that he leave for twenty-nine days in a row.<sup>342</sup>

In general, the underlying relationship between Egypt and its neighbors has become purely transactional instead of one of a suzerain and its vassals. In resolving the main point of Wenamun's mission, the Byblian prince does not accept demands or manipulation. He only accepts payment, and once the Egyptian vizier sends it, only then does he spring into action to help Wenamun complete his mission. In fact, in the context of the story, the relationship of dependence has been reversed. During the times of its power and its control over an empire, Egypt's neighbors were made dependent on it. Here, the Egyptians have become dependent on the Asiatics.

One caution should be raised about connecting the attitudes of Wenamun to the attitudes of Egyptians in general. It must be kept in mind that the attitudes of the author do not align with those of the protagonist. The author repeatedly and explicitly portrays Wenamun's views as out of date and uses this failing to propel the action. Wenamun very often, at least in the surviving portions of the text, is made the fool by the author. This then suggests the author projects this image of the protagonist in order to critique and even ridicule those who cling to past glory. The work takes a more realistic and conciliatory attitude toward Egypt's neighbors even if it is not an accepting one. The imperial mindset is implicitly rejected, and Egypt is presented as diminished.

The nature of the rhetoric in the dialogue is also markedly different than the Middle Kingdom Tale of Sinuhe. The obsequious attitude toward the Pharaoh is not

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

present. In fact, Rameses XI is completely absent from the story both explicitly and implicitly. The centers of authority in the account are Herihor, the high priest of Amun of Thebes, in the south as well as Smendes, the vizier, and his wife Tentamun in Tanis.<sup>343</sup> Neither are given royal titles.<sup>344</sup> Herihor initiates the mission. Smendes and Tentamun finance it by advancing the money in expectation of repayment by Herihor.<sup>345</sup> Just as absent from the Report of Wenamun as the king is the accompanying rhetoric reflecting royal ideology. Herihor in the story is referred to as “my lord” and “my master,” and the mission reflects the independence of the high priest of Amun in this period.<sup>346</sup> Smendes and Tentamun, though Wenamun looks to them for relief, are not given honorifics when they are referred to.

Egypt’s neighbors are portrayed with realism. They are not elevated as paragons of virtue, yet at the same time, they are not demonized or demeaned. Princes do not acquiesce to every demand made of them and are not impressed by low-level foreign functionaries. They are careful to protect their own power and standing, and they look out for their financial interests. The Tjeker’s pursuit of Wenamun is a natural response to the egregious theft he appears to have committed against them. Zakar-Ba‘al, the prince of Byblos, took a very diplomatic and even-handed position concerning their dispute.<sup>347</sup> He did not side with the Tjeker by handing Wenamun over to them nor did he side with

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<sup>343</sup> Van de Mierop, 253. Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 90 n.3.

<sup>344</sup> Van de Mierop, 253.

<sup>345</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 91 n.14.

<sup>346</sup> Van de Mierop, 241.

<sup>347</sup> Lichtheim’s translation maintains the Egyptian rendering of the prince’s name, Tiekeraal/Tjekeraal. Van de Mierop translates the Egyptianized name into its Semitic equivalent, Zakar-Ba‘al.

Wenamun by offering him absolute protection. He takes an almost Solomonic middle path that gives Wenamun a chance to escape without entirely withholding him from the Tjekker. Neither side could be entirely pleased or disappointed.

The one “king” that receives the most attention in the story is the god Amun of Thebes. It is in his authority, not that of Rameses XI, that Wenamun frequently and forcefully asserts that he is acting. He attempts to persuade non-Egyptians to act in order to please Amun. The story is suffused throughout, not with royal ideology, but with religious ideology. The ideology is specific, in this case, to just one deity. The same kind of attention given to exalt the king carefully and reverently in Sinuhe is instead lavished on Amun. Historically, this shift in emphasis fits the rise of the power of the priesthood and the temples at the expense of the monarch that characterized the later Ramesside rulers.

The Report of Wenamun does not easily lend itself, however, to religious propaganda. On the one hand, foreigners, such as Zakar-Ba‘al, are portrayed as recognizing Amun-Re as a god and the implied superiority of Egypt. For instance, Zakar-Ba‘al affirms Amun’s influence, in conjunction with Seth, over thunderstorms.<sup>348</sup> He acknowledges Amun created Egypt and all lands and that learning/craftsmanship originated there.<sup>349</sup> Most significant of all is that, earlier in the story, he is finally convinced to give Wenamun an audience in response to an oracle from Amun.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> This also fits with the Egyptian identification of Seth with Ba‘al, the storm-god. Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 91 n.12.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 90.



Smendes and Tentamun's dialogue amounts to an agreement to do the will of Amun "our lord."<sup>351</sup> On the other hand, most of the greatest exaltation of Amun comes in the mouth of Wenamun who, as has been stated, is repeatedly made to look the fool. Furthermore, Zakar-Ba'al speaks in respectful tones of Amun, but he only yields to Wenamun's wishes on the arrival of payment from Smendes and Tentamun. Even if the story imagines Amun of Thebes as the true king of Egypt and the lands of the Mediterranean coast, he is, for the non-Egyptians, merely an equal trading partner who must pay for services rendered like everyone else.<sup>352</sup>

In summary, the Report of Wenamun and the Tale of Sinuhe differ in many particulars. They offer strongly contrasting portrayals of the relationships between Egyptians and their neighbors that are commensurate with the different periods that they portray. The Tale of Sinuhe prominently features royal ideology while the Report of Wenamun displaces that entirely with religious ideology. Nevertheless, they both freely mix plainly ideological content with elements that are designed to give the story historical realism. These elements of historical realism defy the tropes of foreigners found in royal inscriptions — though they are at times presented almost side-by-side in Sinuhe.

Wenamun's troubles, besides being the product of misfortune and hubris, are due to his social location as a minor official of a diminished empire. There are no overlapping axes of loyalty and connection. The politics of belonging have broken down in a sense,

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Van de Mieroop advances the idea that Egypt was merely an equal trading partner. Van de Mieroop, 253.

not so much into active alienation of others, but into a passive exclusion or separation. Each group pursues only its own interests with little or no regard for the impact it has on others. The exclusiveness, though, is presented as fundamentally political and economic. Only two groups are distinguished unambiguously by their ethnic identity (Syrian and Tjekker). For only one of those groups is their ethnic identity at issue. In that case, Zakar-Ba'al and Wenamun debate whether Smendes sent Wenamun on a ship with a Syrian crew or not.<sup>353</sup> In this context, his low-level status means that he has little influence or power with which to overcome the self-interests of others.

What also is repeatedly made prominent throughout the story are the normative values of religious ideology. Unlike Sinuhe, though, the normative values do not stand outside of the text, as it were, and make judgments on the action. Rather, religious ideology is kept within the narrative frame. It is difficult to identify an instance where the normative values of religious ideology seem to be the same as that of the author. Instead, through the agency of the hapless Wenamun, the author possibly scorns those values. The author could not be accused of being a royalist either since royal ideology is simply ignored or ridiculed. Nevertheless, while the author's attitudes remain ambiguous beyond mockery, they do allow the normative values of religious ideology to shape the protagonist's actions and, with them, the course of the story.

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<sup>353</sup> Lichtheim, COS 1.41, 91.

## 4.4 The Influence of Identities and Social Locations in Ancient Egypt

### 4.4.1 Vizier 'Aper-El

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, the idea that the royal and religious ideological portrayal of non-Egyptians is not a reflection of the reality in ancient Egypt has been well-documented by others. The examples that follow will show that, when we have a window into the more complex realities of ancient Egypt, social locations and identities play a significant role beyond that of ethnic identity alone. One such window, and one of the most conspicuous counterexamples to the strongly ideological rhetoric elsewhere, is that of the vizier 'Aper-El in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>354</sup>

'Aper-El was buried with his wife and oldest son in an elite tomb of high quality in Saqqara near Memphis. The name of the tomb owner in Egyptian is *'Aperiar* (*'pri3r*) which, according to the excavator Alain Zivie, would be the Egyptian spelling of the Semitic name 'Abdiel.<sup>355</sup> Though it is often supposed he is a foreigner in the same vein as Joseph in Genesis, his name on its own does not prove that he immigrated from southwestern Asia.<sup>356</sup> Two other possibilities include 1) being a descendant of Asiatics

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<sup>354</sup> For publications by the excavator on 'Aper-El's tomb in both academic and popular venues, c.f. Alain Zivie, "'Aper-El et Ses Voisins: Considérations Sur Les Tombes Rupestres de La 18e Dynastie à Saqqarah," in *Memphis et Ses Nécropoles Au Nouvel Empire* nouvelles Données, *Nouvelles Questions: Colloque Int'l CNRS, Paris, 1986* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1988), 103–12. Alain Zivie, "The 'Saga' Of 'Aper-El's Funerary Treasure," in *Offerings to the Discerning Eye: An Egyptological Medley in Honor of Jack A. Josephson*, ed. Sue D'Auria, vol. 38, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 1566-2055 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 349–56. Alain Zivie, "Pharaoh's Man, 'Abdiel: The Vizier with a Semitic Name," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 44, no. 4 (August 7, 2018): 22–66.

<sup>355</sup> Zivie (2018), 23.

<sup>356</sup> What, if any, connections may be drawn to the Joseph story of Genesis will not be explored in this study.

while being raised in Egypt according to Egyptian culture and 2) being born to an Egyptian family but for unknown reasons was given a Semitic name.<sup>357</sup> Some of his numerous titles, however, suggest specific identities and social locations that would explain why this person became one of the most powerful people in Egypt. The title “child of the *kap*” (*khrd n k3p*) indicates that he was raised and educated in the palace with the future king.<sup>358</sup> Furthermore, he was “the father of the god” (*it ntjr*), meaning he was a senior advisor in close proximity to the Pharaoh who had known the king as a child.<sup>359</sup> Another that is relevant for our purposes is “director of the foster fathers and mothers of the children of the king” (*mr mn ‘w/wt msw nsw*). According to Zivie, “It indicates that ‘Abdiel was responsible for the officials or wives of officials, the royal foster fathers and mothers who were in charge of feeding and educating the princes and princesses.”<sup>360</sup> Most significantly, ‘Aper-El, as he is commonly referred to in the literature, is distinguished by the fact that he was a vizier (*mr niwt tj3ty*) possibly first under Amenhotep III and then under his son Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten).<sup>361</sup> This places him just below Pharaoh. While people of Asiatic origin have long been known to be

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 31, 64.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 27. It may be speculated that he was one of the children of foreign leaders who were sent to be raised in the palace, but there is no evidence of this one way or another. For more on this and its biblical implications, cf. Nili Fox, “Royal Officials and Court Families: A New Look at the ילדים (Yēlādīm) in 1 Kings 12,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 59, no. 4 (1996): 225–32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3210564>.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>361</sup> The use of ‘Aper-El inconsistently leaves the first half of his name in Egyptian while translating the second half into its Semitic equivalent. Since ‘Aper-el or ‘Aper-El (preferred by the excavator) is the name by which this individual is most frequently known in the secondary literature, it is the one that will be adopted here.

present in Egypt occupying social positions from slaves to lower officials, ‘Aper-El is the first that is known to have reached such a high rank. He was throughout his lifetime intimately enmeshed with both the life of the royal family and the functioning of the state at the highest levels.

Setting aside the possible, but the less likely, scenario that he was an Egyptian with a foreign name, ‘Aper-El exemplifies the complexity of negotiating the politics of belonging. On the one hand, he retained his foreign name and did not adopt an Egyptian one. On the other, his self-presentation in the iconography of his tomb is that of an Egyptian. Zivie observes, “everything in his tomb...is Egyptian and *only* Egyptian.”<sup>362</sup> In fact, there is no other evidence of his non-Egyptian origin, besides his name, that survives to the present.<sup>363</sup> Based on the limited evidence provided by his tomb, it may be surmised that on the level of identities, he valued both his sense of belonging to his Asiatic family and to the Egyptians of the palace among whom he was raised. His Asiatic identity did not prevent his rise to his many positions in the state, including vizier, because other aspects of belonging were more significant. His social locations as a resident of the palace and one who had a close relationship with two generations of kings facilitated his path to power far more than one of his identities or the rhetoric of royal ideology would have hindered it. His social location shifted the politics of belonging firmly in his favor.

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>363</sup> A possible example where a tomb contained depictions of the deceased as both foreign and Egyptian is that of Horimin in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, who was “General of the Army in the Palace of the King.” Most scenes portray him as Egyptian, but another appears to add a beard and a feather to his head adornment. Unfortunately, this scene has been badly damaged and may not have been complete when new. José F. Alonso García, “The Tomb of Horimin,” *Egyptian Archaeology* Autumn, no. 43 (2013): 11–14.

#### 4.4.2 Prince Heqanefer and Viceroy Huy

Heqanefer was a Cushite prince of Miam and an Egyptian official during the reign of Tutankhamun (ca. 1341-1323 B.C.E.).<sup>364</sup> He provides an example of how complex the workings of identity can be. In his own tomb in Cush, he represents himself using the artistic conventions for an Egyptian (Figure 3).<sup>365</sup> According to Stuart Tyson Smith, “his grave goods are those of a member of the Egyptian elite who believed in all the intricacies of an Osirian afterlife.”<sup>366</sup> In the tomb of the Viceroy of Cush, Huy, who was his superior, Heqanefer is depicted by the viceroy in a scene where Cushite princes are bringing tribute before both him and the Pharaoh (Figure 4).

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<sup>364</sup> Moreno García, 6.

<sup>365</sup> *Shawabti inscribed for the Chief of Miam, Heqanefer*, New Kingdom, Ceramic, H. 7.5 in, New Kingdom, ANT 222265, Yale Peabody Museum, <https://echoesofegypt.peabody.yale.edu/overview/shawabti-inscribed-chief-miam-heqanefer>.

<sup>366</sup> Stuart Tyson Smith, “Nubian and Egyptian Ethnicity,” in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jeremy McNerney (United Kingdom: Wiley, 2014), 200.

**Figure 3: Shawabti inscribed for the Chief of Miam, Heqanefer**



Credit: Yale Peabody

**Figure 4: Scene of Cushites offering tribute, tomb of Viceroy Huy, overview**





**Figure 4a: Scene of Cushites offering tribute, tomb of Viceroy Huy, detail**



**Heqanefer**

Heqanefer is presented in a stereotypically Cushite manner. His skin is black, and his head is adorned with ostrich feathers. He leads the procession and wears standard Cushite attire, but he is presented, unlike others, bowing to the ground. Heqanefer, perhaps owing to his relative importance, is the only member of the procession who is identified by name.

Smith critiqued Huy's presentation of Heqanefer as transforming him from someone who has adapted to Egyptian culture to someone who is stereotypically

Cushite.<sup>367</sup> Smith argues that Huy makes this change because it serves the interests of imperial ideology. In this case, the imperial ideology at work is the presentation of Pharaoh as someone who receives obeisance and exotic gifts from distant lands. It does not seem likely, however, that this is the whole explanation. Compared to the later tomb of Seti I, Huy's tomb shows remarkable nuance in its portrait of the Cushites. First, the Book of Gates in Seti's tomb makes each Cushite more or less look identical. Though it was significant that the Cushites were being equally welcomed into the afterlife, for its purposes, granting individuality was not important or relevant. Huy's tomb, on the other hand, makes a careful distinction between the elite and lower-ranking members of the procession. Matić interprets the attire of the elites, including Heqanefer, as both Egyptian and Nubian in style.<sup>368</sup> The depiction of the Cushites is also unusually varied in its choice of skin color. Cushites in Egyptian art are uniformly presented with dark black skin as in Seti I's tomb. Huy's tomb alternates the skin color of the Cushite figures between the black and reddish brown. This is the same reddish brown used for the Egyptians. Perhaps, Huy's position as Viceroy of Cush afforded a more nuanced view of the Cushites or, at least, afforded the artisans working on his tomb a more nuanced view. Burrell implies, despite Huy's self-representation as Egyptian, that Huy was Cushite.<sup>369</sup> Lastly, a weakness of Smith's argument is that it adopts a critical view of Huy's depiction but accepts Heqanefer's self-representation at its face value. Were that the only information we had on Heqanefer, as with Aper-'El, this would be understandable since there would

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 200-202.

<sup>368</sup> Matić, 49.

<sup>369</sup> Burrell, 97.

be no alternative point of view by which to contextualize it. With the additional perspective of Huy's tomb, it is worth considering whether or not Heqanefer's image was really the victim of imperial (i.e. royal) ideology.

Another possibility, raised by Matić, is that Heqanefer made full use of his position as an official in the Egyptian state and Egyptian culture for his benefit.<sup>370</sup> He self-consciously positioned himself as part of the Egyptian elite. In Matić's view, social location is probably playing a more significant role than ethnic identity.<sup>371</sup> Which portrait of Heqanefer, if either, is closer to reality? The answer will remain contested, but I prefer Matić's position that social location plays a more important role than has previously been acknowledged. I would qualify that with social *locations*. Heqanefer occupied a very high, elite position in Cushite society, but that also placed him in an elite, but somewhat lower, position in the colonial apparatus.<sup>372</sup> Rather than placing these two portraits of Heqanefer in opposition to each other, it is better to see them as the complex manifestations that result from the intersection of his Cushite identity with his social locations.

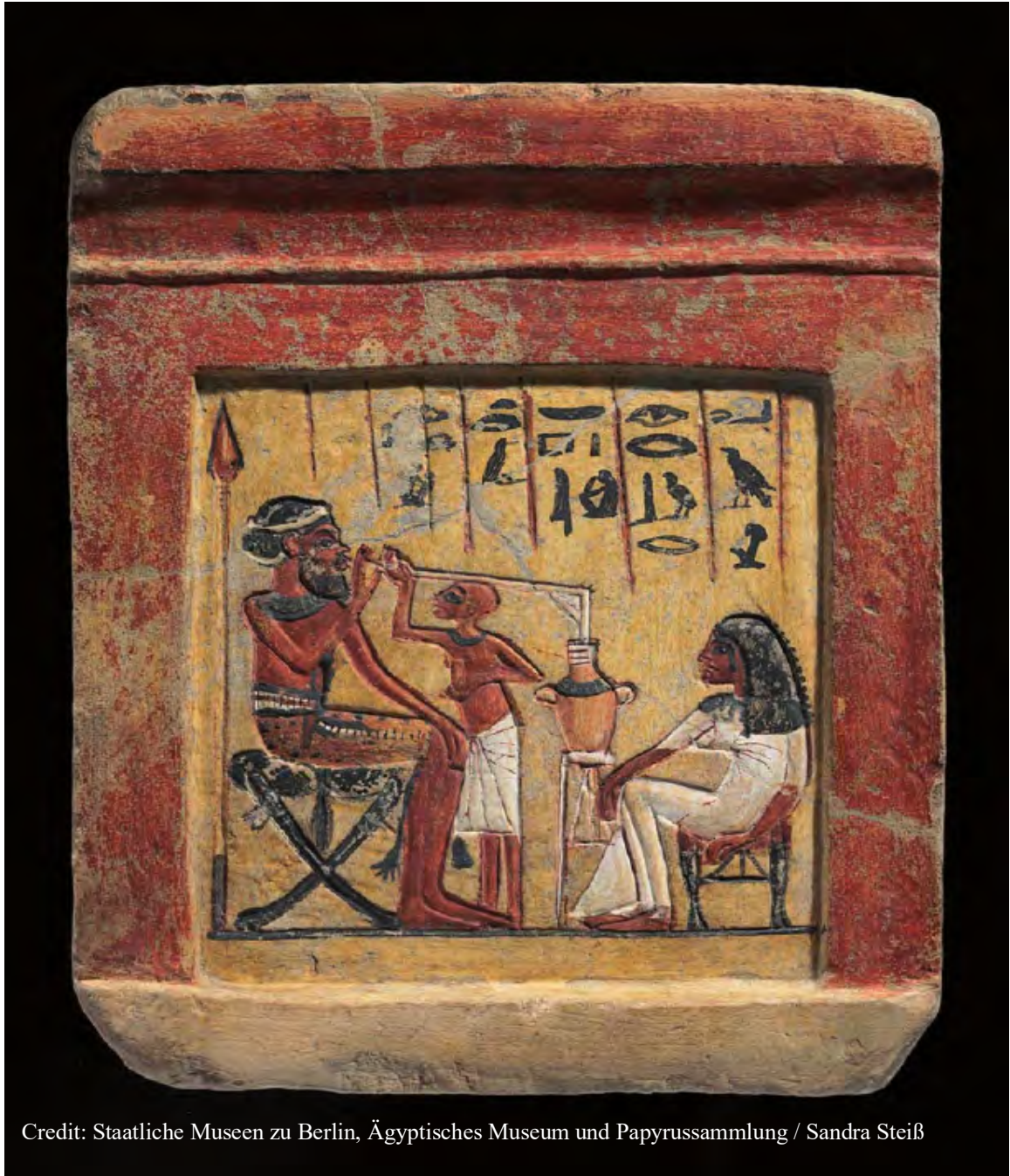
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<sup>370</sup> Matić, 50.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> The idea that a colonial power dynamic was involved was often valid for the Egypt-Cush relationship, but care should be exercised in making that assumption. As Burrell and others have observed, the relationship was not always one of domination of the former over the latter. Matić has suggested that the relationship is best described as one of entanglement. In the specific context of the offering of tribute to Tutankhamun, the differential power relations created by colonialism are entirely relevant and unavoidable. Stuart Tyson Smith, "Revenge of the Kushites: Assimilation and Resistance in Egypt's New Kingdom Empire and Nubian Ascendancy over Egypt," in *Empires and Diversity: On the Crossroads of Archaeology, Anthropology, and History* (Los Angeles, CA: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2013), 84–107. Burrell, 96-97. Matić, 46.

#### 4.4.3 Stele of an Asiatic Soldier and His Wife



Credit: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung / Sandra SteiB

Figure 5: Stele of an Asiatic soldier and his wife

A limestone stele from the Amarna period depicts a man and a woman seated while either a servant or a child offers or assists the man with drinking through a straw.<sup>373</sup> This small stele (29.7 cm x 23.5 cm x 3 cm) is from Egypt and appears to be intended for a domestic context rather than a funerary one.<sup>374</sup> Both the man and woman bear non-Egyptian names. They are Terura and his wife Arbura. Terura's clothing and other features are distinctive of the Egyptian iconographic conventions for representing Asiatics.<sup>375</sup> First, he has a beard which immediately distinguishes him from an Egyptian, and his hair appears to be natural whereas Egyptians are typically depicted wearing a black wig or as bald. His clothing is colorful, patterned, and features tassels dangling from its edges. Egyptian men, by contrast, are shown with a white linen wrap around the waist. While Egyptians certainly do embrace the use of color, in art the color comes in the form of other adornments in addition to the basic garment. As noted by the museum catalog description, his dagger and spear identify him as a soldier. The author of the

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<sup>373</sup> The absence of the so-called "sidelock of youth" from the smaller figure is not determinative since children were not always depicted with it. For information on the stele, cf. *Stele of a Syrian Mercenary Drinking Beer*, n.d., limestone stele, 29.7 cm x 23.5 cm x 3 cm, n.d., ÄM 14122, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, <https://id.smb.museum/object/607112/stele-mit-darstellung-eines-syrischen-s%C3%B6ldners-beim-biertrinken>. For the sidelock of youth, cf. Lyn Green, "Hairstyles," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford, vol. 2 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 73–76.

<sup>374</sup> What follows will often mirror the museum description of this artifact. The author is identified only as F. Seyfried, possibly Prof. Dr. Friederike Seyfried.

<sup>375</sup> The name and description of this stele is hindered somewhat for the scholarly lack of consensus on how to designate the people represented in this way. *Syrians*, *Canaanites*, *Asiatics*, and *foreigners* are all terms employed in the literature for essentially the same group, very loosely defined, of people. Asiatic is preferred in this study to clearly distinguish them from Libyans and Cushites. *Syrian* is anachronistic. *Foreigner* is too vague. *Canaanite* has some use but unfortunately implies the existence of an ethnic group of that name. As discussed in Chapter 2, this point is contentious.

description infers that this Asiatic soldier is therefore a mercenary in the Egyptian army.<sup>376</sup> Arbura is dressed in typical Egyptian style with the characteristic black wig and white linen robe. The servant possesses the iconographic features noted above that identify him as Egyptian. The drinking straw was introduced into Egypt by way of Mesopotamia and the Levant, and the Egyptians “are almost never depicted using drinking straws themselves.”<sup>377</sup>

The stele’s relevance for this study is that the stele offers a small window into everyday life in Egypt in the Amarna period. It was created for neither a royal nor religious context, but a domestic one, so its purpose is not likely propagandistic. Secondly, the stele shows a scene at odds with the stereotyped and otherwise artificial portrayals of Egypt’s neighbors that are found in royal and, to a lesser degree, religious sources. Without recapitulating the major features of foreigners in royal and religious ideologies, these Asiatics are both in Egypt and enjoy a relatively comfortable status there. They can afford the stele, the wine, an Egyptian servant, and the time to relax.<sup>378</sup> Moreover, presuming the named individuals are the ones who commissioned the work, their self-presentation is culturally mixed. The husband wore clothing of the style

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Rachael Sparks, “Canaan in Egypt: Archaeological Evidence for a Social Phenomenon,” in *Invention and Innovation: The Social Context of Technological Change 2: Egypt, the Aegean and the Near East, 1650-1150 B.C.*, ed. Janine Bourriau and Jacke Phillips (Oxbow Books, 2004), 37–38.

<sup>378</sup> As Seyfried notes, despite the designation given by the museum, the amphora likely indicates the beverage is wine, not beer. *Stele of a Syrian Mercenary Drinking Beer*.

stereotypically attributed to Asiatics, but Arbura's representation in clothing and hairstyle is completely Egyptian. Only her name suggests that she is otherwise.

While the information provided is limited, this stele does provide some insights into the lived experience of foreigners in Egypt. First, ancient Egyptian society had some degree of permeability for non-Egyptians. Non-Egyptians were not rigidly excluded as outcasts and intruders. Terura could be employed in a desirable professional position and enjoy a relatively comfortable lifestyle while transparently presenting himself as an Asiatic. Because iconography can and does employ a symbolic language of its own, it cannot be determined whether he presented himself in daily life in a stereotypically Asiatic manner or he simply made use of stereotypical features to signal his Asiatic identity. In either case, Terura did not shy away from his Asiatic identity, and his path to a comfortable social status did not require complete cultural assimilation. As for Arbura, the situation is the reverse. At least in dress and hairstyle, her image is one of assimilation to Egyptian culture. Her representation indicates it could be both desirable and socially acceptable for a foreigner to adopt a fully Egyptian appearance. This stele suggests that neither maintaining a foreign appearance (Terura) nor adopting an Egyptian one (Arbura) appears to have violated social prohibitions or triggered social exclusion. Clothing and hairstyle in this period, then, do not seem to be ethnic boundaries.

Rather than looking through the lens of ethnic identity alone, we should consider the intersection between ethnic identity and social location. Ethnic identity may have played a role in what kind of social locations were open to Terura as an Asiatic. Egypt is known to have relied on foreign mercenaries in its armies across several centuries.



Therefore, in the established network of social roles and normative values around who-belonged-where, another Asiatic and his wife being in Egypt for that reason would occasion no special notice or controversy. The politics of belonging in Egypt, this network of social roles and normative values, would have paved the way for Terura to occupy the social location that he does and meet acceptance in Egyptian society. The social and economic value attached to that social location, however, likely provided the means to achieve the relative level of material success depicted on the stele. While the stele is notable for its depiction of an Asiatic and his wife in Egypt, the social location of the couple and the normative values Egyptian society attached to that location must be taken into account to fully understand the scene.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

As can be seen through these texts and iconography, the portrayal of Egypt's neighbors and, to a lesser extent, their actual relationship to Egyptian society depended less on ethnic identity than the intersecting influences of social locations and normative values *along with* ethnic and other identities. Royal and religious works alike needed no additional ethnic sentiments, positive or negative, to arrive at their respective portrayals of Egypt's neighbors. This is not to say such sentiments are absent, but they cannot be given pride of place as the main influence. Works that were not created to support a particular ideology reflect the significance of social locations and the interaction of multiple identities.

In works that are either produced on behalf of or connected to the king, the normative values of royal ideology are the most influential in the stance it takes toward



Egypt's neighbors. Given the belief in the king's right to rule over every land, an assertion supported by the favor and direction of the gods, that stance is unreservedly hostile toward any non-Egyptians who are seen to resist the will of the Pharaoh. From this point of view, the expansionist aims of New Kingdom pharaohs are wholly justified in that the king is merely establishing actual control over the territories he has already been given a right to rule by the gods. Pharaoh could be thought of, in this sense, as extending *Ma'at* to an ever-expanding sphere. The second aspect of the royal ideology that appears in these texts is the glorification of the person of the king. It is not enough for Pharaoh to conquer or win a military victory, though these are highly prized. A foundational perspective of Egyptian kingship in the New Kingdom is the divine nature of the king. Such an image could scarcely be more exalted. Accordingly, the son of Amun-Re must also evince a divine power in battle on behalf of Egypt that is equal to his image. To the extent that the literary form of Egypt's neighbors logically follows their function in royal propaganda, they need to be a despicable enemy who is nonetheless very numerous and strong. The king cannot be glorified in battle if there is no foe worthy of his feats of martial prowess. This is, of course, focusing on only the literary presentation of Egypt's neighbors through the lens of royal ideology in the context of royal monumental inscriptions. Egyptian kings certainly had practical concerns more substantive than propaganda in their real-world dealings with their neighbors, yet these concerns fade into the background in royal texts in favor of promoting royal ideology.

Works that function in a religious context echo in important ways the characteristics of those from the royal sphere. Instead of promoting and advancing the

interests of the king, these works promote and advance the interests of the gods of Egypt. Because the gods operate at the cosmic level over all creation, the priorities of Egyptian religious ideology are the reverse of royal ideology. The greatness of the gods is increased if they are not the gods of Egypt alone. Their power over and care of the entire world becomes essential to their glorification. Consequently, the normative values of religious ideology express the universal inclusion of Egypt's neighbors rather than the extreme exclusion found in royal ideology. This does not mean that the priesthoods of Egypt or the more religious among the Egyptians had more open and beneficent attitudes toward non-Egyptians. These universalist values are articulated strictly from the Egyptian perspective. All are governed by the *Egyptian* gods, must adhere to the *Egyptian* understanding of the natural order of the world (*Ma'at*), and enter into the *Egyptian* afterlife. Universalism is used as an ideological support for Egyptian religious chauvinism.<sup>379</sup>

Outside of these more ideologically-laden realms, the examples of 'Aper-El, Heqanefer, Huy, Terura, and Arbura show how social location and identities offer more explanatory value than considering the role of ethnic identity alone. Looking at ethnicity

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<sup>379</sup> The phenomenon of exalting one's God or gods by extending their creation, care, and control over all humankind is not uniquely Egyptian. For example, Isa 42:5 attributes creation of all that exists and specifically humankind. This expression in context is meant to exalt Yahweh and his care for his Servant. This Servant will also be "for a light for the nations" (Isa 42:6). In the very next oracle (Isa 43:3), however, Yahweh says that he will give Egypt, Cush, and Seba all in exchange for Israel. Additionally, Isaiah 19, which begins with a prophecy against Egypt, by its end projects an ideal time in the future when Israel will stand third with Egypt and Assyria. While further examples could be offered and analyzed, an extended discussion of Isaiah is beyond the limits of the present study. Suffice it to say, the prophecies, even in their universal expressions, do not lose their primary aim of glorifying the God of Israel.

alone, ‘Aper-El’s story is one of the unlikely rise of a foreigner through the social and political ranks to become one of the most powerful people in Egypt. Upon closer examination, his titles indicate he enjoyed close proximity to the royal family for at least two generations. Whatever his foreign origin or ancestry might have meant to the Egyptians, his social location in the inner circle of the king mattered much more to the position he would hold and the power he would wield. The example of Prince Heqanefer of Miam and Viceroy Huy is more ambiguous. There is an ethnic difference, and their social locations also meant there was a difference in power relations between the two. As the colonial representative of the Pharaoh, it is entirely possible that Huy’s depiction of Heqanefer bowing and appearing stereotypically Cushite is a case of ethnic othering to advance Huy’s narrative at Heqanefer’s expense. Nevertheless, elements of Huy’s depiction break from Egyptian artistic conventions hinting that more nuance may be present than it at first appears. Additionally, simply accepting Heqanefer’s self-representation as fully Egyptian uncritically is unwarranted. We must entertain the possibility that Heqanefer was exercising a significant degree of agency. From his dual position as both a Cushite prince and an Egyptian official, he navigated the politics of belonging to present himself as fully Egyptian for his own benefit. In the view from the bottom, or at least the middle, Terura and Arbura’s foreignness or Egyptian-ness appears to be less significant than the financial means granted by being a soldier.

Finally, the Tale of Sinuhe and the Report of Wenamun deserve special attention. As narrative literature that has a historical character, they most resemble the narratives of

the Former Prophets of all of the works discussed in this chapter.<sup>380</sup> Each is demonstrably influenced by a particular set of normative values. For the Tale of Sinuhe, royal ideology permeates the story throughout. In the Report of Wenamun, religious ideology often takes center stage. Significantly, neither story is *entirely* characterized by the values of their respective ideological leanings.

The authors of both also convey images of Egypt's neighbors that in many ways are more in agreement with the window into lived experience we are given through texts and iconography where ideology is less prominent.<sup>381</sup> As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the consensus in scholarship is that the ideological portrayals in royal and religious texts are not totally representative of life in ancient Egypt. Egypt's neighbors, especially Cushites and Asiatics, could live and flourish in ancient Egypt just as often or more often than they became enslaved. What mattered most was not ethnic identity but a person's social locations and other identities.

Thus, each of these two stories presents both types of images together. To the extent that these stories differ in their approach, the Tale of Sinuhe will at times allow its ideological lens to dominate at the expense of the story. The Report of Wenamun, if

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<sup>380</sup> Whether or not there was any historical basis to either story is not significant to this study and will not be addressed. If one of the difficulties works of ancient histories is their tendency to be suffused with fictional elements, we should also consider that one of the advantages of ancient fictional works is their tendency to include elements of realism. In judging their relative worth, it may be that a well-written work of fiction is shown to have more value for understanding the past than another work that purports to be nonfiction.

<sup>381</sup> For the sake of convenience, this image will be referred to as *realistic* even as it is recognized that what is realistic and not involves a certain amount of modern judgment.

anything, does the opposite. It does not abandon the lens of religious ideology, yet the author seems to lean into the realistic image of Egypt's neighbors especially when it is useful for making the life of the protagonist more difficult. In either case, these stories are willing to embrace the ideological and realistic side-by-side without any apparent concern or awareness of the tension between them. If belonging is typically understood as involving the intersecting lines of identities, social locations, and normative values, at times, both of these stories are content to allow normative values to run parallel along its own track.

Belonging offers a coherent means of integrating and explaining the kinds of radically divergent data that ancient Egyptian texts and iconography present. It begins to make sense of how the extreme exclusion of foreigners in royal propaganda can coexist with the extreme inclusion of the very same people in religious texts. Different sets of normative values were operating in their respective spheres of political and cultural influence. Belonging can integrate both with a lived experience in ancient Egypt that was far more accepting and complex than either royal or religious ideology would indicate. Whereas normative values took priority in shaping the rhetoric of the king and the rhetoric of Egyptian religion, social locations and identities were more influential in the course of everyday life including in the palace itself. Finally, as the Egyptian material illustrates, the three analytical dimensions of belonging are not equally relevant on every occasion. This creates flexibility to accept that some types of data require a very different explanation than others, but all can be handled within the same framework.

## **Chapter 5: Israelite Attitudes Toward Their Neighbors in the Former Prophets**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter demonstrated that the ancient Egyptians' views of their neighbors should not be reduced to consideration of ethnicity alone. Instead, an array of factors could be discerned that likely had a more significant impact on the texts and iconography that were produced. These factors can be analyzed in relationship to each other within the framework of belonging. As applied to antiquity, belonging can be analyzed along the dimensions of identities, social locations, and normative values. The intersecting relationship of these dimensions showed the coherence of what, at first, seemed to be mutually exclusive views of other people groups by the Egyptians.

As we turn to the Former Prophets, the ancient Israelites' views of their neighbors seem equally incoherent. The Israelites, at times, adopt an attitude of what appears to be intense xenophobia. They pursue policies of conquest and often genocide throughout the corpus. Nevertheless, embedded in these very same works are stories of peaceful interaction, cooperation, and acceptance. To further complicate the matter, often the text presents these contradictory actions being performed by the very same people in the same narratives.

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is too easy to attribute these contradictory impulses to different redactional layers. The Former Prophets as a corpus of literature has resisted the interrogation of its compositional history despite the determined efforts of many scholars. What we do know is that, at some point in antiquity, the text reached something like its present form. Whoever produced this form of the text was content to incorporate

or preserve the disparate views that are there. It is not necessary, though, to resort to a redactional dissection of the text to account for the co-mingling of these views.

Belonging offers a plausible alternative framework that can comfortably accommodate the presence of such a wide variety of responses by the Israelites to their neighbors.

If we look to ethnicity for an explanation, it will be demonstrated that it is but one of a number of powerful factors that contribute to the attitudes and relationships that can be observed in the text.<sup>382</sup> The author(s) of the Former Prophets had a keen awareness of ethnicity and often highlighted it. They were also willing to employ literary strategies that demeaned their neighbors in very strong ways (e.g. 1 Sam 17:26).<sup>383</sup> Nonetheless, our understanding of biblical attitudes should not stop there, nor should we privilege these expressions of ethnic sentiments and allow them to control the analysis.

This chapter will focus on three case studies of interactions between Israelites and their neighbors. They are the Rahab/Jericho narrative (Joshua 2 and 6), the Samson cycle (Judges 13-16), and episodes from the life of David (1-2 Samuel). These case studies were selected because they include as much or more of the extremes of Israelite attitudes than many other episodes in the Former Prophets.<sup>384</sup> They include positive images of Israel's neighbors, extremely negative images, and those that are in some way mixed or contradictory. They are useful because, if belonging can explain the coherence of Israelite

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<sup>382</sup> The issue of using the analytical lens of ethnicity alone is addressed in Chapter 1.

<sup>383</sup> Further discussion of these literary strategies will be discussed below.

<sup>384</sup> To remain consistent with the canonical divisions of the HB, the first five books of the HB will be referred to as the Torah rather than the Pentateuch. The term *Torah* in this study will *not* be used to refer to law or the HB generally.

attitudes toward their neighbors in these complex cases, then it is reasonable to extrapolate that it will also be useful for simpler interactions. Furthermore, any framework, in order to have heuristic value, needs to be able to address the full range of interactions.

One complicating factor for analyzing these texts is that, while it would be analytically simpler to focus on either individual or group interactions, it will be necessary to consider both together. The necessity comes from the fact that the Former Prophets, and these episodes in particular, frequently intermixes accounts of individuals and groups. The distinction between the two becomes particularly blurred where kings or other notable leaders are concerned. A story about a king is just as often also a story about the kingdom or one piece of a larger narrative about the kingdom. Samson and David are just these kinds of leaders, and Rahab has been understood by scholars as being portrayed as representative on some level of Canaanites generally.<sup>385</sup>

The discussion will proceed along the canonical order which also follows the internal chronology of the text. The Rahab/Jericho narrative illustrates the tensions between positive and negative portrayals and the tight integration of individual and group-oriented accounts. It tells the story of Rahab and her unlikely escape from death at the hands of the Israelites with the help of the Israelites themselves, but it is also the story of the Israelite destruction of her city, Jericho, and its people. Moving to the book of Judges, Samson's attitudes and behavior toward the Philistines vacillate between both extremes, so this story represents an opportunity to use belonging to seek a coherent

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<sup>385</sup> The argument for Rahab's representative status will be discussed below.



explanation for it. The opportunity also arises to include the belongings of other characters as they contribute to our understanding of the story. In 1-2 Samuel, the life of David will be examined through the many changes in his relationships with Israel's neighbors. Of all of the narrative blocks in the Former Prophets, David's life perhaps best exemplifies the problems of centering ethnicity and the need for another approach.

## **5.2 Joshua: Rahab and Jericho**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

Of the many narratives throughout the Former Prophets, the Rahab/Jericho story stands out for the way it is intertwined with some of the deepest and most challenging facets of the human condition: gender, sex, identity, religion, land, and violence. Many of the issues to be discussed are all too relevant for those living in the modern world. Marginalization, dehumanization, sexual slavery, ethnic conflict, and genocide are present experiences that cause intense pain and suffering rather than vestiges of a distant past. Each of these aspects of the story deserves the substantial treatment that they receive in the literature.<sup>386</sup> To fully engage with all of these topics, however, goes beyond

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<sup>386</sup> To give a sample of the literature: Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*. Frank A. Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider*. Dora Rudo Mbuwayesango, "Justice for Rahab and the Gibeonites in the Book of Joshua?: The Elusive Communities of Justice in Imperial/Colonial Contexts," in *Transgression and Transformation: Feminist, Postcolonial and Queer Biblical Interpretation as Creative Interventions*, ed. L. Juliana M. Claassens, Christl M. Maier, and Funlola O. Olojede, T & T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2021). Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible*, Bible World (London; New York: Routledge, 2014). Nāsili Vaka'uta, "Border Crossing/Body Whoring: Rereading Rahab of Jericho with Native Women," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania*, ed. Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine Mary Wainwright, Society of Biblical Literature. Semeia Studies 75 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014). Leveen, *Biblical Narratives of Israelites*

the scope of this study. They will be considered as they are relevant for understanding why the Israelite response to the people of Jericho included the seemingly incompatible extremes of the genocide of the general population and the acceptance, leading to intermarriage, of one person and her family. Our attention will focus on how belonging informs our understanding of the dynamics that led to this outcome.

The narrative of the events surrounding the destruction of Jericho in Joshua 2, 6-7 is literarily complex. In addition to the destruction of Jericho and related stories, the rest of this first section of Joshua, chapters 1, 3-5, deals exclusively with the Israelites' preparations for and entrance into Canaan. The focus swings dramatically between an inward focus on the Israelites and an outward focus on the Canaanites. The reason for and placement of these shifts is not always clear, nor is the relationship between them. Since the internally focused narratives do not relate to the Israelites' neighbors but their own self-understanding, the discussion to follow will not include them.

Joshua 2 relates the story of Joshua sending spies to reconnoiter their first target, Jericho and their rescue by Rahab, a זונה, which is usually translated as *prostitute*.<sup>387</sup> A prominent feature of the story is that she, rather than the spies, is the center of attention. In fact, the only named characters throughout the narrative are Rahab and Joshua. Joshua

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*and Their Neighbors: Strangers at the Gate*. C. S. Cowles et al., eds., *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>387</sup> Whether or not Rahab's activities meet a strict definition of *prostitute* cannot be determined because the text does not say anything more on the subject directly. What is certain is that the author is communicating that Rahab was someone who does not meet his societal norms for respectable sexual behavior. The sexual overtones and double entendres embedded into the early parts of the story reinforce this conclusion.

6 deals with the city's destruction, but it also devotes significant space to the saving of Rahab and her family. At the same time that Joshua 6 concludes the story of Rahab, the author also lays the foundation for the following story — the defeat at Ai and the sin of Achan (Josh 6:18-19, 24). As Frank Spina has observed, the figure of Achan in Joshua 7 is the mirror image of Rahab in Joshua 2.<sup>388</sup> From the Israelite point of view, Rahab the Canaanite becomes the unlikely hero of the victory at Jericho.<sup>389</sup> Achan the Israelite, on the other hand, becomes the reason for the defeat at Ai. Because of the numerous thematic parallels, scholars have suggested considering the Rahab/Jericho account together with the Achan/Ai account.<sup>390</sup> Because the Achan/Ai narrative is mostly centered on intra-Israelite matters, however, our discussion will not focus on it.

At the outset, in applying belonging to the story, a distinction must be made between understanding the social forces at work in the story and the self-perception of those involved. Belonging can offer a coherent explanation of the social forces that affect the attitudes and behavior of the characters in the story. This does not necessarily mean that these forces would have been perceived and understood by an ancient person or, if they did, that they would have understood these social forces in the same way. This

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<sup>388</sup> Frank A. Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 63–64.

<sup>389</sup> For characterization of Rahab in heroic terms, cf. Jacob L. Wright, *War, Memory, and National Identity in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Rahab's actions notably do not result in the victory at Jericho. That is attributed to Yahweh alone, but she is the only one who engages in something that could be seen as a heroic deed.

<sup>390</sup> See also the discussion in Carolyn J. Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*, *Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 100, <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=474479>.

distinction is important to avoid anachronistically projecting modern perspectives onto ancient people.

### 5.2.2 Literary-Historical Context

The first half of Joshua is concerned with the Israelite settlement or conquest in the land of Canaan. Which term is used depends a great deal on the aims of the scholar. *Settlement* better reflects the fact that neither the HB nor archaeology reflect a total conquest of the land. The Israelites do not conquer even a majority of Canaan. The inhabitants of Canaan in neither the biblical portrayal nor the archaeological remains were completely exterminated — far from it. The term *settlement* thus aims to provide a more accurate and nuanced view of the first appearance of the Israelites in Canaan. Use of the term also responds to the older assumption that the Israelites conquered Canaan based on a superficial reading of the biblical text and a misreading of the archaeological evidence. The term *conquest*, however, better conveys the impression the biblical author wishes to leave of the activities of Joshua and the Israelite army. Modern scholarship has also become more attentive to the issues surrounding depictions of violence. The term *conquest* preserves the violent aspect of *how* the Israelites came to settle in the highlands of southern Canaan. *Settlement* effectively glosses over this issue.

Underlying both terms are certain assumptions on the part of scholars. The prevailing model in scholarship is that the Israelites are an indigenous group that simply relocated from other parts of Canaan to the highlands.<sup>391</sup> Implicit in this is the rejection of

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<sup>391</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 BCE* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New*

the biblical portrayal of the arrival of the Israelites from outside of Canaan as fictional. At most, it is conceded that the Exodus and Wilderness traditions might have arisen from a subset of the Israelites who came from elsewhere. If the Israelites are indeed indigenous and the biblical account fictional, then the more peaceful connotations of the word *settlement* are no obstacle. If the biblical account is the focus, it is a question of whether the emphasis is on the violence of the account (conquest) or on nuancing what the violence actually accomplished (settlement).

This discussion is significant because questions of violence and xenophobia are central to the concerns of this study, and the choice of terminology reflects its assumptions. Since the emphasis of this study is on the biblical account, both terms will be used. When discussing more generally the appearance of the Israelites in southern Canaan, the term *settlement* will be preferred to better reflect that a complete conquest never occurred. The Israelites found a foothold in the highlands in which to establish themselves and failed to move significantly beyond them, except perhaps in the north. In those specific instances where the violent destruction of cities, regions, or people groups is in view, *conquest* will be used.

The conquest and settlement narrative in the first half of Joshua is disproportionately preoccupied with its earliest stages. The preparations of the Israelites,

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*Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 118. William G. Dever, *Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 63. For an excellent summary of models of Israelite settlement in Canaan, cf. J. P. Dessel, “Looking for the Israelites: The Archaeology of Iron Age I,” in *The Old Testament in Archaeology and History*, ed. Jennie R. Ebeling et al. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), 275–98.

the miraculous crossing of the Jordan in a manner reminiscent of the parting of the Sea in Exodus, the encampment in Gilgal, and associated commemorations are covered by Joshua 1 and 3-5.<sup>392</sup> Joshua 2, 6, and 7 deal with the conquest of Jericho and its aftermath. The author magnifies the significance of these early stages in the book by allotting approximately one-quarter of its total length to them.<sup>393</sup> With this in mind, the intense focus on the Rahab and Achan stories should not be seen as merely idiosyncratic anecdotes in the larger movement of the narrative. These stories by virtue of their length, placement, and the fact that their central figures are among the very few named characters can be seen as archetypical for the rest of the book. Wright points out,

The Rahab story appears on the seams of the Torah and the Former Prophets, which it introduces. In this strategic position, it treats issues of national identity and belonging in an indirect and safe manner insofar as its protagonist doesn't represent a particular population (in the way that, for example, Esau represents the Edomites). We will see that Rahab's purpose is broader: she is the archetype of the outsider who becomes an insider, and the authors of her story wanted their readers to pay close attention to both her words and her deeds as she negotiated the terms of her survival.<sup>394</sup>

Differing somewhat from Wright, Spina contends that Rahab and Achan are meant to represent each of their peoples.<sup>395</sup> He argues that the most distinctive characteristic of Canaanites from an Israelite ethno-religious perspective is their idolatry.

The most prominent metaphor in the HB, including Joshua, for idolatry is sexual

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<sup>392</sup> For an analysis of the many allusions to the narratives of the Torah, cf. Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism*, 1st ed, JPS Scholar of Distinction Series (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2006).

<sup>393</sup> To be more precise, Joshua 1-7 comprises 26.2% of the total word count in the Masoretic Text.

<sup>394</sup> Wright, 108-109

<sup>395</sup> Spina, 54.

promiscuity, specifically in the form of female sexual promiscuity.<sup>396</sup> The figure of Rahab, the prostitute, is the quintessential promiscuous woman and a Canaanite. He further argues that her Yahwistic confession is framed in such a way as to be speaking for all of her people.<sup>397</sup> From the Israelite perspective, she represents all that is Canaanite, but she does not do so on ethnic grounds but religious ones.<sup>398</sup>

### 5.2.3 Alternative Analytical Perspectives

At its heart, the conquest of Jericho is the annihilation of the Canaanite population by the Israelites. Within the context of the Primary History, the rationale for this killing is twofold. From the point of view of Deuteronomy 7:1-5, the Canaanites represent a danger to the Israelites in that they may lure the Israelites into the worship of their gods. Beyond prohibited worship of other gods, this worship consequently involves practices that the Torah also finds abhorrent (Deut 20:16-18). The second is that the Canaanites live on the land that Yahweh has promised to the Israelites (e.g. Gen 12:7; 15:7, 18-21; Exod 23:23-33). Their violent removal, justified by their egregious sins against Yahweh, fulfills that promise. While the rationales above are fundamentally religious, in practice the main criterion that identifies someone as one who should be killed is that they are a Canaanite living in Canaan.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> While the HB distinguishes the Canaanites as one of a number of groups who are subject to being devoted to destruction, the *herem* (חרם), my usage here is geographic rather than ethnic. Whatever other identities they may have, *Canaanites* here simply designates the inhabitants of Canaan.

This context of dehumanization and annihilation of the populace makes the Rahab story all the more striking. The Israelites from the very beginning of their conquest save a Canaanite woman and her family and allow them to live with them. Evaluated through the lens of xenophobia, this does not make sense. Rahab, regardless of her good deeds to the Israelites, should have met the same fate as her people. Someone who is primarily motivated by ethnic hatred is not likely to honor promises to those they have dehumanized. Dehumanization breaks down the sense of social obligation. Conversely, Achan's offenses should not have warranted treating him the same as the Canaanites. When ethnic and racial sentiments are involved, people tend to treat those who are excluded more harshly than the perceived offense would warrant, and those who are part of the in-group are treated with far more tolerance and forgiveness than their actual offenses require. Xenophobia on its own cannot explain the logic of the story either internally or from the authorial point of view.

From the perspective of the legal material in the Torah, the death of Achan is logically coherent as the due punishment for disobedience of and theft from God, but the salvation of Rahab seems to be completely at odds with it. Rahab is a disreputable person from a people that God explicitly commanded the Israelites to kill (Deut 7:1-5). Because of concerns of introducing idolatry among the Israelites mentioned above, she is precisely the kind of person with whom the Israelites should not make a covenant (Exod. 23:32-33; Deut 7:2) nor should she or her family be made part of the people of Israel. Nevertheless, that is exactly what is done in the story. This point has certainly not been lost on previous



commentators who generally regard this inconsistency between theological mandate and actual behavior as a point of tension for the characters, the author, and/or the readers.<sup>400</sup>

From this perspective the principal mitigating factors would be her confession of faith in Yahweh and consequent saving of the spies. Billings has argued that the spies', and later Joshua's, actions do not technically violate the terms of Deuteronomy's injunctions.<sup>401</sup> She contends the oath that the spies made is not the same as a covenant. Secondly, Deuteronomy only contemplates the Canaanites collectively as being idolaters. It does not address a situation where an individual Canaanite expresses faith in Yahweh. Indeed, Rahab stands among a select few non-Israelites who, against all expectation, are portrayed as exemplars of Yahwistic righteousness. In her expression of faith and specific knowledge of the acts of Yahweh on behalf of the Israelites, Rahab, as Spina described it, "presents herself as fully and comfortably conversant with information that would typically characterize an Israelite insider completely knowledgeable about Israel's religious thought patterns."<sup>402</sup> From the point of view of Yahweh-only theology and in the context of the legal material of the Torah, the author makes Rahab difficult to reject, especially since her circumstances would not, strictly speaking, fall under the *herem* required by Deuteronomy and Exodus.

On a literary level, at some point in the compositional history of the text, Genesis-2 Kings would have been edited together into what has been called the Primary History.

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 99-101. Rachel M. Billings, *"Israel Served the Lord": The Book of Joshua as Paradoxical Portrait of Faithful Israel* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpg85zh>.

<sup>401</sup> Billings, 35-37.

<sup>402</sup> Spina, 60.

At least at this stage, an author/redactor must have been confronted with the juxtaposition of Deuteronomy's injunctions and the positive treatment of Rahab and judged them compatible enough to transmit them more or less in their current form in the same expanded work. Put a little differently, a redactor or series of redactors did not think anything needed to be "fixed." A reading from the perspective that accepts a Yahweh-only theology and the values of the legal material in the Torah, then, does provide a great deal of the inner coherence of the behavior of the characters in the stories.

#### **5.2.4 Rahab's Social Location as a Prostitute**

##### **5.2.4.1 Prostitution in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible**

If the lens of the Torah explains much of Rahab's acceptance and Achan's rejection, belonging offers a window into Rahab's and the spies' characterization within their literary world. Why a prostitute? Why betray her people? The key to answering these questions is her social location and that *Canaanite* is not the only one of Rahab's identities that is relevant to the story. Beginning with social location, Rahab's social location as a prostitute facilitates the action of the story. Before discussing its significance within the framework of belonging, it is necessary, to contextualize it with what can be known of prostitution in the ANE and the HB.

Throughout the ancient Near East (conceived broadly), prostitution was a legal and socially tolerated profession.<sup>403</sup> The tolerance of the profession, however, does not translate into a socially *respectable* profession. For example, in the Laws of Lipit-Ishtar

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<sup>403</sup> Carolyn Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 24.

(ca. 1930 B.C.E.), Law 27 offers material provision for a prostitute when she has someone's child, but only when the man's legal wife has not born him an heir.<sup>404</sup> Even when this scenario occurs, she is not allowed to live in the house with the man so long as the wife is alive. Law 30 prevents a man from marrying a prostitute from whom the local judges have required him to stay away, including *after* he divorces his wife.<sup>405</sup> In the Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1114-1076 B.C.E.), Law 40 deals with which women are allowed to wear a veil. Prostitutes and enslaved women are singled out for especially cruel punishment for violating this law.<sup>406</sup> Prostitution was not condemned by this law, but it strictly enforced their low social status by preventing them, in the strongest terms, from appropriating to themselves a status symbol (the veil) deemed above their station. Whether or not this was enforced in reality, it reflected the attitudes of at least some Assyrians in the late second millennium B.C.E.

In the HB, aside from Joshua 2 and 6, prostitution is a recurring theme especially in the law collections. Just as in earlier law collections, and implied in the Rahab story, prostitution is not technically prohibited even in the legal material, but it is definitely viewed negatively. The closest that it comes to a prohibition is Lev 19:29 — if the verb is read narrowly to refer specifically to prostitution rather than generally to sexual

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<sup>404</sup> Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 31.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>406</sup> Law 40 reads, in part, “The one who sees a veiled prostitute shall seize her. Men shall establish witnesses. He shall bring her to the palace entrance. They shall not take her jewelry. The one who seized her shall take her clothes. They shall strike her with sticks 50 times. They shall pour pitch on her head” (author's translation). In Gen 38:15, the assumed cultural expectations are reversed. Judah misidentifies Tamar as a prostitute *because* she was wearing a veil.

promiscuity.<sup>407</sup> This law prohibits parents, presumably fathers, from prostituting their daughters. The rationale given is to prevent the land, as a metonymy for the people in it, from engaging in promiscuity and becoming full of shameful behavior (זמה). For the priests, one of the categories of women they are prohibited from marrying is prostitutes (Lev 21:7-9, 13-15). The other categories are a woman who is “defiled,” divorced, or widowed. Combining these prohibitions with the requirement to marry a virgin (Lev 21:13), the underlying principle seems to be that *any* woman with prior sexual experience, socially approved or not, is not fit to marry a priest because that would violate his holiness. In this same section, the daughter of a priest engaging in sexually promiscuous behavior, of a kind not specified, is subject to death by burning (Lev 21:9).

Finally, in Deuteronomy 23:18-19, there are two provisions. The first prohibits the presence of a *qadeš* (קדש) or a *qedešah* (קדשה) among the Israelites. While usually translated as male and female *cult prostitute* respectively, this characterization is highly disputed.<sup>408</sup> The second provision prohibits the payment of vows in Yahweh’s temple using the wages of a prostitute or the purchase price of a dog. The refusal to accept a prostitute’s wages in the Temple was a significant rejection but not unlike the rejection of a prostitute as a wife for a priest. The rejection is compounded by the close association with the purchase price of a dog. Dogs are usually mentioned in the HB in contexts that communicate the lowest social status or most demeaning state of affairs. For instance,

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<sup>407</sup> The verb is the Hifil infinitive construct form of זנה.

<sup>408</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, “The End of the Male Cult Prostitute: A Literary-Historical and Sociological Analysis of Hebrew Qadeš-Qedešim,” in *Congress Volume Cambridge 1995*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997).

Hazael refers to himself as a “dog” in relation to Elisha, and David describes himself as a “dead dog” in relation to Saul (1 Sam 24:15; 2 Kgs 8:13). In both cases and others, the speaker is rhetorically positioning themselves in a place of abject humility. The close association with dogs dehumanizes prostitutes by putting them in the same social place. Third, both payments are called an “abomination of Yahweh.” The terms could hardly be stronger. The only glimmer of flexibility concerning prostitutes that could be imagined is that the prohibition is narrowly construed to the payment of a vow to God received in the Temple.

Portrayals of prostitutes in the narratives of the Primary History reflect a similar phenomenon.<sup>409</sup> Prostitution is tacitly accepted while the prostitutes themselves and their behavior are reviled. In Genesis 38:15-16, Judah casually solicits a prostitute and negotiates her fee without any apparent judgment. The stigma of prostitution begins to reappear when Judah relents in the quest to get his signet ring, cord, and staff back to avoid the social embarrassment attached to having to publicly admit he used the services of a prostitute (Gen 38:23). The social rejection of the prostitute comes into full view when he immediately condemns to death his daughter-in-law for engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Her offense, as described, could include prostitution but is not specific to it (Gen 38:24). Tamar, of course, only escapes a grisly fate by the revelation that Judah is the father (Gen 38:25-26).

The story of Solomon’s wisdom in deciding between two prostitutes reflects similar attitudes (1 Kgs 3:16-28). The existence of prostitution and the fact that the

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<sup>409</sup> This phenomenon is also well-known in modern times.

petitioners are prostitutes are not questioned. The text and the characters in the story pass over these points without comment. The king decides the dispute with sole reference to their motherhood and without addressing how they became mothers in the first place. Even so, the author's distaste for the prostitutes is palpable. The story is emphatic that these two women live together by themselves yet, they both became pregnant. Both these features would likely be cause for disdain by ancient readers even without already knowing the women are prostitutes. While the true mother receives a fairly sympathetic portrait, the other prostitute is set up as the model of callousness and cruelty. From the original baby swap to her callous response to the possibility of the baby being cut in half, she represents the epitome of hard-hearted indifference. This characterization is made possible and believable by ancient antipathy toward prostitutes. This antipathy is also used by the author to magnify the image of Solomon. His willingness to hear the case between two prostitutes portrays him as a king who loves justice, no matter who needs it.

A brief vignette in the Samson cycle is the most neutral of the stories involving prostitutes in that it says nothing (Judg 16:1-3).<sup>410</sup> Samson goes to Gaza for unexplained reasons. He appears to have a strong penchant for Philistine women as all of his romantic or sexual encounters are with Philistine women or those associated with the Philistines. In this instance, that penchant leads him to use the services of a (presumably Philistine) prostitute that he sees there. The encounter provides the rationale for him to still be in the city at night when the gates are closed. This sets up another feat of strength that causes another Philistine plot against him to be foiled and ultimately backfire. The figure of the

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<sup>410</sup> This episode will be revisited in the discussion of the Samson cycle.

prostitute in the story is neither expressly praised nor condemned. In the context of a story about an Israelite judge and considering generally the negative attitudes toward prostitutes, her presence in the story is most likely an unobvious condemnation of Samson.

Significantly, these three stories are the closest the HB comes to a neutral portrayal of prostitution and prostitutes. Others take a less nuanced stance and reflect an unambiguously negative view of prostitutes. Returning to Genesis, the sons of Jacob justify their slaughter of all the men of Shechem with an angry retort that ends the story. They respond, “Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?” (Gen 34:31). Jephthah’s outcast status among the Gileadites is due to the fact that he is the son of a prostitute (Judges 11:1). One of the finishing touches of Ahab’s ignominious end was the king’s blood being washed from his chariot at a pool where dogs licked it up, and prostitutes washed themselves (1 Kgs 22:38). The text is not clear whether the prostitutes washed themselves in the blood-contaminated pool or the blood of the king was washed off using water from a pool that prostitutes used for washing. In either case, prostitutes are once again mentioned in close association with dogs. If the pool is tainted with blood, they are attempting to wash themselves clean with something that makes them ritually unclean, and they are attached to the story to further the posthumous humiliation of King Ahab. The prostitutes in the story occupy an extremely low status, and the author implies they represent a social defilement that can stain even a dead king. Lastly, kings are either condemned or praised for their allowance or removal of the *qadešim* (קדשים) in 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, and 2 Kgs 23:7. As discussed above, however, scholars have disputed what exactly these were.

In the portrayal of ancient Israel in the Primary History, what in modern terms would be understood as a relative “legalization” does not come anywhere close to conferring respectability much less endorsement or approval. Prostitution and prostitutes are not directly criminalized. Several activities, however, when done in connection with prostitutes were subject to criminal penalties up to and including death. The law collections are explicit that prostitution represents a *moral* defilement if not a *criminal* violation. Narratives reflect this sentiment and consistently portray prostitutes as occupying a despised social status more than once loosely equated to dogs.

To the extent that prostitution is mentioned, the extant law collections of the ANE reflect social views of prostitutes consistent with those expressed in the Primary History. The principal qualification to that is the view in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that prostitution defiles the sacred. This has no explicit comparison elsewhere. It might be because of the possible associations between sex and prostitution with the cults of other deities. Otherwise, prostitution was legally tolerated but lacked social respectability. The inferior position of the prostitute meant that she was subject to legal and social measures in which her rights were disadvantaged or outright restricted.

#### **5.2.4.2 Rahab’s Social Location and Belonging**

With this social and literary context, as a prostitute, Rahab would have been a social outsider even within her own city. That this was the case is possibly indicated by the location of her home in the small city of Jericho.<sup>411</sup> She did not reside in the city center near where the housing of the elites would have been. Her home was incorporated

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<sup>411</sup> Pressler also makes this point. Ibid, 26.



into the wall. She lived as far from the elites as she possibly could while still being inside the city. Older commentators argued the placement of her house has the advantage of being readily accessible to potential customers, but this ignores the fact that Jericho, like other ancient cities, was not a large place by modern standards.<sup>412</sup> Almost anywhere in the city would have been accessible in just a few minutes' walk. Her placement in the city wall is not one of convenience but of exclusion.<sup>413</sup> This exclusion does not need to be an active or conscious rejection. Exclusion can also operate passively and subtly through systemic forces such as economics. Living in the wall may simply have been what she could afford, yet what she could afford would have been strongly influenced by her social location. Being a prostitute likely meant her economic and social opportunities were extremely limited. As a result, to be discussed further below, Rahab was most probably at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Her social position translates into the economic choices available to her. Her home in the wall, away from the elites, reflects a degree of social exclusion.

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<sup>412</sup> From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the first waves of modern archaeology, John Gill offered this idea. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, Early American Imprints. No. 40916. Second Series (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1978). John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. 8 (Harper & Brothers, 1894), 879. However this viewpoint has been reiterated in less academic fora. Claude Mariottini, "Rahab: A Prostitute or an Innkeeper?," *Dr. Claude Mariottini - Professor of Old Testament* (blog), March 19, 2010, <https://claudemariottini.com/2010/03/19/rahah-a-prostitute-or-an-innkeeper/>.

<sup>413</sup> Nili Wazana, "Rahab, the Unlikely Foreign Woman of Jericho," in *Foreign Women - Women in Foreign Lands: Studies on Foreignness and Gender in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East in the First Millennium BCE*, ed. Angelika Berlejung and Marianne Grohmann, *Orientalische Religionen in Der Antike* 35 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 40.

There is one respect in which Rahab may be distinguished from a substantial proportion of prostitutes in the ANE. Based on her characterization within the story, she was not a slave. In the ancient context, slaves had no rights over their person, sexual or otherwise. Women and girls could become enslaved by a number of means. The most prominent ways would be debt slavery, being the children of slaves, and being captured in warfare.<sup>414</sup> Enslaved women were known to be forced into prostitution in the ANE.<sup>415</sup> Lerner has suggested, “It is likely that commercial prostitution derived directly from the enslavement of women and the consolidation and formation of classes.”<sup>416</sup> While dehumanizing and callous, forcing women and girls into prostitution permitted those slave owners who engaged in the practice to directly commoditize them for profit. Rahab, by contrast, appears to be completely independent. She:

1. lives in a house that is described as *her* house.
2. shows functional control over that house by hiding the spies on the roof and letting them out a window.
3. communicates directly with those sent by the king.
4. negotiates directly with the spies.
5. provides for the salvation of her immediate family.

At no time is her decision-making subordinated to anyone. Instead, Rahab exercises full agency over her actions.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> For warfare, cf. Lerner, 247.

<sup>415</sup> Another legal mechanism besides slavery of forcing a woman or girl into prostitution was adoption. Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, trans. Helen Richardson-Hewitt and M. E. J. (Mervyn Edwin John) Richardson (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2016), 409–10, 413–14.

<sup>416</sup> Gerda Lerner, “The Origin of Prostitution in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Signs* 11, no. 2 (1986): 247.

<sup>417</sup> A post-colonial perspective could view her agency as circumscribed by the need to negotiate with the Israelites at all. As someone in the position of having to

How Rahab chose to exercise her agency was deceive the king's messengers, help the Israelites, and make a deal with them that ensured her survival and that of her family. Belonging explains this choice in part as due to her social location as a prostitute. While it is difficult to know how an ancient person would have felt in her situation, it is reasonable to suppose that people in antiquity were just as quick to perceive rejection, insults, and slights as those in the modern era. Their perception is not dependent on a sophisticated understanding of the reasons for the rejection. Being a prostitute placed Rahab on the outer fringes of society. The evidence from the ANE material and the HB suggests reminders of her inferior social position would appear in daily life.<sup>418</sup> This social experience would be unlikely to generate positive feelings of affection, attachment, and/or belonging to the community but rather the opposite.<sup>419</sup> This lack of a sense of belonging would have made her more open to help the Israelites against the interests of her city. In the midst of social discrimination and a likely lack of belonging, her

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survive, navigate, and perhaps resist the violent coercion of a colonial power, she is not exercising agency so much as choosing the best of her limited options.

<sup>418</sup> In addition to the previously discussed texts from the ANE, an oft-cited selection from Gilgamesh Tablet VII should be mentioned at this point. It colorfully depicts an abusive disdain for prostitutes in a literary context. It includes the prostitute being slapped by drunkards and being forced to stand at the city wall. It is, however, in an extremely broken context. Much of the potentially useful aspects of the text have been supplied by translators, so drawing meaningful conclusions from it is unwarranted. A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 641.

<sup>419</sup> Pressler argues Rahab's status as a social and economic outcast would not have encouraged her loyalty to Jericho's elite. *Ibid.*, 24. cf. also Amy H.C. Robertson, "Rahab and Her Interpreters," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. (Carol Ann) Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd, Twentieth Anniversary Ed ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 111.

relationship with the people of Jericho might have been tenuous and superficial rather than affective.

### **5.2.5 Rahab's Identity as a Woman**

Though Rahab's social location as a prostitute in this setting is an important driver of the action in the story, focusing exclusively on her social location would be just as reductive as focusing exclusively on her identity as a Canaanite. Her experience of the world would sit at the intersection of her social locations (e.g. prostitute) and her identities. To her identity as an inhabitant of Canaan, whether or not this may be construed as an ethnic identity, we can add her identity as a woman.<sup>420</sup> Power in ancient societies was allocated strongly in favor of men. In addition to political control from local elders to kings and governors, fathers and brothers controlled the sexual and other rights of the women of the family. This did not mean that women had no rights and never held positions of power in antiquity.<sup>421</sup> Rather, it must be kept in mind that, whatever those rights and positions were, they were determined or tacitly accepted by men. Thus, the kinds of roles and opportunities that were available to Rahab were constrained by her gender.

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<sup>420</sup> Sharp has pointed out that her identity as a woman in a male-dominated world is inherently othering. "The dominance of male voices and their implied normative male gaze renders the female as a charged and virtually marked "Other" even in those biblical texts in which women act as heroines." Sharp, 86.

<sup>421</sup> To give but one example, according to Lesko, "women in ancient Egypt could buy and sell property, adopt children, and sue quite on their own. The court case Mose shows that a woman who was senior to her siblings of either sex could be selected by a court of law to act as executrix for her brothers and sisters." Egypt, however, was exceptional in the ANE in this regard. Leonard H. Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir El Medina* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 36.

We cannot know how Rahab would have perceived her place as a woman in society since the perspectives of women from the ancient Levant have not come down to us. From the perspective of belonging, we can recognize that, in a male-dominated society, Rahab was in a less powerful position than her male contemporaries. In saying that she occupied a lower, marginalized social status because she was a prostitute, it must be understood that it was not lower from a starting point equal to men. Her lowered social status would have been diminished relative to her already lowered social status as a woman. Thus, the combined effect of these two aspects of her belonging is not additive.<sup>422</sup> The intersection and interaction of different forms of oppression are mutually constitutive, according to Yuval-Davis.<sup>423</sup>

She was able to accommodate or refuse the spies at will because their social location and identities placed them in a place that was inferior even to her. Though they are men, their temporary social location as spies in enemy territory made them vulnerable to anyone who discovered who they were. Thus, despite being both a woman and a prostitute, the power dynamic between Rahab and the spies is reversed. They are reduced to negotiating with her from the inferior position in the relationship when, in other circumstances, it is she who would be the vulnerable one.

#### **5.2.6 Rahab's Social Location as Lower Class**

In an intersectional analysis, Rahab has another social location that should be considered — her class. While it is possible to imagine Rahab as a financially prosperous

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<sup>422</sup> Yuval-Davis (2006), 195.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 197.

madam, it is more likely that she would have been on the lowest end of the socio-economic scale. One is not likely to accept the ignominy of a despised profession, whatever that profession may be, except at great need. The great need that compelled many, as discussed above, was coercion through slavery. The second was poverty, whether the woman's own or that of her family. Since Rahab was not the former, it is reasonable to suppose that the latter explanation is best.

Being a woman, a prostitute, and probably lower class, Rahab found herself at the confluence of three intersecting axes of marginalization and oppression in the society in which she lived.<sup>424</sup> Each reinforces and amplifies the impact of the others whether or not she would have recognized this herself. A person in such a situation is unlikely to have experienced feelings of belonging to her immediate neighbors or her city. The dire circumstances of an impending military invasion and the opportunity presented by her encounter with the spies (sexual or otherwise) would have created a choice between securing her survival and loyalty to her city. From the way she is portrayed in Joshua, her willingness to betray her city in exchange for her survival is an entirely logical outcome of the triple marginalization she experienced in her own society.

### **5.2.7 Belonging and the Inclusion of Rahab**

On the Israelite side of the equation, Rahab is again at the confluence of three reinforcing lines of marginalization. Though for the Israelites, the marginalizing factors are being a Canaanite, a prostitute, and a woman. It is possible that her relative poverty

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<sup>424</sup> Pressler had a similar idea but a different list with an Israelite perspective in mind: Canaanite, woman, and prostitute. Pressler, 25.

could also be a factor, but within the world of the narrative, economic class does not yet play a determinative role. Since the story does not explicitly address Rahab's Canaanite identity, Israelite attitudes can be discerned in how the author portrays Rahab and the inhabitants of Jericho and how the characters respond to her.

In contrast to the portrayal of an extremely negative Israelite view of Canaanites and prostitutes generally and of sexual relationships with Canaanite women in particular in Exodus and Deuteronomy, the author almost immediately complicates this with the figure of Rahab.<sup>425</sup> Because Exodus and Deuteronomy leave the reader with the impression that the Israelite view of their Canaanite neighbors is one of exclusion and hatred, it would be reasonable to anticipate with Rahab's introduction into the story that she will be characterized as the quintessential sinner. Of all the people in the book of Joshua, she is the person who one would expect to be held up for derision. Instead, someone who ought in this context to be the very image of Canaanite idolatry and depravity, in a complete reversal of expectations, turns out to represent the Israelite ideal of Yahwistic faith and loyalty.

The lens of ethnicity can highlight this reversal, but it cannot account for the consequences except in a superficial way. Only looking at ethnicity, one could say that, in a Canaanite versus Israelite opposition, their respective ethnic boundaries would likely have become relatively rigid and impervious due to the impending military conflict that both sides anticipate. Mutual hostility and ethnic hatred would be at their peak. This

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<sup>425</sup> If Rahab is, as some have observed, representative of the Canaanites, then the complication introduced by Rahab's Yahwistic faith also complicates how Israelites should view Canaanites generally.

makes Rahab's confession and the Israelites' final acceptance of the deal surprising. The surprise aspect of the reversal, on this understanding, can be accounted for as an intentional literary feature of the text. Within the world of the narrative, the acceptance of the deal can be primarily construed as one only made under duress, for a strong force such as coercion would be needed to cross this kind of hardened ethnic boundary.

The framework of belonging, however, offers the insight that the shift in response from the Israelites that occurs in the story is more than a literary feature or the spies acting under duress, though it is both of these as well. Whereas before there was no meaningful overlap between the networks of belonging of the Israelites and those of the Canaanites, Rahab creates a connection between her and the Israelites at the level of normative values. The values in this instance are the orthodox Yahwistic values expressed in the five books of the Torah. This changes the types of belongings that are possible for the Israelites relative to Rahab. Consequently, the spies make an agreement with her enforced by an oath without argument.<sup>426</sup> While Joshua, by ancient standards, was likely bound to his course of action by the spies' oath, the intersecting belongings at the level of normative values made the agreement and oath palatable even though she and her family should be subject to the ban (*herem*). Accordingly, he merely tasks the spies with following through on their oath.

That did not mean the Israelites easily or simplistically accommodated themselves to this new development. The Israelites demonstrated a certain ambivalence toward

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<sup>426</sup> I avoid the use of the term *covenant* because it is more specialized in its use. Joshua 2 does not contain the elements that the HB and other sources typically connect with them, such as a feast.



Rahab. Immediately after making and keeping their oaths to her, the Israelites still did not welcome this new Canaanite ally and neighbor with open arms. Yahwistic faith only goes so far at first. She and her family are initially placed outside the camp — not among the Israelites (Josh 6:23). Once again, Rahab lives on the margins of society. Permitting survival did not mean immediate and full acceptance of her belonging. She was still not one of *us* but one of *them*. The only indication that this eventually changes is the etiological statement explaining that Rahab, presumably meaning her descendants, still dwells in Israel.

For her social location as a prostitute, the negative attitudes toward prostitution in the legal material of Genesis-Deuteronomy are instructive. As previously discussed, though prostitution's existence is not technically prohibited, Rahab's profession is regarded as moral depravity. Joshua 2 and 6 do not explicitly condemn her prostitution, but it also does not let the reader forget it either. In addition to direct references to her as a prostitute, the numerous sexually charged wordplays continually remind the reader what kind of woman it is talking about. This is one way in which identities, social locations, and normative values are mutually constitutive. It is difficult to discuss Israelite attitudes toward Rahab as a prostitute that are divorced from her identity as a woman. The social stigma she bears as a prostitute comes embedded with the unequal social burdens and expectations placed on women. The principle also works in reverse. She is not just a woman. She is a specific kind of woman, a prostitute.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> This does not mean to imply there were never prostitutes who were male, but it merely recognizes that most prostitutes were women.

What remains is an explanation of Israelite attitudes toward the Canaanites in Joshua that accounts for the differing outcomes for Rahab and her family on the one hand and the other inhabitants of Jericho on the other. An explanation that rests primarily on ethnic identity will not suffice because all were inhabitants of Canaan. If there were ethnic differentiations to be made among the inhabitants of Jericho, this is not raised by the text.<sup>428</sup> Moreover, in time, Rahab and her family were able to go beyond merely being located outside the camp. Joshua 6:25 ends her part in the account with an etiological explanation that Rahab lives *in* Israel “unto this day” (עד היום הזה), the standard construction for such explanations. This result is justified by her hiding the “messengers” (המלאכים) whom Joshua sent.<sup>429</sup> Rahab, the Canaanite, is incorporated into the Israelites. The basis for allowing the crossing of this ethnic boundary is her act of political loyalty to the Israelites (Josh 6:25; hiding the spies and helping them escape against the interests of the inhabitants of Jericho) expressed in theological terms (Josh 2:8-14; knowledge of the saving acts of Yahweh and his support of the Israelites). Alternatively, this could be understood as theological loyalty (to Yahweh) expressed in political terms (choosing to help the Israelites against the inhabitants of Jericho).<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> The author(s) of the Primary History do not appear to be reticent about differentiating among people of different ethnic groups, so the fact that Rahab is not distinguished from the other inhabitants of Jericho except by her profession is significant.

<sup>429</sup> The author’s word choice alludes to the arrival of the messengers of Yahweh who came to save Lot and his family (Gen 19:1).

<sup>430</sup> To make a sharp distinction between religion and politics would be anachronistic. In ancient Israel and the rest of the ANE, loyalty to the king and the people of the land was intimately connected with loyalty to their god(s).

In the politics of belonging, Rahab successfully made the leap from Canaanite to Israelite. This leap, however, came in two parts. The first was self-ascription. By her well-known confessional speech in chapter 2, Rahab appropriated to herself belonging to Israel's God. With that self-ascription, she also appropriated to herself, from an inner-biblical point of view, the core element of Israelite ethnic identity. As theorists from Fredrik Barth to Nira Yuval-Davis have argued, ascription by others is also an essential element in the politics of identity and belonging. In Rahab's case, her self-ascription was not enough. She had to be accepted as belonging to the group by the Israelites. In their responses, the Israelites progressively moved her family from outsiders to insiders.<sup>431</sup> From the author's point of view, the reason for that transition was helping the spies, but aligning her normative values to those of the Israelites made it acceptable.

### **5.2.8 Belonging and the Exclusion of the People of Jericho**

To the extent the story of the conquest of Jericho can be analyzed, the analysis is limited by the fact that it only appears in the HB, the account is shaped by the author's values. In terms of belonging, when a conflict results in the wholesale massacre of a city's inhabitants, the relationships involved might best be described in terms of absence. There is an absence of connection between the networks of belonging of the two sides. This absence may occur for a number of possible reasons. Among them, the connections

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<sup>431</sup> So successful was this transition that, in the history of biblical interpretation, some may have placed her in the lineage of David (Matthew 1:5). The uncertainty arises from the fact that this text does not identify *which* Rahab the author has in mind, but the placement in the genealogy is at an appropriate point. Also, only notable biblical women are mentioned in this genealogy suggesting the Rahab in question is the Rahab of the book of Joshua.

could have been broken, never established, or not made in areas that were meaningful to one or both sides.<sup>432</sup> As modern tragedies in the same region attest, a high degree of familiarity with a neighbor with many cultural similarities does not necessarily prevent catastrophic violence.<sup>433</sup> Analyzed alternatively through the lens of a constructivist approach to ethnicity, the rigid and impermeable boundaries that would likely be in place between two groups on the verge of violent conflict, along with the attendant hostility, would cause that conflict to be more likely and severe. In either case, the breakdown or absence of significant social connections and increasing social distance through hardened boundaries create the conditions for extreme violence. The other side can be dehumanized and seen as neighbors to whom no social obligations are owed.

To this point, both belonging and the constructivist approach to ethnicity lead to the same conclusion. Belonging, however, can add further nuance. That the inhabitants of Canaan were categorically targeted for violence obscures the fact the motivations for the violence were not exclusively ethnic but ethno-religious. The political dimension of military conquest and settlement to replace the Canaanites is undergirded by a religious rationale. The Canaanites worshiped other gods and have committed acts that, according to the legal material in the Torah, Yahweh considers an abomination. Moreover, in the wider context of the Primary History, Yahweh had previously granted the land where the Canaanites live to the Israelites' ancestor Abraham. The biblical presentation of the

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<sup>432</sup> This list is not meant to be exhaustive. A number of reasons and combinations of reasons could be adduced. The reasons can also shift or transform over time.

<sup>433</sup> Doak contends that fighting is characteristic of neighbors, rather than a deviation from the norm. Doak, 1.

Israelites as a people makes the religious values from which these ideas spring the normative values of the ethnic group. In this way, religious normative values translate into a *de facto* ethnic conflict. To this might be added the tensions created by differences in social location between the settled populations of Canaan and the Israelites' self-understanding as a wandering and nomadic people in need of a homeland.<sup>434</sup> The gulf in ethnic identity, socio-economic location, and normative values between the Israelites and the Canaanites add depth to the one-dimensional view afforded by the lens of ethnicity.

### **5.2.9 Summary of the Rahab/Jericho Narrative**

The seemingly simple story depicted in the Rahab/Jericho narrative of Joshua 2 and 6 belies the complexity of the relationships involved. It is not just a narrative of ethnic annihilation with a surprising twist. Analysis through the lens of belonging shows that the depiction of Rahab's behavior and the differences in treatment between the Israelites' response to her and the other inhabitants of Jericho can be explained.

Viewed through the lens of ethnicity alone, the pre-invasion situation between the Israelites and the Canaanites of Jericho would have involved rigid boundaries and a breakdown of inter-ethnic interaction. Whatever each group would have identified as its boundaries, these boundaries would have hardened in ways that excluded the other in this particular time and place. If violence is not seen as an inevitability, as the text does, each move in the direction of exclusion and hostility exacerbates the gap between the two

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<sup>434</sup> The classification as "nomadic" comes down to self-perception even from an inner-biblical perspective. The Israelites had previously conquered and begun to occupy the lands to the east of the Jordan River.

groups and makes violence more likely. The resulting destruction of Jericho and the death of its people are easily accounted for from the perspective of ethnicity.

What the constructivist theorization of ethnic boundaries does not do well is account for the juxtaposition of this extreme violence with the saving of Rahab and her family in the same historical moment. Belonging can better handle the various dimensions of the social situation. Concerning the people of Jericho, the violence of the Israelites against them can only be superficially characterized as an ethnic conflict. It is more than an ethnic conflict. It is an ethno-religious one. From the Israelite point of view, as presented in the HB, the normative values of religious ideology motivate and justify their actions as much as a desire for land and plunder. Furthermore, the networks of belonging for the Israelites and the Canaanites in the Rahab/Jericho narrative do not overlap in a way meaningful to them. This sets the conditions for exclusion, hostility, and violence.

Concerning the Rahab narrative, Rahab's place in her native society can be understood, using intersectional analysis, as one of the most marginalized people in Jericho. At the intersection of not one, but three, axes of social power, Rahab is positioned as one of the most disadvantaged along each.<sup>435</sup> Though she probably shares ethnic identity with the other inhabitants of Jericho, she is a woman in a place where men dominate. She is impoverished where the wealthy have power. She is a prostitute where sex workers are despised even by those who use their services. Rahab would likely have

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<sup>435</sup> In what follows, I do not mean to imply that the situation in Jericho is somehow special or unique. It is quite the opposite.

been reminded of their low status and that they did not belong frequently, perhaps daily. For instance, the comment about Ahab's bloody chariot being washed out at the pool of Samaria notes "The dogs licked his blood, and the prostitutes bathed" (1 Kgs 22:38). The mention of prostitutes specifically rather than women generally implies a social segregation. Prostitutes did not wash themselves in the same place and/or at the same time as others. Only they would have been contaminated by the blood, or rather, that is how they came to contaminate the king's blood. While individual perceptions of and reactions to this situation could vary, the social rejection was real, and it was not likely to have gone unnoticed and unfelt. From the perspective of belonging, her willingness to seize the opportunity afforded by the spies and betray her city is understandable. Rahab has been disdained by the people of her own society, so she disdained them.

Belonging also clarifies why the Israelites were willing to include Rahab when they were not willing to do so for the other inhabitants of Jericho. From the outset, if the view is restricted to ethnic identity, this should not have been possible. Rahab belonged to the group the Israelites were about to destroy, and there was little to no reason to accept a Canaanite in their midst. Belonging, however, brings into play the evaluative role of normative values, which in this case are the values of religious ideology. Within the world of the narrative, Rahab creates belonging by explicitly aligning herself with the religious ideology of the Torah.

The attempt was effective on two counts. The first is she had the spies in a position where the normal relations of power were reversed. They could hardly have refused. Failure to agree to her terms meant their capture and likely death, yet as noted

earlier, neither they nor Joshua resisted the deal. Secondly, normative values provide the standard by which belongings are evaluated. Rahab was able to get acquiescence, if not immediate acceptance, of her belonging by aligning herself to the standard by which her belonging would be judged. This move succeeds both within the world of the narrative *and* on the level of the reader. The author used the legal material earlier in the Primary History to prepare the reader to view her Yahwistic confession positively. It is then a small step from viewing her confession positively to accepting her survival and incorporation into the Israelites.

### **5.3 Judges: The Samson Cycle**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

Our second case study is the Samson cycle in Judges 13-16. Similar to the Rahab/Jericho narrative, it has the virtue of including a complex mix of both positive and negative Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors. These attitudes range from marriage to murder and are embodied in the figure of Samson.

Among the many avenues that could be explored concerning belonging and the Samson cycle, there are three that stand out due to their complex relationship to ethnic identity. The first is Samson's own sense of belonging, or, rather, what can be observed of his sense of belonging in the way he is portrayed in the narrative. The belonging of the women featured in the Samson cycle will also be examined since they have such major roles in the narrative. Third, analysis of the politics of belonging highlights how Israelite and Philistine attitudes play out in different parts of the narrative.



### 5.3.2 Literary Overview

The book of Judges is mainly organized around stories of the judges with a narrative introduction and a lengthy series of stories that form a conclusion. The story of each judge represents an iteration of the cycle: 1) The Israelites disobey and abandon Yahweh, 2) Yahweh sends an oppressor, 3) The Israelites cry out to Yahweh, 4) Yahweh has compassion on the Israelites and sends a savior, a judge. 5) The Israelites are loyal to Yahweh during the life of the judge. 6) After the death of the judge, the Israelites return to disobedience. From the beginning to the end, there is a moral decline in Israelite society.<sup>436</sup> Being the last of the major judges, the lengthy Samson cycle represents the nadir of the stories of the judges, but not of Israelite society.

The movement of the plot of the book also very often represents a decline in the quality of the judges. Earlier judges, like Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah, act with faith and deliver Israel from its enemies. Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson are much more problematic. Gideon lacks faith, and his decisions after his great triumph led to the betrayal by Abimelech and the tragedies that followed. Jephthah is rash and inclined to violence. His lack of compunction about killing extends not only to the Ammonites but also Ephraimites and his own daughter. By the time the narrative reaches the Samson cycle, Samson fails in the most basic job requirement of a judge — delivering Israel from its enemies. The text implicitly acknowledges this at the outset. The angel of Yahweh specifically qualifies the extent of the as-yet unborn child's accomplishments with "he

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<sup>436</sup> Mascrenge makes a similar observation. M. Alroy Mascrenge, *Samson as God's Adulterous Wife* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 2.

will *begin* to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (Judg 13:5). Instead, it is Israel’s judge, Samson, who is delivered to Israel’s enemies (Judg 16:21). Worse, this happens twice. On one occasion the Israelites themselves deliver him to the Philistines (Judg 15:9-13). Whereas Gideon and Jephthah cared about defeating Israel’s enemies, as will be shown below, Samson cared about himself. His primary motivations come down to pleasure and revenge.

Multiple suggestions have been made for structuring the Samson cycle.<sup>437</sup> For example, Exum has demonstrated the parallel structure of chapters 14-15 with that of chapter 16.<sup>438</sup> The parallel between the two sections is based on Samson’s Timnite wife in the first and the Gazan prostitute and Delilah in the second. Choosing among the competing proposals will not be attempted here. Instead, what is important for our purposes is that the common denominator among them is that they structure the narrative around Samson’s interactions with women. When evaluating the Samson cycle through the framework of belonging, the role of women and gender should not be ignored.

Samson, as a judge and the protagonist of the story, carries with him, by virtue of these positions, certain expectations. For ancient and modern reading audiences alike, he is, in some sense, supposed to be the hero of the story like so many other figures in biblical stories. If anything, this expectation is reinforced by the supernatural

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<sup>437</sup> For a review of proposals, cf. Elie Assis, “The Structure and Meaning of the Samson Narratives (Jud. 13-16),” in *Samson: Hero or Fool?: The Many Faces of Samson*, ed. Erik Eynikel and Tobias Nicklas, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions, 1388-3909, Volume 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–12.

<sup>438</sup> J Cheryl Exum, “Aspects of Symmetry and Balance in the Samson Saga,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 6, no. 19 (February 1981): 3–29.

circumstances of his birth and the demonstrations of strength by which he vanquishes his enemies against all odds. As a judge, he is, as discussed above, supposed to deliver Israel from its enemies. Implicit in that statement is the idea that the judge, the deliverer, actually cares about Israel. The judge is expected to care about the oppression of their people and be zealous enough, or at least concerned enough, to fight to end it. Samson defies all of these expectations.

Samson is, rather, an antihero.<sup>439</sup> An antihero is defined as, “a protagonist or notable figure who is conspicuously lacking in heroic qualities.”<sup>440</sup> It takes imagination to discern noble or heroic intent in his thoughts, words, or actions. His motivations consistently swirl around his appetites for women and revenge.<sup>441</sup> His appetite for women leads to his desire to marry a Philistine woman of Timnah, his visit to a prostitute in Gaza, and his affair with Delilah (Judg 14:1-3). These episodes then precipitate major events in the story. After the encounters with the women, Samson is usually left with a sense of grievance and seeks revenge. So strong was this desire for revenge, that his final act was an act of self-sacrifice, but he did not sacrifice himself to help others or for some

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<sup>439</sup> By presenting Samson as an antihero, I do not intend to exclude other interpretive options. Mobley characterizes Samson as a liminal hero who never gets to come home but is always stuck in the wilderness. Exum reviews the many different ways of categorizing Samson from hero to fool to terrorist, etc. Gregory Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*, T & T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (New York: T & T Clark, 2006). J. Cheryl Exum, “The Many Faces of Samson,” in *Samson: Hero or Fool?: The Many Faces of Samson*, ed. Erik Eynikel and Tobias Nicklas, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions, 1388-3909, Volume 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 13–32.

<sup>440</sup> “Antihero,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, s.v., July 6, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/antihero>.

<sup>441</sup> One could arguably add an appetite for food and drink.

other altruistic purpose. He died to get final revenge on the Philistines — for the loss of his eyes. A detail of Samson's life to which the author devotes attention is the honey that bees produced in the carcass of the lion that he killed (Judg 13:8-9). There is also an emphasis on the occasion of the wedding feast. Additionally, one of his two prayers to God was for water after killing the Philistines (Judg 15:18-19).

### 5.3.3 Samson's Belonging

Identifying Samson's sense of belonging through intersectional analysis is both challenging and potentially enlightening. Starting with the analytical dimension of identities, Samson could identify as a son, a Danite, and an Israelite.<sup>442</sup> In contrast to the great efforts expended to satisfy his desires, though, he expresses little to no concern or care for the Israelites, the tribe of the Danites, or his own family. Admittedly, what follows is an argument from absence. On the other hand, that is precisely the point. There is an absence of concern for the well-being of the Israelites. He does not seem to be bothered by the oppression of the Philistines of his people.<sup>443</sup> More to the point, he takes no overt action intended to remedy the situation. If he does not have a grand vision of helping the Israelites, perhaps he might act on behalf of his tribe?<sup>444</sup> Again, the answer is no. The Danites as a tribe do not figure directly into the narrative.

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<sup>442</sup> For brief periods, he could also identify as a husband, lover, and son-in-law.

<sup>443</sup> The author's statement that the Philistines ruled over the Israelites is taken at face value (Judg 14:4). Whether or not it can be sustained by historical or archaeological investigation is irrelevant. Samson's behavior must first be understood in its literary setting. That literary setting portrays a historical situation in which the Philistines are dominant over the Israelites.

<sup>444</sup> The term *tribe* here is employed to retain the biblical designation of the Danites without taking a position on exactly what is entailed by tribal affiliation. In my

Most telling of all is his treatment of his parents. Much of the first section of the Samson cycle is preoccupied with the miraculous events before his birth and his parents' concern with how to raise him (Judges 13). To the extent the story permits a window into the character of Samson's parents, they demonstrate conscientious parental care for him. Samson, however, when questioned about his choice of a wife, ignores their concerns and demands that he be given what he wants (Judg 14:1-3). The author, furthermore, goes out of his way to demonstrate Samson's unconcern or indifference toward his parents. Among the events connected with the dead lion, the text explicitly states that he gave them the honey and did not bother to tell them where it came from. For an ancient Israelite/Judahite audience, the significance of this act would have been immediately apparent. He made them ritually unclean without giving them a choice in the matter and gave them no opportunity to cleanse themselves because they were unaware in the first place.

It would be true that, outside of a literary setting, such seemingly small details would hardly support the conclusion that someone was unconcerned for their parents or treated them with indifference. The text's narrative form, however, as a short story changes the standard of evaluation.<sup>445</sup> The story by virtue of its short form requires a degree of conciseness in how the author approaches characterization. This means greater

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usage, *tribe* only refers to a level of social organization that is of a size between that of the extended family and the whole people group.

<sup>445</sup> The Samson cycle is given unusual length compared to the stories of the other judges, but it is much shorter than the stories of Moses, Samuel, and David, to give a few examples. By modern standards, the Samson cycle is very short indeed and warrants the label "short story."

significance should be attached to the details an author provides, especially concerning the protagonist. An author will not spend a chapter, as a modern novel might, elucidating the protagonist's complex and fraught relationship with their parents. Instead, brief comments or actions, particularly in ancient literature, may be used by the author to cue the reader to infer additional information.

In this case, it would have been easy enough for the author to highlight Samson's desire to marry this particular Philistine young woman and then pass on directly to the wedding feast. It is significant therefore that this vignette between Samson and his parents was included. Samson's refusal to listen to his parents' concern about his request to marry outside of the group indicates both his stubbornness and his lack of respect for his parents. Regarding the episode where Samson gave his parents honey, not only is importance attached to ritual cleanness in the Torah, but it is also of explicit concern in Samson's story.<sup>446</sup> The author's disclosure both that he gave them honey from the carcass of the lion and that he did not tell them is not incidental (Judg 14:9). This detail was included by the author to say something about Samson's character. For Samson, however, his relationship with his parents does seem to match his sense of belonging (or lack thereof) to these larger levels of social organization. His identities as a son, Danite, and Israelite seem to have little bearing on his actions.

There is, however, a limited exception. He may not care very much for the Israelites, Danites, or his family, but he does have a fundamental loyalty to them.

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<sup>446</sup> Judg 13:4. One area where the Torah attaches importance to ritual uncleanness would be the regulations on clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11, which includes the regulations at issue in the Samson cycle. For the priests, cf. Lev 21:1-4, 11.

Throughout the text, he is a prolific slaughterer of Philistines, but he never once moves to harm or threaten an Israelite. In the one instance where Samson finds himself in opposition to other Israelites, the conflict plays out in a way that could not be more different than the hyper-violence that unfolds between Samson and the Philistines. The conflict is inter-tribal because it is Judah's land that has been invaded, and Samson is Danite. Based on the inter-tribal conflicts of the preceding Gideon and Jephthah cycles, the reader might reasonably anticipate that the conflict could easily spark violence. The Judahites, for their part, threaten nothing of the kind. They do strongly reprimand him for his behavior, however. They care nothing for the loss of Philistine lives. Their worry revolves around the fact that the Philistines have power over them. His actions could and did provoke a military attack that they were in no position to resist. Samson responds in an uncharacteristic fashion. He calmly negotiates an agreement instead of resorting quickly and directly to violence as he does with the Philistines. He satisfies their concerns by allowing them to bind him and turn him over to the Philistines. The one condition is they must agree to not kill him themselves (Judg 15:11-13). For a self-centered antihero, this may be as close as Samson can come to expressing belonging to other Israelites. It is not so much an affective attachment to others as a mutual recognition based on ethnicity that Judahites and Danites belong to the category "us," and the Philistines are categorized as "them."

If the identities dimension of belonging is unfruitful for discerning Samson's sense of belonging, then social location may provide some insight. Unlike Rahab, however, his social location has been ignored by the author almost completely. Such an

omission likely means the author considered it unimportant to the story. What can be said about Samson's social location is that his family had enough money to afford a wedding feast but perhaps not enough to afford thirty changes of clothing. He does not appear to have an occupation to which he must attend. He travels locally to Timnah. He goes further to Ashkelon to kill Philistines for their clothing. He journeys south all the way to Gaza where his only notable interaction is with a prostitute and ripping out the city's gates. Hidden behind all of this could be an occupation as a traveling merchant, or Samson is wealthy enough to have a great deal of disposable time and money. Leveen interprets his travels as indicating that he belonged nowhere.<sup>447</sup>

The last dimension of belonging is normative values. In the context of the Hebrew Bible, the role of Yahwistic religious ideology, of primary concern to the author, cannot be ignored. Regarding religious piety, a distinction must be made between the motives and aims of the author and the author's characterization of Samson. The author pours religious and theological elements into the Samson cycle. Almost a quarter of the story is devoted to a birth narrative for Samson which features not one, but two theophanies and a miracle (Judges 13). In the Primary History, birth narratives are few and typically reserved for some of the most significant figures of Israelite history: Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Moses, and Samuel.<sup>448</sup> Theophanies are likewise reserved for important

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<sup>447</sup> Leveen, 87.

<sup>448</sup> The choices, however, are somewhat inconsistent. Ishmael appears rarely in the text. Benjamin and Ichabod both get birth narratives though neither are important actors in the text. In those cases, the emphasis was on the experience of their dying mothers. Most notable of all is an omission. David is one of the most important people in the Hebrew Bible who is a major protagonist for a large portion of 1-2 Samuel, yet he



moments such as Moses' encounter with the burning bush, Joshua meeting the captain of Yahweh's armies before the attack on Jericho, and the call of Gideon. Samson's birth narrative is infused with theological significance.

Samson was to live a life as theologically significant as his birth narrative would suggest. He was a *nazir* from birth and had to observe its restrictions for life rather than a predetermined period for a vow. Even his mother while pregnant with him had to observe one of its basic requirements to not consume anything related to grapes. His birth narrative concludes with Yahweh blessing him and the Spirit of Yahweh beginning to stir him (Judg 13:24-25). A common refrain in the Samson cycle thereafter is that "the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him" which is immediately followed by some miraculous feat (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). Through narration of this kind, the author repeatedly keeps in front of the reader the governing action of Yahweh throughout these stories. In this way the theological element is as prominent in the Samson cycle, or more, than in the other sections of the book of Judges.

On the other hand, this theology-by-narration is necessary because, without it, the deeds, motivations, and character of Samson would appear to be almost completely devoid of the divine. This contrast between the theologically infused storyline and Samson's almost determined worldliness is one of the great tensions in the story. Looking at the character of Samson, his theological perspective seems to be inconsistent and highly utilitarian. It is inconsistent in that he dutifully observes at least one element of the

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does not have a birth narrative. As if to compensate, there are important stories of his youth that set up his later career.

requirements of the *nazir*, keeping his hair uncut, but blithely disregards others. He appears to have no concern about touching the jawbone of a donkey, the dead lion, or the honey that bees produced in its carcass. All of these made him ritually unclean, and in theory, they voided his Nazirite status (Num 19:11-16; Num 6:6-12). He is also uninterested in maintaining the endogamy required by the Torah when he is attracted to a Philistine woman (Deut 7:3; Judg 14:3).<sup>449</sup>

His theology is highly utilitarian because Samson is only concerned with God when he perceives himself to be at a point of desperation. He prays twice. The first is almost in challenge asking if God will allow him to die of thirst after winning such a great victory (Judg 15:18). The second is at the moment of his self-sacrifice when he asks God for strength one last time so he can get revenge for the gouging out of his two eyes (Judg 16:28). While people in the HB are often depicted crying out to Yahweh in extreme need, Samson's perception of what counted as an extreme need stands out as especially base. More importantly, as he is characterized, Samson has little regard for God except as such regard suits his immediate needs.

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<sup>449</sup> Deuteronomy 7:1-3 does not explicitly list the Philistines as those prohibited from intermarriage with the Israelites. What appears instead is one variation of the stereotyped list of "seven nations." It was not an exhaustive list, and it aimed to describe the inhabitants of Canaan which the Israelites were to possess. Elsewhere, this land explicitly includes "the Sea of the Philistines" (Exod 23:31) and "the Great Sea [i.e. the Mediterranean] and its coast" (Num 34:6). Along the same lines, Judges 1:18 describes the tribe of Judah capturing cities (Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron) typically associated with the Philistine pentapolis, and Judges 3:3 includes the land of the five lords of the Philistines as territory that Yahweh had left to test the Israelites. These texts suggest that both in Judges and the wider Primary History the Philistines are among those who are to be destroyed and their land taken. If so, then it is also reasonable to suppose intermarriage with the Philistines was prohibited like all the other inhabitants of Canaan.

The Samson cycle, in stark contrast to Sinuhe, Wenamun, and Rahab, reveals an antihero protagonist. Samson, who was supposed to be the model of Yahwistic piety as a lifelong *nazir*, charted his own path in society that was anything but strict adherence to the laws of the Torah. As a consequence of the qualities that make him an antihero, he displays only a very loose and general sense of belonging to his family and his people, the Israelites. Samson shows the faintest glimmer of connection and belonging to the Israelites by the fact that he never resorts to violence with them. Otherwise, Samson only belongs to himself and his passions.

### 5.3.4 Belonging and the Women of the Samson Cycle

The four women who are featured in the Samson cycle are his mother, his Philistine wife from Timnah, the unnamed prostitute in Gaza, and Delilah. The representation of these women by the author is suffused with both common literary tropes into which women are often placed and, within the common tropes, a more nuanced portrayal at times. They correspond to the literary tropes of mother, virgin/wife, promiscuous woman, and seductress.<sup>450</sup>

Samson's mother is, unsurprisingly, featured in the birth narrative which illustrates the tensions in how women are portrayed. On the one hand, she is given preference over her husband both within the world of the story and in the author's characterization. The angel of Yahweh appears to her twice rather than Manoah even when he is the one who requests the appearance. Samson's mother is characterized as

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<sup>450</sup> The trope of the promiscuous woman is more typically referred to with the short, but crass, term *whore*. Since it also doubles as a very strong and demeaning slur, this term will be avoided as inappropriate.

wise and understanding while Manoah is portrayed as not very intelligent. He needs everything repeated, asks obvious questions, and later becomes afraid that Yahweh will kill them when that would have defeated the very purpose of the revelation (Judg 13:8, 22). It falls to the angel and then his wife to make things plain for him whereas she requires no such assistance. At each point, she out-shines her otherwise well-intentioned, husband. Each of these aspects give her prominence and respect in the story.

On the other hand, Samson's mother checks all of the familiar boxes for the portrayal of a wife and mother in an ancient, patriarchal society. Samson's father, Manoah, is named, but his mother is not. When Manoah is speaking to the angel of Yahweh and she is standing there, he refers to her only as "this woman" (Judg 13:11). While she does speak, Manoah does most of the talking to the angel. Her roles are those that are traditionally acceptable and respectable for women. In the story's present time, she is the dutiful, if barren, wife. In the future, her role will be that of a mother. This latter role receives the lion's share of attention so that, though she is not yet pregnant, she is already functioning for the audience as a maternal figure.

Samson's mother is situated in the established network of belongings of her family and people group. Throughout the birth narrative and the episodes around Samson's marriage, Manoah and his wife are portrayed as presenting a united front. They work in concert with each other insofar as the narrative offers a window into that aspect of their characters. The lone indication of belonging to the Israelites is her objection, along with her husband, to Samson's marriage to a non-Israelite. Underlying their response to his demand is that any Israelite woman would be preferable to the Philistines.

Their contempt for the Philistines is indicated both by the response itself and by the emphasis they give it by referring to the Philistines as uncircumcised (Judg 14:3).

As with Samson's mother, Samson's Philistine wife is unnamed. She is so completely anonymous from the reader's perspective and thoroughly objectified by the people in the story that she has almost no characterization at all. She could be *any* woman. The story is told from the perspective of the almost exclusively male actors in the story. Samson, Manoah, her father, and his Philistine 'companions' collectively decide her fate in the most literal sense with little or no evidence of her own input. At each turn, she acts under duress. Even though all of the consequential decisions were out of her hands and despite all of her efforts to negotiate the forces at work in her life, she still ended up suffering the horrific death that she tried to avoid. Samson's Philistine wife might be the most tragic of all of the characters in the story. Samson was the architect of his own tragedy, but his Timnite wife was the victim of the decisions of others. She suffered especially for Samson's volatility and his proclivity for revenge.

Though Samson's anonymous wife somewhat plays the generic role of the chaste virgin or the wife, the tragic aspect of her story is the one glimmer of something more nuanced than the flat, two-dimensional character outlined to this point. The author could have portrayed her in any fashion he wanted to. He could have used any number of grammatical and rhetorical devices to slant the reader's perception of her in any direction they wished. In light of the legal material of the Torah, she is an ethnic outsider and a source of threat to the theological purity of the Israelites, yet she is never the object of criticism or disdain in the narration. Instead, the author makes her into a sympathetic

figure. For example, the repetition of the motif of being burned to death highlights the inescapable quality of the trap in which she finds herself. It makes her final doom particularly tragic and unjust.

The tensions of belonging are particularly apparent with Samson's Philistine wife. From the Philistine point of view, she was a normal young woman who was firmly connected to the established networks of belonging of her family and town. She adhered to social norms and was accepted as belonging to the community until Samson's acts of revenge. As a Philistine and a woman, she would experience exclusion along both intersecting axes of power from an Israelite point of view. This would be true of the author as well as the people within the narrative. It would explain the anonymity and the distance the author keeps from her and her perspective. She does not belong, and the presumably male, Israelite author does not identify with her. Even so, these mutually constitutive axes of marginalization do not prevent the author from casting her as a sympathetic figure for an Israelite or Judahite audience.<sup>451</sup> Perhaps the author did sympathize, or the tragic nature of her and her father's deaths serve to highlight the monstrous character of the Philistines writ large. Their monstrous character, in turn, affirms Israelite prejudices and justifies Samson's behavior. On the other hand, it is not necessary to have to choose between the alternatives of sympathy for her and demonizing the Philistines. They could both be true.

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<sup>451</sup> Exactly how the audience should be characterized involves questions of dating which cannot be resolved in any satisfactory manner.

Belonging can also tease out some of the nuances of Samson's behavior. Again, being both a Philistine and a woman would have been marginalizing factors for Samson, but she was appealing enough as a woman that he wanted her as a wife, which occurred for a short time. Filtered through his tendency toward rage and self-absorption, Samson vacillates back and forth in his attitudes toward her between attraction and disdain. He rejects her over the affair with the riddle, but after a long cooling-off period, he returns with a gift when he wants sex. He did not care enough to either protect her or avoid actions that would endanger her. He did care enough, however, to avenge her with passion.

The third woman featured in the Samson cycle is the prostitute in Gaza. The place of prostitution and prostitutes in ANE cultures that was discussed with the story of Rahab does not need to be reiterated here. It will be sufficient to add that in the story she represents two common archetypes for women in literature. She is, as mentioned above, the classic promiscuous woman with the moral condemnation that goes with that role. If the author gives scant attention to the characterization of Samson's wife, then he gives even less to the anonymous prostitute. What can be said, even with such anonymity, is that she inhabits a social space outside of the established networks of belonging in the community. She is also the scandalous occasion for Samson's presence in Gaza which then becomes the springboard for the miraculous feat of strength that follows. There is no reversal of expectations in this case. The prostitute remains just that in the story. To the extent that she is involved in characterization, her social location as a prostitute and

identity as a Philistine impact the characterization of Samson, not her own.<sup>452</sup> His visit to a Philistine prostitute is part of his portrayal as a lesser judge. It is a tolerated, but embarrassing, deed.<sup>453</sup> Making it worse, he engages in this kind of behavior with the Israelites' overlords in one of their major cities.

The last, and most famous, of the four women is Delilah. Among the four she stands out in a number of ways. First, Samson displays a greater attachment to Delilah than to any other person in the narrative. Samson's Philistine wife may have been "right in his eyes," but Samson "loved" Delilah (Judg 14:3; 16:4). She is the only one of the four women who is named. She is also arguably one of the women in the HB who has the most agency. The narrative leaves no doubt as to who is really in charge. The Philistine lords do not threaten. They entice her with a massive sum of money. Her social location appears to be fully independent of anyone at a time when women were typically under the control of either her father (or, in his absence, her brothers) or her husband.

While, as discussed with Rahab, one of the few classes of women who were economically and sexually independent of male control were prostitutes, there is little to favor interpreting Delilah as a prostitute. Besides her apparent social independence, Delilah's relationship with Samson is portrayed as one where the affection is very one-sided. Neither of these, though, really indicates anything about her social location. There

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<sup>452</sup> It is not necessary to conduct a demographic survey of the Iron Age I material culture of Gaza to assess the likelihood that the prostitute was a Philistine. In the narrative world of the Primary History, Gaza was one of the five major Philistine cities. For literary purposes, this fact alone would lead readers to assume she was a Philistine.

<sup>453</sup> cf. Gen 38:23 where Judah's fear of becoming an object of contempt or mockery was associated with having to admit both to using the prostitute and then getting swindled by her.



are any number of reasons why Delilah could be in some sort of romantic or sexual relationship with Samson while also being willing to betray him. Additionally, elements of Delilah's characterization don't fit with the possibility that she was a prostitute. One is the fact that the author(s) of the Primary History are never shy about identifying someone as a prostitute, but the author says nothing here. Also, her repeated and frequent pressuring of him to reveal the secret of his strength gives the impression of an ongoing relationship, and likely cohabitation, rather than the occasional use of services (Judg 16:16). There are, similarly, other possible reasons for her independence. She could have been a younger widow or divorcée who had enough means to remain independent of her father and/or brother(s) despite the absence of her late/former husband. Without additional information, Delilah's social location beyond her evident independence must remain a matter of conjecture.

On the level of identities, Delilah is an equally mysterious figure. Literarily, she plays the role of the seductress, the very image of the traditional *femme fatale*. It is not clear whether she was Israelite, Philistine, or something else altogether. She lived in the Sorek Valley. Both Israelites and Philistines either lived in or near this valley. Samson's home was at the eastern end (Judg 13:25). Timnah where his Philistine wife lived was toward the western end (Judg 14:1). Thus, her geographic location leaves the situation ambiguous. Delilah's name does nothing to clear things up either. Its derivation and meaning are uncertain for linguists who must look to Akkadian roots for assistance.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., "דִּלְיָה," in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000).

Without making definitive assertions, Delilah should probably be understood as a Philistine. Samson, as portrayed in the narrative, displays a distinct romantic and sexual preference for Philistine women. The Philistine lords do not hesitate to approach her to convince her to betray Samson. Likewise, she does not hesitate to accept their outrageously large reward. Social barriers do not seem to be a concern. More tellingly, when Delilah finally learns Samson's secret, she begins to oppress or humiliate him when his hair is cut (Judg 16:19).<sup>455</sup> This is a brutal betrayal on any reading, but it makes more sense if the working assumption is that she is Philistine.<sup>456</sup>

The chief normative value at work in the Delilah episode is fairly straightforward to identify. That value is self-interest, whatever that interest happened to be at a given time. Delilah's (and Samson's) self-interest for a time was to have an ongoing relationship that dispenses with marriage altogether. The perceived benefits of the shared identities of husband and wife and the socially sanctioned social location of being married were, for whatever reason, no longer attractive to either her or Samson. Alternatively, they were no longer attractive *enough*. The story pivots on a change in Delilah's self-interest. When the Philistine lords offer her a fortune for the secret of Samson's strength, Delilah and Samson's self-interests diverge. This sets the stage for a

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<sup>455</sup> The Hebrew verb ענה in the Piel is open to various translations depending on context. All of them involve actively doing something strongly negative toward someone else. If Samson is, as some interpreters believe, representative of Israel, then a Philistine Delilah oppressing Israel fits the context well.

<sup>456</sup> A further speculation may be offered, and it is very speculative. Oftentimes, the Hebrew Bible makes an attempt to preserve foreign names. Philistine language and prosopography are still largely unknown, and what little we have of Philistine names also present puzzles of meaning and derivation such as those in the royal dedicatory inscription from Ekron. "Delilah" may simply be an otherwise unknown Philistine name.

contest of wills in which Samson proved to be hopelessly outmatched and leads to his downfall.

When evaluating the belongings of these four women, each one inhabits a different place in the intersecting axes of power. In the area of identities, one is Israelite, and three are Philistine or probably Philistine. In their networks of belonging, a different evaluation emerges that cuts across the line drawn by ethnic identity. Two are situated in the established networks of belonging connected to their families and community. They are Samson's mother and his Philistine wife. As such, they demonstrate belonging to their people and operate within customary social norms. Samson could not just approach his wife for sex. He had to subordinate his desire for self-gratification to the social norm of marriage first. As the narrative progresses, Samson moves away from adhering to social norms, so he chooses the prostitute of Gaza and Delilah. These are women who inhabit social locations where immediate gratification is both possible and acceptable to them. The prostitute is virtually invisible to the reader because she is mentioned briefly and does not any other actions. Delilah is the woman in the narrative who is the most like Samson. She behaves as if she belongs to only herself and pursues her own self-interest. Samson's defeat at the hands of the Philistines came because her self-interest began to conflict with his.

### **5.3.5 The Politics of Belonging in the Samson Cycle**

The self-centeredness of Samson has implications for how the politics of belonging between the Israelites and the Philistines may be evaluated. The most straightforward implication is that, if Samson belongs only to himself and behaves like a

narcissist, his attitudes are not necessarily indicative of those of anyone else. To get a sense of the politics of belonging at work in the Samson cycle, we must look at the attitudes of others in the narrative. We must also consider those attitudes in the context of a substantial difference in power between the Israelites and the Philistines.

From an Israelite perspective, both within the world of the story and from that of the author, marriage is an ethnic boundary between the Israelites and the Philistines. The nature of the boundary is a religious one in that Philistine males do not observe the practice of circumcision, so marriage between them is prohibited. As a result, Samson's parents openly express the view that *any* Israelite woman would have been preferable to his choice of a neighboring Philistine for marriage.<sup>457</sup> They add emphasis to their contempt by calling the Philistines "uncircumcised," which in context is a strong pejorative expression best described as an ethnic slur (Judg 14:3). Nevertheless, the boundary and the negative attitude toward the Philistines is not strong enough to withstand the mere insistence of their son.

At this point, the author interjects an aside that informs the reader that the parents were unaware that the whole scenario was being orchestrated by Yahweh who was seeking an occasion to punish the Philistines (Judg 14:4). That the author felt the need to make such an apology for Samson's parents is significant. Implicit in the apology is the

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<sup>457</sup> Leveen characterizes the borders that Samson crosses to the Philistines as uninhabited land in contrast to a physical border, but she does not recognize that there probably was not even that. Timnah is only 6 miles from Zorah. These Philistines are near neighbors of the Israelites. Leveen, 13. For the distance from Zorah to Timnah, cf. Daniel I. Block, "Judges," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 189.

idea that, under ordinary circumstances, this marriage should not have received their approval. Because Manoah and his wife become vulnerable to criticism for accepting such an arrangement from the reader, the author steps in with this apology to deflect criticism of those he has consistently presented as righteous and God-fearing. The negative attitude, then, toward Israelites creating intersections in their networks of belonging with Philistines through marriage operates both in the world of the story and at the level of the author and reader.

From the Philistine side of the marriage agreement, the same prohibition against exogamy does not appear to be in place. The father of the young woman agrees to the marriage, and when Samson returned to his house to consummate the marriage only to discover she had been given to someone else, the father offers his younger daughter instead. Rather than object to the father's initial decision, others in the community provide thirty people to attend the wedding feast. This, however, should not necessarily be interpreted as a welcoming gesture. The provision of the so-called companions may have been seen as an opportunity for Philistines to feast at Israelite expense since Samson's family was paying for it. The Philistines throughout the narrative, understandably, react with open hostility when they are being murdered and their crops are destroyed. Their relatively non-hostile attitude is indicated by how they handle their military move against Judah. They act only after being provoked with violence, and even then, the Philistines are interested only in capturing Samson. Accordingly, the Judahites are able to avoid a wider reprisal simply by handing him over, but they do so under duress.

The imbalance in the responses of the Philistines and the Israelites to Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman and subsequent violence may be attributed, in part, to their social locations relative to each other. The text states or implies three times that the Philistines ruled over Israel at that time (Judg 13:1; 14:4; 15:11). The political and military dominance of the Philistines over the Israelites created a situation in which the Philistines would not have felt threatened in their dealings on an individual or family level. They were open to intermarriage. Whether or not this was part of a broader desire for the ethnic erasure of the Israelites through marriage cannot be known. On the other hand, the Israelites felt threatened and any religious barriers to intermarriage would have been strengthened by the desire to close ranks in the face of the threat posed by the power imbalance.

The existence of the power differential does not, in itself, entail hostility and exclusion on the part of those in the inferior position. As the Egyptian material discussed in the previous chapter has shown, those who were in the inferior position in the power differential were not excluded from important areas of both life and death, and they did not reject participation in Egyptian society. Vizier 'Aper-El, Prince Heqanefer, as well as Terura and Arbura, were all non-Egyptians who sought successfully belonging in Egyptian society.<sup>458</sup> In literature, Sinuhe in his eponymous tale and Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6 found ways through different dimensions of belonging to cross ethnic boundaries and do so despite differences in power.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> cf. the discussion in Chapter 4 on these figures

<sup>459</sup> Wenamun failed spectacularly and comically when attempting to work across ethnic boundaries.

The differences in power were not entirely benign. The Philistines may have been relatively open to interaction and integration, but that was due to being able to do so from the comfort of the superior position. The Judahite elders' rebuke of Samson explicitly shows that the Israelites' lack of hostility has nothing to do with friendliness or even ethnicity. Their behavior is governed by the difference in social location. The Philistines are their lords whether they are willing to accept it or not, so they acquiesce to their demands to avoid punishment.

### **5.3.6 Summary of the Samson Cycle**

On the surface of these events, ethnicity plays an important role in shaping their course. The main thrust of the narrative is an ongoing, violent conflict between the Israelites and the Philistines. Under the surface level of that conflict, the significance of ethnic identity becomes more nuanced and less clear-cut. While Samson was disinclined to fight Israelites and all too happy to kill Philistines, his motivations were primarily self-centered and had little to do with hating the Philistines as Philistines. He did, after all, repeatedly spend time in Philistine territory and gravitate toward Philistine women. He also did not love, help, or defend Israelites as Israelites. Even his attitudes toward Yahweh were inconsistent and utilitarian. Along any dimension of belonging, Samson ultimately belonged only to himself.

The women of the Samson cycle exhibited belongings of different kinds. Samson's mother was Israelite, and the other three were, or were likely, Philistines. They may also be divided by their differing situatedness in their community's established networks of belonging. Samson's mother and his Timnite wife were fully integrated and

accepted in their networks, so Samson (mostly) dealt with them according to the normative values of those communities for their social locations. The prostitute of Gaza and Delilah are disconnected from these networks of belonging. This allows them a high degree of personal agency. They were in a position to accept Samson's desire for sexual gratification without concern for the marriage which the normative values of their communities would require. Delilah, of all those in the Samson cycle, is the most like him. She belongs only to herself and acts according to her self-interest, and this precipitates his downfall.

The politics of belonging in the Samson cycle are driven less by ethnicity than by the unequal distribution of power between the Philistines and Israelites. The division between ethnic groups was secondary to the difference in power. The Philistines were open to peaceful interactions with the Israelites including marriage. This openness, however, must be strongly qualified because their openness remained only so long as their hegemony over the Israelites was not threatened. When it was, they responded with violence or the threat of it.

The attitudes of the Israelites, represented best by Samson's parents and the Judahite elders, were constrained by the conditions of being the ones who are subjugated. Privately amongst each other, Samson's parents showed contempt for the Philistines. They preferred that he marry anyone else among the Israelites and characterized them with a slur. Outwardly to the Philistines, though, Manoah was willing to be friendly enough to negotiate a marriage agreement with a nearby Philistine family.



Similarly, the Judahite elders display differing attitudes depending on to whom they are speaking. Toward the Philistines, they display wariness, but insider-to-insider, they rebuke Samson for creating the trouble with the Philistines that now enmeshes them (Judg 15:11). They care nothing for the Philistines who come against them or those that Samson killed. Their concern is self-preservation in an unequal power relationship. Belonging along the dimension of ethnic identity allows them to be both more direct in their speech and more restrained in their actions. They were restrained with the Philistines because they were in no position to resist. With Samson, they had a choice and chose a verbal rebuke rather than violence.

That inter-tribal violence was on the table is evident in both the preceding two judge cycles and the succeeding narratives that conclude the book. The Ephraimites threaten violence against Gideon who deescalates the conflict with flattery. Jephthah responds to the same situation with escalation and warfare with the Ephraimites. After Samson, the Danites threaten Micah if he does not back down over their theft of his idols. The Benjamites are nearly annihilated by the other tribes in response to the rape of a Levite's concubine.

From the author's point of view, the real conflict was between Yahweh and the Philistines. It was a matter of loyalty to the Israelites and, to a lesser extent, justice. From that angle, the Samson cycle was a campaign of unrelenting hostility against the Philistines.<sup>460</sup> Samson, as Yahweh's agent in this conflict, was simply the tool to

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<sup>460</sup> The lone possible exception, as discussed above, was Samson's hapless Philistine wife.

accomplish that end. Oblivious to the real conflict, Samson would swing from marriage to murder according to the demands of narcissistic self-gratification rather than either inter-ethnic acceptance or hatred.

## **5.4 1-2 Samuel: The Life of David**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

The life of David is another case where the wide range of interactions that Israelites had with their neighbors indicates a more complex set of factors than just ethnicity. David is the great warrior and enemy of many of Israel's neighbors. This is, in fact, the dominant image of David in 1-2 Samuel.<sup>461</sup> In this capacity, David's characterization is of one who is enthusiastically hostile to Israel's neighbors. Like the pharaohs of the New Kingdom discussed in Chapter 4, he almost gleefully embraces slaughter. Nevertheless, a persistent feature of David's life is his periodic willingness to deal with non-Israelites in decidedly favorable terms. At more than one point, his life depends in large part on the goodwill of individuals from neighboring peoples. These episodes receive much less attention and are difficult to reconcile with his image as Israel's champion in battle.

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<sup>461</sup> In 1-2 Kings, David would become the archetype for the ideal king who was loyal to Yahweh. Other images of David as a great poet and songwriter come to the fore in the Psalms. Less attention is given to his military prowess. For a similar understanding of the multifaceted presentation of David in the HB, see Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, "David: Kaleidoscope of a King," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

The argument below will investigate both those periods where David fits his champion of Israel image and those that are seemingly inconsistent with it. It will roughly follow the biblical chronology of David's life since the alternation between hostility and acceptance of Israel's neighbors evident in the text should also be considered. For that reason, it will begin with a brief survey of his early career with attention to his relationship with Israel's neighbors. Afterward, the period where David becomes a fugitive from Saul will be discussed. He initiates contact with both the Moabites and the Philistines, and he depends on them for his continued survival. Special attention will be given to the significance of his role as leader of a band of dislocated migrants (*ḥabiru*).<sup>462</sup> Saul's own openness to non-Israelites, and the author's use of that fact, will also be included. David's image as a traditional king and how he related to Israel's neighbors in that capacity will be surveyed and then followed by a discussion of other interactions David had with non-Israelites that do not fit this image. Here, David's bodyguard and the appearance of Ittai of (Philistine) Gath and his band will be discussed.

Viewed from the lens of ethnicity, David's behavior in 1-2 Samuel is at best erratic. At worst, it simply makes no sense, and some sort of appeal to different redactional layers would need to be made. The inconsistency, from a redaction-critical perspective, is due to different, conflicting voices making their way into the text. One voice sees David exclusively as Israel's champion. Other voices may wish to integrate David more closely with other people groups to facilitate relations with those people

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<sup>462</sup> The nature of the *ḥabiru* and the literature on this social phenomenon will also be discussed in 5.4.3.

groups in the redactor's present. His image as a champion fits the theological goals of the author. David was anointed king as a youth by Samuel at the direction of Yahweh. Success as a warrior and king against Israel's neighbors would validate Yahweh's selection of him and also his power to strengthen someone who trusted in him. David's friendship and loyalty to Israel's neighbors, effectively changing sides, is not so easily accounted for. Belonging, on the other hand, can bring a measure of coherence to the phenomena observable in the text without needing to depend on the validity of a specific redactional framework.

#### **5.4.2 David's Early Career**

While David's ethnic identity as an Israelite is left assumed by the biblical text, the stories of his early career begin to establish for him a trajectory of social locations of increasing prominence among the Israelites. The driving force that causes David to match and begin to eclipse Saul in social power is his prowess in battle.<sup>463</sup> The dynamic is encapsulated in the brief bit of song which is repeated three times in the narrative,

Saul has struck his thousands,  
but David his ten thousands. (1 Sam 18:7, 21:12; 29:5)

The three-fold repetition indicates the significance for the author of David's military skill for explaining both his rise in Israelite society to the kingship and its legitimacy. In the process, David's networks of belonging are portrayed as expanding from being family-

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<sup>463</sup> For a detailed analysis and discussion of this section, cf. Joseph Lozovyy, *Saul, Doeg, Nabal, and the Son of Jesse: Readings in 1 Samuel 16-25* (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2009).

centered to including the army and popularity with the general populace to the royal household.

In the background of this narrative, these stories frame David's relationship with the Philistines as a simple one of unremitting hostility. In the politics of belonging, there is no overlap in their social networks. As portrayed in the biblical text, the networks of belonging in which David was enmeshed would have encouraged exclusion and ethnic hatred toward the Philistines. This plays out in the episode with Goliath when David expresses contempt for him and the Philistines with the slur that they are

"uncircumcised" (1 Sam 17:26, 46).<sup>464</sup> That the draw of David deeper and higher in the networks of belonging among the Israelites was connected to the exclusion of the Philistines is further illustrated in Saul's demand of one hundred Philistine foreskins as a bride-price for Michal and David's cheerful doubling of the amount (1 Sam 18:25-27).<sup>465</sup>

This kind of enthusiasm in slaughter and the summary statements highlighting David's military successes are reminiscent of the texts produced by royal ideology in New Kingdom Egypt discussed in Chapter 4. As with the Egyptian kings of the past, a great warrior (and future king) needs a great enemy, and he finds one in the Philistines.

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<sup>464</sup> David's expression of contempt is similar to that of Samson's parents (Judg 14:3).

<sup>465</sup> The choice of trophy again focuses on what Israelites saw as one of the major differences (and ethnic boundaries) between themselves and the Philistines. A foreskin trophy may only be claimed from someone who is uncircumcised. Since other people groups besides the Israelites also practiced circumcision, a foreskin almost certainly came from a Philistine. Jeremiah 9:24-25 indicates the author's belief that the people Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, and Moab practiced circumcision. Sasson also discusses the very early practice of circumcision in Egypt and the Levant. Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85, no. 4 (December 1966): 473–76.

Israel's neighbors make a useful literary foil. The image of the king or, in this case, the eventual king is the only thing that really matters. Other figures are present only insofar as they can be used to glorify him. The depiction of unadulterated hostility and ethnic hatred toward the Philistines, then, must be understood in light of the literary and ideological functions it serves rather than as a precise indicator of his personal attitudes.

To be clear, no argument will be made that the stories of David's rise were somehow influenced by Egyptian royal monumental inscriptions. Nor are they parallel.<sup>466</sup> The comparison is only raised for context. The Egyptian material shows how another ancient culture, and one that is not too geographically distant, approached the literary representation of the deeds of the king with respect to its neighbors. The contextualization is meant to highlight how, when presented with a similar task, different cultures oftentimes came up with similar solutions. It may also suggest similar motivations, but this remains to be seen.

In the case of David's representation in 1-2 Samuel, the author does not continue this simplistic attitude towards the Philistines and other non-Israelites that would be expected if he was *only* writing to serve literary and ideological concerns. Not only does the author complicate David's path to kingship, but he also complicates the portrayal of Israel's neighbors and Israelite relationships with them. The seemingly inevitable, meteoric rise to the throne that David's early career would suggest is interrupted. He is forced to become a fugitive from Saul. Not coincidentally, David's relationship with

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<sup>466</sup> Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (March 1, 1962): 1-13.

Israel's neighbors undergoes a radical change, and the portrayal of these neighbors mirrors this change.

#### **5.4.3 David as a Fugitive from Saul**

At the outset of a discussion of David's fugitive period, it must be acknowledged that, on a theoretical level, belonging is not the only valid framework that could be used. One could analyze the change in David's behavior and relationship with Israel's neighbors through a political lens. It could also be argued that David was acting out of pure self-interest in that his choices were governed by the simple need to survive. These are legitimate perspectives. David was navigating the dangerous political waters of being both an enemy of the Philistines and of the king of Israel. In fleeing and hiding among those who were Saul's enemies, David was certainly acting in self-interest to preserve his life, yet the specific shape those actions took cannot be adequately explained by either of these factors alone.

Belonging helps clarify *why* he could make the choices that he did. Beginning with politics, Saul was more like a chieftain than the ruler of a kingdom with a tightly integrated administrative apparatus. It might have been easier to attempt to hide among one of the more distant Israelite tribes. The Transjordanian tribes were a possibility because he fled there during the Absalom revolt, and the Jordan River throughout the HB appears as an important topographic and political barrier. A northern tribe, like Asher, might also have been a bit too far out of Saul's political reach. How was it that hiding out

among the Philistines and the Moabites was a possibility open to him?<sup>467</sup> If we look beyond one level of identity to the broader view afforded by the framework of belonging, then the openness to the possibility becomes more explicable.

Becoming a fugitive is a dramatic change in social location.<sup>468</sup> A change of this kind also significantly shifts how the different axes of social power intersect in his life. This creates an entirely new social dynamic in which some connections and belongings previously available to him on the group level are now closed. Whereas he previously had favor among Saul's top officials and officers, he was now a pariah. To a certain extent, the severing of his connections and belonging to the Israelites can be viewed as partial. Individual Israelites could and did assist David despite (or in apparent ignorance of) his fugitive status. As will be discussed below, that assistance had deadly consequences with Ahimelech son of Ahitub and the priests of Nob (1 Sam 21:7, 10;

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<sup>467</sup> Leonard-Fleckman also wrestles with this issue and approaches it from a diachronic literary perspective. One early memory of a David-Gath connection spreads to other parts of the corpus over time. Tsumura speculates that either topography or the fact that the Philistines and Moabites were Saul's enemies was the reason. Other than this brief speculation, he passes over the issue. Cartledge describes David's action as "curious and unsuccessful." David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 535, 539. Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, "All the גִּבּוֹל of Israel (1 Sam 27:1)," in *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise,"* ed. Hannes Bezzel and Reinhard Gregor Kratz, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 0934-2575, Volume 514 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 122. Tony W. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2001), 259.

<sup>468</sup> Strine reframes David's entire biography through a socioeconomic perspective. He views David's experiences as an involuntary migrant as central to his life. Notably, Strine relates David's experience to modern migrants, not ancient *habiru*. Nevertheless, it is an insightful take on the material. C. A. Strine, "On the Road Again: King David as Involuntary Migrant," *Open Theology* 7, no. 1 (2021): 401–12, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2020-0171>.



22:11-19). Earlier, David could count on his status as a military officer and on his popularity to be well-received wherever he went. When he became a fugitive, each new encounter required a reassessment of the social connection. The perilousness of interacting with other Israelites can be illustrated by the willingness of the inhabitants of both Keilah and Ziph to aid Saul against David. The willingness of the inhabitants of Keilah is especially telling because David had saved them from the Philistines (1 Sam 23:12, 19-24; 26:1). This realignment of the social connections that stem from his previous belongings leaves a social vacuum open to be filled by new belongings. As he creates new belongings, he could forge social connections with individuals and groups that he would have previously excluded on the grounds of identity (i.e. ethnicity) and/or normative values (i.e. religious ideology).

For a clearer analysis of belonging, David's fugitive status needs to be addressed with greater historical specificity. David's behavior, especially the gathering of his band of social misfits, has long been compared to the persistent phenomenon of the *ḥabiru* in the Levant.<sup>469</sup> While much ink has been spilled arguing over the question of the relationship between the designations of *ḥabiru* and *Hebrew*, there is a general consensus

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<sup>469</sup> The argument here largely follows that of Nadav Na'aman. Kipfer also reviews evidence that David and his band should be considered *ḥabiru*. Nadav Na'aman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.*, vol. 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 252–74. Sara Kipfer, "The Land 'from Telam on the Way to Shur and on to the Land of Egypt' (1 Sam 27)," in *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise,"* ed. Hannes Bezzel and Reinhard Gregor Kratz, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 0934-2575, Volume 514 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 66, 70–71.

that the term *habiru* known from Mari, the Amarna letters, and elsewhere is not an ethnic designation.<sup>470</sup>

The term *habiru* refers to a social class of dislocated migrants. According to Na'aman, the people in these groups share the characteristic that they have been dislocated from their original political or social environment. The causes of this kind of dislocation include war, natural disasters, debt, taxes, etc. *Habiru* bands are not homogenous but are composed of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, and they typically form around a strong leader. These bands did not amount to large armies in comparison to the great empires or even medium-sized kingdoms of their time, but they could be large enough to pose a significant threat to smaller cities and local communities. According to R. Youngblood, in the Amarna letters *habiru* "troops rarely, if ever, amounted to more than a few hundred."<sup>471</sup> Though they could be mobile and were widely despised for their raiding, *habiru* often lived a settled existence in towns as attested in Alalakh (AT 180).<sup>472</sup> Overall, Na'aman concludes, "The bands of Jephthah and David were socially identical to *Habiru*-bands of the second millennium B.C.E... In fact, the best descriptions of bands within the entire literature of the ancient Near East appear in the biblical stories of Jephthah and David."<sup>473</sup> With the description of David's fugitive status

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<sup>470</sup> The link between the two terms, if any, is not relevant to this study.

<sup>471</sup> Ronald Youngblood, "The Amarna Letters and the 'Habiru,'" in *Beyond the Jordan: Studies in Honor of W. Harold Mare*, ed. Glenn A. Carnagey (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 137.

<sup>472</sup> Richard S. Hess, "A List of Hapiru Soldiers," in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 276–77.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

and the gathering of his band, there is then a literary preservation of the wider social phenomenon of the *ḥabiru*.<sup>474</sup>

This social location at the margins of society produces a more complex social dynamic between Israelites and non-Israelites than one of simple differentiation based on ethnic identity. As highlighted above, there is likely a breakdown or disconnect from the person's normal network of belonging. As David discovered, once he became a fugitive living as a *ḥabiru*, his fellow Israelites became an unreliable source of support. There would have been, however, another implication of the breakdown of the person's normal networks of belonging beyond a loss of reliable support. There may also be a concomitant breakdown of the social pressures and expectations (i.e. normative values) ordinarily exerted by those networks. The push toward associating with certain types of people and the pull to reject others would collapse. An opportunity is opened up for the *ḥabiru* individually and collectively to reevaluate those values. For instance, without the fear of the disapproval of others, an Israelite like David is free to decide whether he really rejects Moabites and "uncircumcised" Philistines or not.

The socially and geographically dislocated nature of being a *ḥabiru* also carries with it the potential to cross social and political boundaries and create inter-ethnic belongings that would not otherwise be possible. The driving forces that bring people together into these bands generally, and David's in particular, depend on socio-economic

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<sup>474</sup> Leonard-Fleckman rejects the connection between David and the *ḥabiru*. The objection mistakenly correlates them with Egyptian categories and the Amarna letters. This social designation's appearance in ancient texts is exclusive to neither. Leonard-Fleckman, 121.

factors. This weakens the significance of ethnic identity because belonging can now be created between these individuals on other grounds and completely independent of ethnicity. Being uprooted from their prior networks of belonging, *habiru* can find and build a sense of belonging with each other. This belonging would be built on their common dislocated circumstances, their common need for each other to provide what is needed, and a common purpose to the extent they have one.<sup>475</sup>

In the story of David, the reevaluation of normative values and openness to new belongings becomes apparent almost immediately after he became a fugitive. After stopping to get help from Ahimelech, David seeks refuge, with no small amount of irony, in Gath carrying Goliath's sword (1 Sam 21:9-11). Outside of his social context as an Israelite military commander, Philistine officials regard him with suspicion, but they do little more than alert the king (1 Sam 21:12). David's next step is to cross ethnic and political boundaries a second time. He takes his parents and his band eastward to the king of Moab for protection (1 Sam 22:3-4). It would be tempting to suppose at this juncture that the author has exchanged one simplistic relationship with non-Israelites (hostility) for another (peaceful coexistence). Looking beyond this episode, however, David immediately returns to conflict with the Philistines for the protection of the Israelite town of Keilah (1 Sam 23:1-5).

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<sup>475</sup> Perversely, the group's common purpose could be found in its most destructive activities, such as violent attacks against others. The English idiom "thick as thieves" intuitively grasps the belonging, strengthened by self-interest, that can develop from engaging in criminal behavior together.

Between the flight to Gath and that to Mizpeh in Moab, the author includes the gathering of David's band at the cave of Adullam (1 Sam 22:1-2). The brief notice about David's time at Adullam accounts, from a literary perspective, for the beginning of the band of men around him which during later narratives would be featured prominently.<sup>476</sup> Like a *habiru* band, its composition is heterogeneous. The first subgroup is his extended family identified as his "brothers" and those of his **בית אב**, "father's house."<sup>477</sup> They were not likely there to merely sympathize. David's fugitive status endangered them as well, so they became dislocated migrants along with him. The four-hundred men were not characterized in the text by their people or place of origin. Instead, they were described in terms of life situation or socio-economic class. Two of the phrases, **כל-איש מצוק** "everyone who was in a hard-pressed situation" and **כל-איש מר-נפש** "everyone who was embittered," are unclear as to what kind of situation of distress or bitterness is in view. The third term, **כל-איש אשר-לו נשא** "everyone who was in debt," does specify an economic situation. Whatever the case, the principal determinant of what brings these dislocated people to David is something other than ethnic affiliation. It may be inferred in fact that at least one person was not Israelite (1 Sam 26:6). Instead, the exigencies of their particular situations are what drove them from their homes and what the author attributes to the formation of the band.

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<sup>476</sup> A group of 400 men, later increased to 600, would seem like a small military force only in modern times. A band of this size would appear to an ancient Levantine reader as a very significant military threat among the mostly small cities of the area.

<sup>477</sup> *Brothers* is in quotation marks in recognition of the fact that the term can be used for a wider range of relationships than just siblings. There is no need to take more specific stance here.

A tension develops between the politics of belonging and David's individual sense of belonging. The breakdown in David's belongings to the Israelites, produces a mixed and uncertain response among the Israelites' neighbors. The Philistines at Gath respond to David's new social location with uncertainty and ambivalence. As an Israelite, David was permitted to be in the city and move around in it.<sup>478</sup> This state of affairs continued after David's identity became known to royal officials. Otherwise, he would have been unable to make a pretense of insanity (1 Sam 21:14).<sup>479</sup> The reported objections of the officials were not ethnic, but political and military. They describe David as the "king of the land" and the one whose military victories are sung about (1 Sam 21:12). Neither David being an Israelite nor the fact that these victories came at the Philistines' expense is raised, although the conciseness of the narration could leave this implied. In Moab, David gets a more hospitable reception in which he asks for and receives from the king indefinite protection for his parents in that country. The significance of an Israelite making this request of a foreign king, if there was significance, is passed over without comment. The exclusion and hostility toward the Philistines evident and promoted in the networks of belonging among the Israelites earlier in the narrative disappears for David individually and is barely acknowledged by the Philistines themselves. The change in David's social location has initially produced a change, albeit an uncertain one, in the politics of

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<sup>478</sup> Baruch Halpern makes the rather dubious suggestion that David was not in fact Israelite. He was a Gibeonite. Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*, The Bible in Its World (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>479</sup> The final redaction of the text does not attempt to reconcile the fact that, in this earlier episode, David successfully convinces the Philistines that he has severe mental illness. Then later, the same Philistines accept the service of a perfectly sane David.

belonging. The initial ambivalence of the Philistines transitions to full acceptance by the king of Gath, Achish. He eventually employs David and his warband and gives them the town of Ziklag. All of this was made possible by the breakdown of David and his band's previous networks of belonging due to their *habiru* social location. This shift, however, does not come without a cost.

The text makes it explicit that David retained a personal sense of belonging to the Israelites throughout his fugitive period.<sup>480</sup> He defeats the Philistines who were threatening Keilah in Judah. Even while supposedly working for Achish, David would raid non-Israelites and lie to him that he was raiding Israelites instead. He would exterminate all of the inhabitants of the places he attacked for the express purpose of covering his duplicity. In the politics of belonging, David feels the need to cut his ties to Israel politically and connect himself to the Philistines of Gath. Personally, his sense of belonging to the people of Israel remained. This gap is what develops the tension in the narrative as the two sides, the Philistines and the Israelites, inevitably find themselves at war. The author uses the tension between David's secret belonging to the Israelites and his open belonging to the king of Gath, to bring about a moment of will-he-or-won't-he dramatic suspense when David is on the cusp of having to go to war on the side of the Philistines against the Israelites. The reader, who is presupposed to be sympathetic to the Israelite point of view, is left in doubt about David's true loyalty to the Israelites. The author releases the tension in favor of David maintaining loyalty to both by having the

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<sup>480</sup> The text does not differentiate David's loyalties, intentions, and belongings from those of his band, so, for discussion, the two will be treated as the same.

other Philistine lords reject him.<sup>481</sup> This resolution of the dramatic irony preserves the idea that David's true belonging is to the Israelites intact.

Aside from the dramatic tension producing a more compelling story, the question remains as to how such tension could exist. Israelites (e.g. Saul, his loyalists in the army, the Ziphites, and potentially the people of Keilah), repeatedly betrayed him. Israel's neighbors repeatedly welcomed and helped David. Why did he not lose his sense of belonging to the Israelites as he apparently gained new belongings with others? The answer may be the dynamic between self-ascription and ascription by others. It is present as much in belonging as it is in constructivism's ethnic boundaries because the concept of ethnic boundaries provides a means of describing how the politics of belonging works with ethnic groups. In the case of David, there was a gap between the ascription by others of belonging and his self-ascription of belonging. His belonging to Israelite society was rejected by others, but for him, he was still a loyal member of Israelite society. The ascription by others created the exigencies of the moment that governed his outward actions in the politics of belonging. Rejected by the Israelites, he found belonging with the Philistines and, to a lesser extent, the Moabites. His own sense of belonging to Israelites remained undiminished, and this governed his hidden agenda.

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<sup>481</sup> Ehrlich believes the narrator goes through so much trouble to absolve David of guilt in Saul's death precisely because David did go to the battle and bears guilt concerning Saul's death. Carl S. Ehrlich, "David and Achish: Remembrance of Things Past, Present, or Future?," in *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise,"* ed. Hannes Bezzel and Reinhard Gregor Kratz, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 0934-2575, Volume 514 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 242–43.



At this juncture, a contrast may be drawn between the responses of David and Rahab. In the story of Rahab and Jericho, Rahab was recognized as a member of her community, but being a woman, a prostitute, and lower class, she was triply marginalized within that community. For that reason, as discussed earlier, her sense of belonging to her own community would have been greatly weakened. This explains her willingness, while still nominally accepted within the community, to betray her own people to save her life and the lives of her family. David, by contrast, had become the consummate social insider. He had a high military rank, was the son-in-law of the king, and was a popular war hero, yet when he was no longer accepted within Israelite society, David continues to be conscientiously loyal to the Israelites.

In terms of self-ascription and ascription by others, Rahab was ascribed by others to be a member of her community. She was not a *respected* member of the community, but her belonging in Jericho was unchallenged. If we can infer her self-ascription from her actions, she felt she was an outsider and did not belong. David, however, suffered a sudden loss of the belonging ascribed by others that he previously held, but he never lost his self-ascribed belonging as a full member of Israelite society. Each acted according to their self-ascription against the headwinds of the surrounding society. Part of what determined their self-ascription was their prior experiences in their respective societies. Through ascription by self and others, belonging provides a framework that explains both their place in society and their individual willingness to forge their own path.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Samson, as the previous discussion showed, likewise forged his own path, but that was because his sense of belonging was primarily to himself.

#### 5.4.4 Doeg the Edomite

Amid the account of David's flight, the author turns his attention to the activities of Saul and an enigmatic episode that involves Saul's own interactions with one of Israel's neighbors. The episode of Saul and the priests of Nob (1 Sam 21:10 and 22:6-23), viewed retrospectively, serves to enhance David's legitimacy as king by further undermining the legitimacy of Saul.<sup>483</sup> Having already established a trajectory for Saul's delegitimization by his disobedience to Yahweh, the author escalates that delegitimization by implicating Saul with a yet more extreme offense — the slaughter of an entire family of Yahwistic priests.<sup>484</sup> The shocking nature of Saul's actions is highlighted by his own courtiers' refusal to follow his command. This episode presents the opportunity to demonstrate how belonging can offer a coherent explanation for the differing responses of the courtiers and the singular figure of Doeg, the Edomite.

From a literary perspective, Doeg's role in the narrative is that of the heartless villain. What is important for our purposes is how ethnic identity plays a role in the narrative and how belonging may offer additional insights into his revealing of David's activities and slaughter of Yahwistic priests and the people of their town. Within the

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<sup>483</sup> In addition to delegitimizing Saul, the Nob episode in the larger context of 1 Samuel functions as further fulfillment of the prophecy against Eli's house in 1 Sam 2:27-36, and it is a narrative thread to which the author returns in 1 Kgs 2:26-27. Klein points out the connections between the prophecy, the slaughter of the priests of Nob, the survival of Abiathar and his later removal. Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 222.

<sup>484</sup> Previous points along the trajectory also reflect a progression in the seriousness of the offense: illegitimate sacrifices (1 Sam 13:8-14), failure to impose the *herem* on the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15), attempted murder of David (1 Sam 18:8-11, 19:9-17).

world of the narrative, that Doeg serves Saul as a chief official is doubly suggestive.<sup>485</sup>

Saul was still willing to accept a non-Israelite as a chief official despite Saul engaging in military conflict with others among Israel's neighbors. Being a foreigner was not, *a priori*, a barrier to being a member of Saul's court. Whether or not this choice should be viewed as acceptable depends on which biblical perspective is in view. From the perspective of the Torah, Edomites should be respected as brothers (Deut 23:8). Beginning with David's wars and onward in the biblical chronology, Edomites were enemies to be subdued. Doeg, for his part, is willing to serve and shows himself more unconditionally loyal than Saul's other, Israelite officials.

Little is known about Doeg beyond his title. He is first introduced into the story by the notice that he was "detained before Yahweh" (1 Sam 21:8). What exactly was meant by this phrase remains unclear. Doeg's presence at the cult site is unexpected because he is not Israelite.<sup>486</sup> What can be said is that Doeg's non-Israelite origin did not prevent him from engaging with Israelite royal and religious institutions, nor did it prevent the author from portraying him as a high official under Saul without further comment or explanation.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Concerning Doeg's position "אביר הרעים אשר לשאול" Lozovyy considers alternative understandings including: a literal chief over the shepherds of Saul's sheep, a military commander, an emendation to "chief bodyguard," and a ruler. He dismisses the emendation as unnecessary but concludes that Doeg was perhaps a governor without excluding authority as a military commander. Lozovyy, 95-100.

<sup>486</sup> Lozovyy surveys possibilities ranging from restriction from participation in the cult to some form of ritual observance to professional business. Ibid., 90-95.

<sup>487</sup> If the author's motive was to imply something negative about Saul on account of his promotion of Doeg, then his notice of Saul's war with Edom does not make sense (1 Sam 14:47).

At the same time, the author's lack of comment should not be construed as acceptance or inclusion. The author deploys ethnic identity negatively in this episode for literary effect. Four times the text mentions that Doeg is an Edomite even when there was no necessity for doing so (1 Sam 21:8; 22:9, 18, 22). It can hardly be incidental that the person who has the role of the heartless villain is positioned as a foreigner. The repetition of Doeg's ethnic identity has the effect of being distancing language. While it performs the more basic function of more specifically identifying the person, it simultaneously emphasizes ethnic difference. The author makes it quite plain that the *Israelite* courtiers were unwilling to so much as harm the priests even at the order of the king, but the *Edomite* was willing to murder all of them himself. While the main point of the passage is to delegitimize Saul's rule, in the course of doing so, the author relies on the ethnic antipathy, perhaps hatred, of an Israelite or Judahite audience toward Edomites to sell the villainous nature of Doeg more effectively. He is, in short, making the villain of the story more unlikeable by casting him as a member of a hated ethnic group.<sup>488</sup> Unlike other narratives reviewed to this point, identity, rather than social location or normative values, seems to be the primary feature of Doeg's characterization in the story.

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<sup>488</sup> There is one possible qualification, and it is related to the plausibility of the story. If Saul were to succeed in committing the heinous crime of slaughtering priests, without killing them himself, the most obvious choice would be someone who does not share the set of normative values that consider Yahwistic priests sacrosanct. Someone in Israel who was not connected to its networks of belonging and the normative values that go with them would be a potential candidate for the task. Saul found that in a foreigner working as one of his officers. To that extent, Doeg *was* connected to one Israelite network of belonging. He was connected through his service to Saul, and he acted consistent with his sense of belonging in Israelite society. This, of course, does not in any way justify those actions.

#### 5.4.5 King David as a Traditional King

David's change in social location from fugitive and mercenary to king also came with significant changes in his attitudes toward Israel's neighbors. The details of the intra-Israelite struggle for the throne as well as the more incremental way that David eventually won it does not relate to our present concerns. Accordingly, the focus will be on how David viewed Israel's neighbors once he was able to claim rule over all of Israel. From the biblical perspective, the change in relationship was dramatic and immediate.

After the summary statement covering David's reign, David engages in extended warfare with Israel's neighbors beginning with the Jebusites and the Philistines.<sup>489</sup> The lone nonviolent interaction was with the more distant king of Tyre, Hiram (2 Sam 5:11-12). As his reign progressed, David turned his attention to Israel's other neighbors. The author's summary is worth quoting at length:

<sup>1</sup>After this David struck the Philistines and humbled them. David took Metheg-ammah from the hand of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup>He struck Moab, and he measured them off with a line, making them lie down on the ground. He measured off two lines to be put to death and one full line to be kept alive. The Moabites became David's servants and brought tribute. <sup>3</sup>David also struck Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. <sup>4</sup>David took from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers. David rendered unusable all the chariots but let remain from them 100 chariots.<sup>490</sup> <sup>5</sup>When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down

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<sup>489</sup> In the case of the Philistines, the Philistines are portrayed as initiating the conflict.

<sup>490</sup> The last two independent clauses of this verse are usually translated as if David hamstringed the chariot horses (NIV, ESV, NET, JPS). Indeed, the verb עָקַר in the Piel is normally used for hamstringing large animals to render them lame. The object of this verse and its parallel in 1 Chron 18:4, however, is *chariot* (רֶכֶב) not *horse* or similar. This combination of verb and object is unique to this passage and the parallel in Chronicles. The translation here relies on the object to infer the meaning of the verb rather than the other way around as in the modern translations above.

22,000 men of the Arameans. <sup>6</sup> Then David put garrisons in Aram Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David and brought tribute. Yahweh protected David wherever he went...

<sup>11</sup> These also the king, David, dedicated to Yahweh, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, <sup>12</sup> from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. <sup>13</sup> David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. <sup>14</sup> Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons. All Edom became David's servants. Yahweh protected David wherever he went. (2 Sam 8:1-6, 11-14)

The above is not the sole account of David's wars with others, but it is representative of the other narratives in the story of his life that depict his military conflicts with Israel's neighbors. A feature throughout these narratives is the absence of the belonging that was evident during the fugitive period of his life. In his new social location as king, the politics of belonging for David have shifted, and the close relationships with the Moabites and Philistines are now gone or unwanted.

As we consider the nature of and changes to David's sense of belonging, the literary aspects of his portrayal cannot be neglected. This literary presentation of David as king is consistent with that of many other kings of the ancient Near East. He engaged in campaigns of conquest in every direction. He defeats all of his enemies. After doing so, he engages in acts of dominance over and humiliation of the defeated people. They then serve him and bring him tribute. He accomplishes his victories as a consequence of divine favor and protection, a motif that is repeated several times (2 Sam 3:18; 5:10, 12; 7:1ff; 8:6, 14; 12:7-8; 22:1). In the discussion of ancient Egyptian views of their neighbors in Chapter 4, many of these motifs were present in those texts characterized by the predominance of royal ideology. The same could be said of Assyrian texts. The

biblical text, then, is presenting David as a traditional king who does the things that ancient kings typically do. Politically, his behavior and its portrayal are expected and normal.

#### 5.4.6 King David and Non-Israelites

Against this standard presentation of a traditional ancient king, there are elements in the narrative that suggest a more complex picture of his reign and the outworkings of the politics of belonging.<sup>491</sup> Early in his reign, David placed the Ark of the Covenant in the house of Obed-Edom from Gath (2 Sam 6:10). One of his closest counselors is Hushai the Archite who is called a רֵעָה דָּוִד “a friend of David” (2 Sam 15:37). Whether or not this designation is a title is unclear. Such is Hushai’s closeness to David that he willingly stayed behind during Absalom’s revolt to try to undermine Absalom’s decision-making. Although he is more famous for being murdered by David for his wife, Uriah the Hittite was listed among David’s top warriors (2 Sam 23:39). One of the main elements of the story of his eventual murder that exacerbates David’s guilt is Uriah’s conspicuous displays of loyalty to David and his fellow soldiers.

The Cherethites and the Pelethites (הַכֵּרֶתִי וְהַפִּלְתִּי) are also in King David’s close orbit. Though they are technically two groups, they appear as a set pair (2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kgs 1:38, 44). There is neither internal nor external evidence to

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<sup>491</sup> Firth takes a literary approach and contends, “Both Uriah the Hittite and Ittai the Gittite enable readers to evaluate David, whilst Ittai and Hushai the Archite provide guidance on what Yahweh is doing in ways that Israelites do not see.” David G. Firth, “Foreigners in David’s Court,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 254.

definitively identify the role of these two groups. The fact that they were subordinated to Benaiah son of Jehoiada does offer a clue. Benaiah's role was that of a trusted warrior of high rank, but he was not the commander of the army. That distinction belonged to Joab during the reign of David. Benaiah was also not subordinated to Joab which suggests he was not a part of the army's command structure. Instead, he was the leader of his own command — the Cherethites and Pelethites. The most likely possibility is that Benaiah led the king's bodyguard composed of foreign mercenaries drawn from the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

The reason for David relying on foreign mercenaries as his bodyguard is essentially the same as the reason why Doeg was the only one to carry out Saul's orders. In the complex overlapping networks of belonging in Israelite society, the belonging of the Cherethites and Pelethites would only connect to David. Being foreign mercenaries, they would have no allegiances or personal belonging to anyone else in Israel. The particulars of their social location meant that they felt a sense of belonging only to the person who paid them.

Another non-Israelite element closely attached to David during his reign is Ittai of Gath and his band. During Absalom's revolt, David the king also became once again David the fugitive. In the middle of this intra-Israelite and intra-familial struggle for the throne, the text portrays a moment where David and those most loyal to him are fleeing Jerusalem. Among those who flee with him, the most unexpected, even from David's point of view, is Ittai and the band who follow him. What makes Ittai and his band's appearance at this crucial moment in the story unexpected is that, since they are from



Philistine Gath, they seem to be very unlikely loyalists (2 Sam 15:18, 22). The band of exiles that includes six hundred men and their families does not have any obvious belonging to Israel or David (2 Sam 15:18-20, 22).<sup>492</sup> David tells them in v.20, “Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your place.”<sup>493</sup> You came yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us...?”<sup>494</sup> The words for “foreigner” (נכרי) and “exile” (גלה) used here are not ambiguous. David shows consciousness of both Ittai’s lack of belonging to the Israelites and his lack of place-belongingness. For this reason, he is surprised at their choosing to risk following him at this dangerous moment.

The reason for Ittai’s loyalty to David and David’s acceptance of that loyalty cannot be based on ethnic identity or normative values.<sup>495</sup> David explicitly recognizes that Ittai and his band are not one “us.” Royal ideology is not a likely explanation since it has almost exclusively led to war with Israel’s neighbors. Social location offers the best explanation. While David may be king and generally beholden to the normative values of royal ideology, Ittai and his band do not share the same social location as other Gittites.

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<sup>492</sup> Verse 22 elaborates that these 600 men had children with them. It seems reasonable that their wives were with them as well unless we are to imagine a group of 600 single fathers in the ancient world.

<sup>493</sup> The preposition before *place* is translated as a *mem* following the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Latin Vulgate rather than the *lamed* of the Masoretic Text.

<sup>494</sup> “Yesterday” in the text should be understood to mean “recently.” The alternative is to propose a scenario where Ittai and his band have the extremely unfortunate timing to arrive in Israel the day before David’s flight from Absalom.

<sup>495</sup> Tsumura ignores the issue entirely except to offer that Ittai’s men could not have come with David to Gath. David Toshio Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 536–37.

Based on the few details presented in the text, Ittai and his band are a *ḥabiru* band. They are geographically and socially dislocated. They are a relatively large armed group that has migrated, but it is not just a band of brigands. Their families are with them. They have a strong leader who appears to be the sole spokesperson for the group. These are the same features that have led scholars to conclude that David and Jephthah are the best literary representations of *ḥabiru* bands in the ANE.

Ittai and his band are presented as the mirror image of David's band during his fugitive period.<sup>496</sup> Just as David and his band of six hundred men lived in the territory of Gath under the sponsorship of Achish, Ittai and his band of six hundred Gittite men lived in the territory of Israel under the sponsorship of David. By analogy with David's acceptance by Achish even while Achish was hostile to Israel, Ittai's social location as a dislocated migrant allowed him and his group to be accepted by David even while David was openly hostile to the Philistines.

David's acceptance of Ittai and six hundred armed men was no small matter. This was a significant military force, and David would eventually rely on Ittai in the same way that Achish had intended to rely on David. When it came time to fight Absalom's army, Ittai and his men were mustered to join the fight. The trust that David places in Ittai is high. When the army was ordered, it was divided into three groups. One third was under the command of Joab, the commander of the entire army. The second was commanded by

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<sup>496</sup> Miller also sees a strong connection between these two times in David's life though she views the second episode as negative commentary on David. Virginia Miller, *A King and a Fool?: The Succession Narrative as a Satire*, vol. 179, Biblical Interpretation Series, 0928-0731 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), 148–49.

his brother Abishai, and the third was commanded by Ittai (2 Sam 18:2). Both Joab and Abishai were among David's closest and longest-standing associates.<sup>497</sup> David's trust in this "foreigner" was not abstract but had practical implications with very high stakes.

#### **5.4.7 Belonging and Other Approaches**

The image of David as a traditional king fits well not only with royal ideology but also with the religious ideology of the Former Prophets. The events of history are understood as being guided by Yahweh who rewards those who are loyal to him. Loyalty by Israelites and their neighbors alike is shown by keeping his covenant through obedience to his laws. Conversely, Yahweh punishes those who break his covenant and disobey his laws. Past scholarship has assumed that the laws in question are those found in some form of Deuteronomy. Later scholarship has demonstrated that, at some point, all of the blocks of text from Genesis-2 Kings were redacted together into the corpus dubbed the Primary History. If this understanding is correct, then any or all of the legal material in the Torah is available to provide the theological basis for loyalty to Yahweh. For instance, the Samson Cycle presumes the laws concerning the *nazir* in the book of Numbers which are not present in Deuteronomy. David for much of the narrative of his life was on the loyalty side of this theological standard, and so he enjoyed the benefits of Yahweh's protection.

Examined through the lens of ethnicity, David's behavior as a traditional king is consistent with an attitude toward Israel's neighbors that is rabidly xenophobic. Ethnic

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<sup>497</sup> Later tradition considers Joab, Abishai, and Asahel to be close relatives of David (1 Chron 2:13-16).

boundaries are presented as rigid and inflexible. His warfare is indiscriminate and not tied to any underlying wrong or offense. Except for the Philistine attack at the beginning of his reign, his actions were not defensive. Moreover, from this perspective, his xenophobic attitude is manifest in his wanton cruelty toward his defeated foes. Making your prisoners lie prostrate on the ground and then executing two-thirds of them by random selection with a measuring line seems to be a particularly calculated form of it.

These approaches, alone or in combination, do not easily account for the changes in his behavior or its inconsistencies. Royal ideology and ethnic hatred could easily account for the warfare and brutality but not the friendship and trust.<sup>498</sup> Yahwistic religious ideology does not offer a full explanation because not everyone who is treated well, such as Hiram, shared those normative values. Nor do we even know what normative values many of these people had. The text does not make that important. While one might advance a redactional explanation for the contrast, it must again be remembered that this complex of Davidic stories was ultimately redacted into the Primary History. At some point, someone decided that both images were consistent enough, by ancient standards, to remain as they are. A redactional explanation, then, does not really solve the problem either.

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<sup>498</sup> Kim observes that the Ittai episode is inconsistent with the tendency of the Deuteronomistic History to be hostile toward Israel's neighbors. The openness to foreigners is viewed as indicative of a postexilic date. This assumes the validity of the Deuteronomistic History as a hypothesis and only sees the issue through an ethnic lens. Daewook Kim, "Absalom's Rebellion and David's Flight (2 Sam 15): The Emergence of the Ideal King David," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 67, no. 1 (2023): 56, <https://doi.org/10.30965/25890468-06701002>.

The framework of belonging has the potential to offer a way forward. The lens of ethnicity is limited in that it only looks at one identity among several potential identities. The other approaches are similarly limited in that they only look at one aspect of the whole picture. With the three analytical dimensions of belonging, a more robust image of David can be constructed. Even this image, though, should be qualified as incomplete and imprecise. What belonging cannot offer is insight into any specific person's conscious rationale for their actions. It also does not fully integrate other economic, political, personal, or environmental forces that might be at play. Belonging offers insight into the complex social dynamics that are at work in the ways people connect to or exclude each other and the implications this has on social networks and group behavior.<sup>499</sup>

What immediately stands out for David is the change in his behavior corresponds to a major change in his social location. Additionally, with that change in social location, there is a corresponding change in both normative values and his networks of belonging. All three (social location, normative values, and networks of belonging) are intertwined. When he was a fugitive, he was more or less disconnected from his prior networks of belonging. At the same time, the coercive power of the normative values associated with those networks would have been weakened. David and his men were essentially left to decide what their normative values were. Accordingly, David chose to freely interact with and serve Israel's neighbors. At the same time, he used that freedom to harbor his lingering belonging to the Israelites.

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<sup>499</sup> This also includes the *perception* of connection or exclusion.

When David assumed the throne, the social forces at work in the politics of belonging were reversed. His social location changed, but this time, he became enmeshed in the dense network of belonging that surrounds a king. Networks of family, clan, and tribal affiliations would be at play. The various officials whose loyalty must be maintained must also be included. Then, there are various other constituencies such as the priests and land-owning classes that have deep connections to the monarchy. All of these would not only have their own interests, but they would also be socialized into cultural and religious norms of what a king ought to be (i.e. royal ideology). The expectations of these social norms would exert a strong coercive force on David or any occupant of the throne. This is all the more the case if it is surmised that David himself was socialized along with everyone else into accepting the prevailing royal ideology of his time.

Because of the drastic change in the politics of belonging, David the king behaved very differently than David the fugitive toward those non-Israelites who were previously his allies and with whom he had friendly relations. These former affiliations and loyalties would have been filtered through a new perspective strongly influenced by the normative values of royal ideology. Conforming to the image of a strong and successful king, he launched into wars of conquest and prevailed. The result is he received the things that kings desire most from their neighbors: control of their territory, the submission of their people, and the payment of tribute from their wealth.

In this way, the biblical text may be highlighting an aspect of the workings of royal ideology that may otherwise be unnoticed in the literary material concerning kings from other cultures. Namely, royal ideology does not operate in just one direction. During

the discussion of Egypt, a presupposition was that royal ideology was produced by the monarchy. It was conceived and propagated to advance its needs and interests. What David's story draws our attention to is that preexisting royal ideology may have as much influence on the king as on anyone else. As with David, kings may often be doing what they are because they have been socialized to believe that that is what a king ought to do. The prevailing political conditions in the kingdom may also require it. This behavior is then additionally filtered through the literary norms of their portrayal.

The question, then, is who was David? Whether we are to imagine the biblical text has created a merely literary figure or is the literary portrayal of a real person, identifying the social mechanisms of his change in attitude seems inadequate. It does not leave the impression of David, as the author would have us believe, of a strong and determined leader. Rather, at first glance, he seems to be an infinitely malleable person who passively reproduces the expectations of his social location and its normative values. To some extent this is true, but through each period of his life, he engages in behaviors that are inconsistent with his social locations and their normative values. As a fugitive, he still harbored belonging to the Israelites. As a king, he still harbored openness to non-Israelites such as Hushai, Uriah, the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and Ittai with his band. The text consistently characterizes David in a way that suggests there was a persistent difference between his personal feelings of belonging and the attitudes he must adopt to navigate the politics of belonging.

### 5.5.5 Summary of David's Attitudes Toward Israel's Neighbors

David across much of his life exhibited a complex and varied relationship to Israel's neighbors. He was, during different periods, hostile to Israel's neighbors, and he perpetrated violence against them with enthusiasm. At other times, he was willing to live with and serve those very same neighbors. The oscillations in these attitudes cannot be explained based on ethnic identity. Moreover, neither can politics, theology, redaction-criticism, nor an evaluation of self-interest adequately account for the particular choices that David made.

The framework of belonging, however, does move us significantly forward in explaining the portrayal of David's attitudes and behavior in 1-2 Samuel. Through the lens of belonging, we can look beyond the singular identity of ethnicity to the wider context of social locations and normative values. The discussion has shown that the most important determinant of David's attitudes and behavior toward Israel's neighbors was social location. Usually, the social location in question was his own, but in the case of Ittai's *ḥabiru* band, Ittai's social location was the more pertinent factor.

When David was firmly enmeshed in the networks of belonging in Israelite society, he was almost exclusively hostile to neighboring people groups, and he enthusiastically engaged in warfare against them. These qualities were expected of a rising champion, military commander, and king of Israel. They reflect the normative values of the royal ideology associated with these social locations. If viewed from the perspective of the work of the author, David was portrayed in a way that made him conform to the image of a successful king according to the normative values concerning



kingship that were widely held in the ANE. If viewed from the perspective of the world of the text, David's story makes apparent the ways royal ideology could influence the behavior of the king and not just be propagated by him. This is consistent with the discursive aspects of the way belonging has been theorized. People are not only shaping the narratives of life but are simultaneously being shaped by them.

When David was dislocated from the networks of belonging in Israelite society, he becomes open to developing new networks. Without the social coercion exerted by the normative values of his previous (Israelite) networks of belonging, David was free to create belongings to people and groups that would have been otherwise prohibited. For him, they were the Philistines and, to a lesser extent, the Moabites. The particular social location that he occupied, the leader of a *habiru* band, offered especially wide latitude in forging connections beyond accepted social boundaries in the home society. *Habiru* bands themselves were disreputable due to their reputation for raiding, so they incurred no additional social penalty for making disreputable choices from the societies from which they were already dislocated.

David's behavior and attitudes, seen in this light, may create the impression that he was merely a passive puppet of his social location. There were a number of instances during both established and dislocated periods of his life, however, where he acted independently of his social location and made choices in line with his own values. The first of these was his secret defense of the Israelites even while a fugitive who had been rejected, and sometimes betrayed, by Israelite society. The second is many relationships with non-Israelites that he maintained while king. During the period in his life when he

engaged in the most hostility to Israel's neighbors, the details of the text suggest he was being advised by them and protected by them as his bodyguard. Finally, during one of the most perilous and fragile moments of his reign, David accepted a (likely *habiru*) band of six hundred, armed Philistine men with their families into his entourage. He demonstrated his high level of trust in these Philistines and their leader, Ittai, by making Ittai the commander of one of the three divisions of his army. He was placed on the same level as Joab and Abishai, two of David's closest and longest-standing associates.

The above only begins to capture how the different analytical dimensions of belonging can be seen to operate in the narrative. To return to the subject of Ittai and his band of Philistines, one way of evaluating the situation would be to see it, as indicated above, as an example of David still being willing to be open to the Israelites' neighbors though the normative values of royal ideology should lead him to hostility. Another way of evaluating it is that Ittai and his band being dislocated from the Philistines made them acceptable, from the perspective of royal ideology, to be welcomed rather than attacked. They were disconnected from belonging to the polity of Gath and so were available to create new belongings just as David did earlier. Whether David, Doeg, Achish, or Ittai, each character in the narrative exhibits their own sense of belonging while also navigating the politics of belonging.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

### 6.1 Summary

The focus of this study has been on three case studies in the Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. The historical narratives in this corpus of texts are rich with interactions between the Israelites and their neighbors. These interactions exhibit an extremely wide range of attitudes. Not only is the range wide but these attitudes are at times seemingly inconsistent or even contradictory. With behaviors ranging from murder to marriage, the Israelites in the Former Prophets cannot be reduced to any single set of motives or perspectives. Sometimes the very same person or people are engaged in both extremes of behavior. The problem arises that a coherent explanation for this wide range and inconsistency is lacking.

Any attempt to find a coherent explanation immediately encounters a host of methodological problems. Political and economic explanations are helpful. They can shed light on interactions between people groups, polities, or regions. They do not, however, have an adequate means of dealing with individual behaviors. More promising is the recognition that ethnicity likely plays an important role in both group and individual behavior. Unfortunately, theories of ethnicity are not without problems too. Not least of these is whether the application of the concept of ethnicity is appropriate at all to the ancient world. Another would be how to draw conclusions about ethnic identity with the very limited and incomplete data that is available from archaeology and texts.

Archaeological and textual evidence each come with their own problems. Archaeological evidence can help identify material culture areas and variations in

material culture, but without the emic perspective afforded by texts, it is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to discern what aspects of material culture represent ethnic boundaries. In addition, there are ethnic groups whose material culture is identical to that of their neighbors, so they are archaeologically indistinguishable. Those who study texts have the opposite problem. They have the benefit of the emic perspective of a person or group, but they often lack the means to discern to what degree that perspective corresponds to any external reality. Ideally, a combination of archaeological data and texts would provide the necessary evidence to adequately discern and discuss an ethnic group, but even this proves problematic as the case of the ancient Israelites illustrates. These problems are not isolated to biblical studies and archaeologists, however. Scholars in related fields and those who study other ancient people groups have wrestled with them as well.<sup>500</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 2, a few tendencies have emerged across these various fields of study. The first is the consensus to accept the validity and heuristic value of the concept of ethnicity for the ancient world. This consensus has been reached despite persistent difficulties in defining what exactly ethnicity is. Second, there is also a general consensus among scholars of the ANE to abandon both primordialism and instrumentalism as theories of ethnicity.<sup>501</sup> Primordialism assumes that ethnicity is somehow intrinsic to the person.<sup>502</sup> It is something one is born into, and it is

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<sup>500</sup> These include, but are not limited to, those who study the Philistines, the Phoenicians, and the Canaanites as well as Egyptologists and Assyriologists.

<sup>501</sup> Exceptions, of course, exist, but these are rare in the literature reviewed.

<sup>502</sup> The three main theories of ethnicity (primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism) were discussed in Chapter 3.

unchangeable. Instrumentalism moves to the opposite extreme. It assumes that ethnicity is not intrinsic but is a structure or strategy for gaining advantages in the social environment. Both have proven to be overly simplistic. Scholars usually rely instead on the work of Fredrik Barth. Barth's constructivist model of ethnic identity emphasizes that ethnic identity is a social construction and that it is mainly defined by its boundaries, not its content. While this has been a laudable advance over prior primordialist and instrumentalist theories of ethnicity, the result in practice has been that, without sufficient methodological controls, Barth's work can be and has been used to support sometimes opposite conclusions.

Another tendency among specialists who study the various people groups in the ANE is to be inconsistent in their handling of ethnic groups. The inconsistency occurs between the ethnic group that is the focus of discussion and those that are peripheral to the discussion. The people group under discussion is handled with nuance and care. Very often, they are perceived to be heterogeneous in composition and their motives complex. Their boundaries may evolve and shift in different periods. At the same time, however, the same work will treat peripheral groups superficially and monolithically. The most common way this appears in the literature is an expression such as, "X ethnic group was the perennial enemy of Y ethnic group" (the one being analyzed). This misses the complex ways ethnic groups interacted with their neighbors as well as the diachronic changes in those interactions. It also misses the opportunity to address their inconsistencies. The main exception is Loprieno's literary critical approach, *topos* and

mimesis, which attempts to address the discrepancy between literary portrayals of Egypt's neighbors and the reality.

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, belonging offers a more robust analytical framework than theorizations of ethnicity alone. Certainly, a constructivist approach to ethnicity has great value, but it is hindered by giving focus and pride of place to identity and just one identity at that. Belonging, as theorized by Nira Yuval-Davis and others, may be defined as an affective construct that includes feelings of security, familiarity, and community. There is a feeling of connectedness. A person's sense of belonging in its fullest expression is the sense of being "at home." Belonging can be examined through an intersectional analysis along three dimensions: identities, social locations, and normative values. These analytical dimensions are framed as plurals in recognition of the reality that people do not have only one identity, social location, or normative value. Each of us has multiple identities, social locations, and normative values. Which are significant for determining someone's attitudes or behavior is contextually dependent. Different aspects of a person's sense of belonging emerge as significant or submerge in different times, places, and social situations. Moreover, these three dimensions are not just useful for investigating an individual's interior perspective on where they feel they belong. These dimensions can be used to analyze the exterior social reality a person or group must negotiate in the politics of belonging. A person or group's 'belongings' are mutually constitutive in how they are perceived and interact with society at large. The analytical framework that belonging provides permits analysis of a wider variety of factors without

*a priori* privileging one, such as ethnic identity, over others. It can also readily handle both individual and group-level dynamics.

Belonging, by its very nature, does not occur in isolation. The Israelites' attitudes toward their neighbors arose in the context of the regional and supra-regional socio-economic networks of which they were a part. It is, therefore, important to situate those attitudes in their ancient context. Do other ancient cultures exhibit the same variation in attitudes and behavior that can be observed in the biblical material? Do they occur for similar reasons? With few inscriptions available from the southern Levant, and few, if any, that are relevant to the present study, it is necessary to look further afield to cultures that have left a substantial body of textual and/or iconographic evidence. Of the cultures that could be examined, ancient Egypt and ancient Assyria offered the most fertile opportunities to investigate their attitudes toward their neighbors. In addition to texts and iconography, both had extensive contact with their neighbors, and the extant texts often deal with their respective culture's interactions with them.

Egypt, discussed in Chapter 4, provides a more useful case study than Assyria for several reasons. It was regionally significant throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages and geographically much closer to Israel than Assyria. Egypt's empire extended into the Levant which only ended in Iron I. Even after the end of its empire in the Levant, pharaohs would continue to conduct military campaigns there. Some of these, Shishak/Sheshonq, Tirhakah/Taharqa, and Necho II, would be mentioned in the Former Prophets itself. The heartland of Assyria was much more distant, though its culture and empire reached to and beyond the southern Levant in the Iron Age.

What makes Egypt especially useful for study is the content and variety of the surviving material. It is the Egyptians who most often expressed their attitudes toward their neighbors. Those expressions also come to us in a greater number of genres and contexts than those of Assyria. The mention of foreigners in Assyrian texts tends to come primarily from administrative texts or royal inscriptions. In Egypt, royal inscriptions and iconography proclaim the greatness of the king. Religious texts and iconography proclaim the greatness of the gods. We may also add works of literature and items from domestic contexts. Thus, Egypt offers the notable advantage of a greater range of perspectives than what is available from the Assyrian empire.

Egyptian texts and iconography revealed certain key features. On the surface level, Egyptian attitudes toward their neighbors were usually framed in terms of ethnic identity. Specifically, they often used a set of three stereotyped categories for foreigners (Asiatics, Cushites, and Libyans) that could collectively represent all non-Egyptians. Together with Egyptians, these were the so-called “four races” that stood for all humankind. The Egyptians were aware of specific people groups and made use of specific designations where it suited them, but when it did not, they relied on these stereotyped categories.

Below the surface, other factors were driving the shape that particular expressions about Egypt’s neighbors took. Royal monumental inscriptions and related iconography took on the character that they did because they strongly reflected the normative values of royal ideology. Among the analytical dimensions of belonging, normative values evaluate other belongings, so royal ideology evaluated foreigners in light of the imperative of



promoting the greatness of the king. The greatness of the king is, in part, constructed and magnified by successful military campaigns and heroic exploits on the battlefield. For Egypt in particular, this also entailed displays of supernatural power (at least rhetorically). In order to have such exploits there must necessarily be enemies these exploits are performed against. Egypt's neighbors became the logical choice to fill the role of wicked villains. For this group of works, normative values produced for the benefit of a specific social location determined the treatment of foreigners in them.

Religious texts and iconography, like the Book of Gates, were characterized by strong universalist themes. Foreigners were included in the beneficence of the gods on an equal basis with the Egyptians. As with those more strongly characterized by royal ideology, religious ideology was the primary force behind these texts and iconography rather than identity. Religious ideology's normative values promoted the greatness of Egypt's gods. Magnifying the gods was best served by rhetorically deploying foreigners in a way that was the complete opposite of royal ideology. The greatness of the gods was established by leaving nothing in the created order, including foreigners, out of their domain or the reach of their power. For this reason, foreigners were included among those cared for and provided for by the gods as well as those who would enter the afterlife under their protection.

The material culture left behind by non-Egyptians living in Egypt or areas under its control tells a very different story than either the rhetoric of royal or religious ideology. The examples reviewed included the tombs of Vizier 'Aper-El, Prince Heqanefer, and Viceroy Huy along with the stele of Terura and Arbura. They reflect the

ability of non-Egyptians to be accepted and succeed in Egyptian society. They not only succeeded, but they appear to have done so without attempting to erase their foreignness, at least not entirely. As in the previous categories, it was not ethnic identity that proved the most significant. In these cases, social location mattered more than anything else.

Most notable of all in the effort to situate the historical narratives of the Former Prophets in their ancient context are two classic works of Egyptian literature, the Tale of Sinuhe and the Report of Wenamun. As narrative literature that has a historical character, they most resemble the narratives of the Former Prophets of all of the Egyptian works surveyed. Both of these works are characterized by the influence of a distinct set of normative values. For the Tale of Sinuhe, it is suffused with royal ideology, but for the Report of Wenamun, religious ideology informs the values of the protagonist and, to a lesser extent, the author. Nevertheless, they both mix plainly ideological content with elements that are designed to give the story historical realism. The authors of these respective stories were successful in this regard to such a degree as to spark debates about whether they are narrative remembrances of real events or purely fictitious.

The elements of historical realism defy the negative tropes of foreigners found in royal inscriptions and the blanket universalism of religious ideology. Instead, these elements convey images of Egypt's neighbors that in many ways are more in agreement with the window into lived experience given through texts and iconography where ideology is less prominent. What mattered most for the behaviors and attitudes of the characters in the stories was not ethnic identity but a person's social locations and other identities. Wenamun was a minor temple official of a declining empire. What success he

meets is directly connected to his ability to secure funds from Egypt. Sinuhe was a dislocated migrant and a respected former official of the royal court. Sinuhe became attached to the family of a local Asiatic ruler and later returned to the court. The Asiatics show deference, independence, or contempt depending on the relative difference in power between their social location and that of the protagonist.

At the same time, both of these stories periodically allowed normative values to operate in parallel to or in the background of the other two analytical dimensions. Sinuhe is characteristically told with a firm attention to royal ideology, and it is often placed in the mouths of the various characters. Sinuhe's sense of belonging was always to Egypt and the royal court, so he jumps at the chance to return with scarcely a look backward. Significantly, this is the "happily ever after" that the story has been moving towards from the beginning and provides a satisfying ending for the ancient Egyptian audience. As was shown with Rameses II's Qadesh inscription and also with Sinuhe, place-belongingness was especially important in ancient Egypt. The Report of Wenamun's religious ideology is often proclaimed by the protagonist and sometimes by supporting characters, but it is difficult to tell how the surviving parts of the story glorify Amun of Thebes. Amun's chief advocate in the protagonist comically fails repeatedly. For this reason, the religious ideology of the story, while pronounced, has a more ambiguous quality than the royal ideology of the Tale of Sinuhe.

Belonging provides a means of coherently integrating and explaining the kinds of radically divergent data that ancient Egyptian texts and iconography present. It begins to make sense of how the extreme exclusion of foreigners in royal propaganda can coexist

with the extreme inclusion of the very same people in religious texts. Different sets of normative values were operating in their respective spheres of political and cultural influence. Belonging can integrate both with a lived experience in ancient Egypt that was far more accepting and complex than either royal or religious ideology would indicate. Whereas normative values took priority in shaping the rhetoric of the king and Egyptian religion, social locations and identities were more influential in the course of everyday life.

Chapter 5 returned to the historical narratives of the Former Prophets. This study considered the Rahab/Jericho narrative, the Samson cycle, and the life of David as case studies. These three cases within this, still very large, corpus were selected for a variety of reasons. The most salient of them is that, in each case, the extremes of attitude and behavior that can be observed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible are present in these stories.

The Rahab/Jericho narrative in Joshua 2 and 6 is the individual story of Rahab interwoven with the larger, corporate-focused story of the destruction of Jericho. The contrasts in the two parts of the narrative are stark. The Israelites spare Rahab and her family at the same time they are slaughtering everyone and everything else in her city. How can these two extremes be integrated? Can they be integrated? Other analytical lenses can explain some of the narrative but not all of it.

There are several interpretations that are based on literary and ideological analyses.<sup>503</sup> One perspective is that the many, strong allusions to the life of Moses

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<sup>503</sup> The outline of the literary and ideological analyses below closely follows the survey of Tikva Frymer-Kensky which captured several of the main interpretations of the Rahab narrative. Frymer-Kensky, 2006.

suggest that the book of Joshua is meant to present Joshua as “the second Moses.”<sup>504</sup>

With reference to the Rahab/Jericho stories, the sending of spies is a “narrative analogy” to the sending of the spies in the book of Numbers.<sup>505</sup> The hiding of the spies is meant to evoke, through the use of a rare verb, the hiding of the infant Moses. Rahab’s deception of the king of Jericho places Rahab in the company of the midwives who lied to Pharaoh after saving Israelite infant boys. The recommendation to the spies that they hide in the hills is thought to be analogous to Yahweh’s messengers telling Lot and his family to leave Sodom and go to the mountains.<sup>506</sup> The scarlet cord that prevented death coming to Rahab’s family within her house alludes to the lamb’s blood that preserved the Israelites during the last plague on Egypt. According to Frymer-Kensky, in this view Rahab is “a new Israel.”<sup>507</sup>

There are also two contradictory perspectives concerning the “ban” (חרם). The first sees the Rahab narrative as qualifying and moderating the ban. While the ban as laid out in Deuteronomy is nearly unqualified, the Rahab and Gibeonite narratives carve out exceptions for inhabitants who show loyalty or reverence to Yahweh and “should be superseded by issues of justice and mercy.”<sup>508</sup> Additionally, Rahab’s survival could be

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid, 210-211.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 212. Though I find the analogy to be much weaker here, the anomalous use of the term המלאכים for Joshua’s spies is suggestive (Josh 6:25). The Septuagint uses “spies” rather than “messengers” or “angels.”

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>508</sup> Frymer-Kensky, 215. Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 88. David M. Howard, *Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1998).

seen as another example of the kinds of reversals of expectations that are a repeated motif in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. the choice of second-born sons instead of the firstborn).<sup>509</sup> A negative appraisal would see the spies' dealings with Rahab as the first step in a long road toward abandoning Yahweh and moral decline. The survival of Rahab and her family is all the more significant because it occurs at the very beginning of the conquest of Canaan. The Israelites waited no time at all to begin deviating from Yahweh's commands.<sup>510</sup> Another view is that Rahab's function is that of an oracle or prophet.<sup>511</sup>

The lens of ethnicity with a view toward xenophobia can easily explain the annihilation of the inhabitants of Jericho, but the same cannot be said of the Rahab narrative. She presumably belonged to the same ethnic group(s) as the other people of Jericho, yet she was spared. Politically, the destruction of Jericho served the expansionist aims of the Israelites, but again, sparing a prostitute does not serve that end. The theological lens has potential in that the destruction of Jericho and the deaths of its inhabitants were given a religious basis. Rahab made the gold standard of Yahwistic confessions to the spies, so, to that extent, it accounts for both Jericho's destruction and her salvation from the Israelite perspective. What the theological lens does not account for is why Rahab would betray her city in the first place.

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<sup>509</sup> L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 34–35.

<sup>510</sup> Harris notes both the positive and negative appraisals without committing to either position. J. Gordon Harris, Cheryl A. Brown, and Michael S. Moore, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000).

<sup>511</sup> Robert L. Hubbard, *Joshua*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 132. Frymer-Kensky, 213.

The explanation for the escape of Rahab and her family from death at the hands of the Israelites can be explained by an intersectional analysis of both sides of the story. From Rahab's side, the analysis in Chapter 5 has shown that Rahab was triply marginalized within her own society. She was at the intersection of her identity as a woman, her social location as a prostitute, and her (likely) social location as lower class. On each of these counts, especially as a prostitute, she would have experienced some form of exclusion. According to Yuval-Davis, the combined effects of the intersection of these axes of social power are not additive. They are mutually constitutive and reinforcing. One indication of the degree of Rahab's exclusion is that she lived in the literal margin of her community, the city wall. As the object of such exclusion and alienation by the people of her own city, she would likely have felt little or no sense of belonging to the people of Jericho. In that light, her choice to betray them to secure her own life and that of her family is entirely understandable.

On the other side of the story, the analysis in Chapter 5 has also shown that Rahab from the Israelite point of view is still triply marginalized. She would have experienced exclusion as both a woman and a prostitute, but in the world of the biblical text, her lower-class social location would have been less relevant. The third axis of marginalization would have been her identity as a Canaanite. From the standpoint of the canonically preceding Torah, she should have been viewed both within the world of the story and by an ancient Israelite/Judahite reader as the epitome of Canaanite sinners and among the most worthy to be devoted to destruction. Unlike the others in Jericho, Rahab

through the importunity of the spies was able to establish a connection to the Israelites' networks of belonging.

While she was marginalized along the dimensions of identity and social location, this study has demonstrated that she managed to establish a connection with the sense of belonging of the Israelites in the dimension of normative values. She did this through the practical action of saving the spies and also through her confession. To begin with the latter, her expression of faith in Yahweh, his saving actions, and his promises connect to the heart of the normative values expressed throughout the Primary History. Since there is often not a sharp distinction between religion and politics, the saving of the spies could be understood as an act of political loyalty that made concrete the theological loyalty she expressed in her confession. Significantly, in the framework of belonging, it is normative values that evaluate other belongings.<sup>512</sup> Rahab, then, made a connection to the Israelites in the very dimension of belonging that judges whether she should belong. It is in this way that Rahab is able to completely reverse expectations and eventually be incorporated into Israelite society while the other inhabitants of Jericho were killed.

The Samson cycle embodies the extremes in Israelite attitudes toward their neighbors in the person of its protagonist. Samson shows a keen predilection for Philistine women even as he shows an equally keen disposition to slaughter Philistine men. His story literally includes both marriage to and the murder of the same neighboring ethnic group. The events and social relationships in the cycle may be accounted for

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<sup>512</sup> This was discussed in Chapter 3.



through a combination of Samson's sense of belonging and the politics of belonging between the Israelites and the Philistines.

The analysis in this study revealed that a central feature of Samson's behavior is his conspicuous lack of belonging to nearly everyone. At no point does he express any significant concern for any people group whether it was the Israelites, Danites, his clan, or the people of his own family. This is a remarkable characteristic for a judge whose primary role is to deliver the Israelites from their enemies. The closest Samson comes to expressing a sense of belonging to a group is his differing responses to the Philistines and the Judahites. He resolves conflicts with the Philistines through bloodshed. He resolved a conflict with the Judahites through negotiation.

Even narrowing the scope to his own immediate family and the women that he sexually pursued, Samson demonstrates very little sense of belonging. He rather roughly rejected his parents' counsel to not marry a Philistine woman. During the process of negotiating the marriage, he causes his parents to become ritually unclean without bothering to tell them. His behavior is such that the narrator feels compelled to absolve them from wrongdoing in the eyes of the reader. Samson did not care enough to protect his Philistine wife from retaliation by her people. He did not even show the minimal care of avoiding taking actions that would endanger her. He only cared enough to become physically intimate with her and, later, to avenge her death. The prostitute in Gaza only briefly appears in the story, and he spends only part of a night with her. Delilah, however, is the only person in the story that Samson is said to have loved, yet how far this extended cannot be determined because she was the agent of his downfall.

When looking beyond identities to social locations and normative values, there is little to discern there as well. The author says nothing and implies little about Samson's social location. As to normative values, there is an abundance of Yahwistic religious ideology expressed in the story, but it is confined almost entirely to the author and Samson's parents. Samson's own approach to Yahweh is utilitarian. He prays twice, once to satisfy his physical thirst and once to satisfy his thirst for revenge. Otherwise, Samson demonstrates almost no concern for Yahweh and pointed indifference to keeping his commands, especially the rules for the *nazir*.

The extremes of Samson's behavior may be attributed to the fact that his sense of belonging was ultimately to himself. Thus, his normative values were his desires: food, sex, and revenge. These he attended to consistently and with great energy. He allowed no one to divert him from them without exacting a heavy price. Meanwhile, he demonstrated only superficial concern or connection to other people. In short, Samson's behavior was completely self-absorbed. He married a Philistine young woman because his passions drove him in that direction, and all other considerations, including his parents and ethnicity, fell by the wayside. Samson visited a prostitute and maintained his relationship with Delilah for the same reasons. He murdered Philistine men and sacrificed his own life because his anger and desire for revenge drove him to those as well.

For those around Samson, this study demonstrated the dominant feature of the politics of belonging between the Israelites and the Philistines besides ethnic identity was social location. More than once in his presentation of the political situation in the Samson cycle, the author reminds the reader that the Philistines dominated the Israelites. This

power imbalance creates situations, such as the Philistine incursion into Judah in pursuit of Samson, in which the Israelites feel powerless to resist. Thus, the Judahite elders, who are excluded from the Philistines based on ethnic identity but suffer from a disadvantage in power in their social location, choose to appease the Philistines. On the other hand, they feel free to sharply reprove Samson for his behavior because he is a fellow Israelite, and they have a power advantage in the relationship. The unequal distribution of power may also be at work in the marriage episode. Because Israelites were in an inferior position, marriage to an Israelite may not have been viewed by the Philistine family as a threat. For the same reason, Samson's parents had a strong negative reaction to the union. The Philistines were a threat, so the Israelites needed to maintain strong boundaries to resist that threat. Their expression of dislike may have been in terms of ethnic identity, but the root cause was social location.

The last of the case studies was the life of David and what his interactions and attitudes toward Israel's neighbors reveal. His life as portrayed in the Former Prophets covers more time and a wider variety of interactions than the previous cases.<sup>513</sup> A distinctive characteristic of his portrayal is that he does not adopt one attitude toward the Israelites' neighbors consistently or permanently. It shifts back and forth through most of the account. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, these changes occur not because of shifting attitudes toward particular ethnic groups as such but his changing social locations.

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<sup>513</sup> His portrayal in the Psalms and the Chronicles falls outside of the scope of this study.

The author frequently cultivates the image of David as the champion of Israel against its neighboring enemies. This begins with his famous youthful confrontation with the Philistine, Goliath. He subsequently earns his reputation as a military commander in battles with the Philistines, inspiring the women to sing, “Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” Additionally, his reported speech in the Goliath episode and his response to Saul’s demand of one hundred Philistine foreskins suggest David does not just kill the Philistines but does so with enthusiasm. His story to this point indicates his belonging is to the Israelites based on ethnic identity, and his attitude toward their neighbors is one of xenophobic hostility. Granted the inevitability, from the author’s and the reader’s perspective, of his eventual ascension to the throne, it would be reasonable to expect David to continue on this path of unremitting hostility.

During the fugitive period of his life, however, David’s behavior changes dramatically. This is due to the corresponding dramatic change in his social location. He has moved from a privileged social insider as a hero, military commander, and son-in-law to the king to a political and social outcast. David is an outlaw and a fugitive. As argued in Chapter 5, it is important to understand the characteristics of his social location. David is portrayed as having a *habiru* band form around him. *Habiru* were dislocated migrants that formed into bands that were sometimes settled while others moved around. They were known and disliked in antiquity for their propensity to engage in the raiding of settlements. In this new, socially disconnected role, the coercive power of his prior networks of belonging dissipated, and David was free to act out his own normative values. At this intersection of normative values and social location, he ignored identity

and quickly developed very favorable relationships with the same Philistines with whom he had previously fought.

The analysis in Chapter 5 has shown that it is possible to observe in the biblical account that belonging is operating in two different ways. At the group level, David is dealing with the politics of belonging as he navigates his way through his relationships with different collectivities. His solution to his problem of being a political outcast and leader of an independent warband was to become a mercenary in service to Achish, the king of Gath. Rejected from the networks of belonging in Israel, he chose to connect to the Philistine networks of belonging for the ongoing support and political protection that he needed. To return to the definition of belonging, he found in Philistine service security for his group and something akin to a feeling of being “at home” in Ziklag. On a personal level, though Israel’s neighbors were often his benefactors and Israelites his genuine enemies, David maintained his sense of belonging to the Israelites. He would help them, especially his fellow Judahites, and lie about it to Achish. Despite appearances from the Philistine point of view, he never severed his ties to the Israelites.

If one were to imagine that David’s fugitive period caused him to experience a new-found appreciation of Israel’s neighbors, his reign as king would quickly dispel the thought. He engages in campaigns of military conquest against all of his surrounding neighbors including those who had previously helped him. Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and Arameans were all conquered or subdued. The text is particularly graphic in its account of the execution of Moabite prisoners of war. He dominated his enemies and collected their tribute. In sum, David is given the standard

portrayal of a highly successful ancient king.<sup>514</sup> At the literary level, the particular characteristics selected for inclusion and the manner of their presentation draw on the normative values of royal ideology.<sup>515</sup>

From a viewpoint internal to the story, though, David's radical about-face on his attitude toward Israel's neighbors should be connected to his radical change in social location. Whereas before he was free to navigate the politics of belonging as he saw fit, as king, David is enmeshed in the center of the dense networks of belonging in Israelite society. The people in those networks have been socialized to have certain expectations of how a king should behave. In other words, they have been socialized to accept a version of royal ideology. More than this, David himself has been socialized along with everyone else to accept this royal ideology. David acts the way he does because this is how he is expected to act as a king. Monarchs do not just propagate normative values that advance their interests. They are also influenced by them.

Even so, this renewed image of David as Israel's champion is inconsistent. Non-Israelites were an important part of his court. The Cherethites and Pelethites served some significant function in his kingdom, most likely as his bodyguard. Hushai the Archite was his "friend." Whether this is a designation of David's genuine affection toward Hushai or

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<sup>514</sup> While the titles and other details may be different, little has changed in modern times. Leaders who are successful in war, or can portray themselves as such, enjoy immense popularity.

<sup>515</sup> The exploration of the details of Israelite royal ideology are beyond the scope of this study, but it should be observed that it is not identical to the royal ideology of New Kingdom Egypt. The most striking difference is the idea that pharaoh had divine power and was deified after death which is lacking in Israel. For this reason, Israelite kings did not need to claim supernatural feats for themselves. Allen, 31.

more likely a title at court, Hushai was close to him. Uriah the Hittite, before David had him murdered, was a devoted member of his elite soldiers. During one of his most difficult times, the Absalom revolt, non-Israelites were among his most loyal and effective supporters. A *habiru* band of six hundred Philistines from Gath led by Ittai followed David from their exile into his. On David's side, he showed remarkable trust in this band by making Ittai the leader of one of the three divisions of the army that he sent to fight Absalom. For Ittai and his band, their social location was the mirror image of David and his band's position with Achish, except they were not being sent to fight other Philistines.

This study has demonstrated that a distinction should be made between how David navigates the politics of belonging and his personal sense of belonging. In the politics of belonging, David conducted himself in all the ways expected of a successful king. He conquered and subdued the neighboring kingdoms. He acted in ways intended to permanently prevent their resistance to his rule. He exacted tribute from their possessions. He generally satisfied the demands of royal ideology. During his reign, however, he continued to accept non-Israelites as important members of his court and military. The complexity of David's relations with Israel's neighbors, then, may be understood in terms of the interplay between ethnic identity, changes in social location, and the normative values of royal ideology. Furthermore, this interplay is operating simultaneously at both the level of the politics of belonging and his personal sense of belonging.

Belonging has been demonstrated to be a productive theoretical framework for the analysis of ancient texts and iconography. In both the Egyptian and biblical material, contradictions and inconsistencies could be explained coherently when the scope of analysis was widened beyond ethnicity to include other identities, social locations, and normative values. This approach does not exclude ethnicity, politics, economics, psychology, or other analytical approaches. Quite to the contrary, these are legitimate and useful approaches, but their explanatory power is limited by the relative narrowness of their scope.

As anticipated by the theorization of Yuval-Davis, different dimensions of belonging were relevant in different circumstances. For some texts, normative values in the form of royal or religious ideology were the reason they took the particular shape that they did. Their differences could be attributed to differences in the underlying ideology. The stark contrast between Egyptian royal monumental inscriptions and the Book of Gates, for example, can be explained in this manner. The conquests of David and their portrayal reflect royal ideology at work. The ability of Rahab to successfully cross over and be accepted by the Israelites was accomplished on the basis of Yahwistic religious ideology.

Social locations have been shown to be an extremely important factor in the inter-ethnic behaviors that were discussed. Social location is why 'Aper-El, an Asiatic or descendant of Asiatics, could rise to the position of vizier in ancient Egypt. He was intimately connected to the royal palace from his childhood. Rahab's triply marginalized social location makes her betrayal of her city more understandable. David's changing



attitudes toward Israel's neighbors approximately track changes in his social location. The differing experiences and attitudes that Sinuhe and Wenamun had among the Asiatics had much to do with differences in social location: theirs, the Asiatics, and Egypt's. The dual and seemingly competing images of Heqanefer likely stem from the complexities of his social location in the hierarchies of both the Cushites and the Egyptians.

The significance of normative values and social locations in these interactions of different people with ethnic others does not eliminate the relevance of identities. Identities in the cases discussed in this study tended to play a secondary role or a starting point rather than a primary motivator of behavior. For Samson, the difference between resolving conflict by negotiation or homicide was ethnic identity. The reason for the conflict in the first place comes back to his sense of belonging to — himself — and the consequent imperative to gratify his desires. Terura succeeded as an Asiatic in Egypt because of his social location as a soldier, but he did not attempt to hide his Asiatic identity. The dual images of Heqanefer just mentioned were dual representations of his ethnic identity. Doeg's role as the heartless villain who slaughters priests centers his ethnic identity as an Edomite. Ethnic identity was the starting point for David's default loyalties. He is portrayed as having unconditional loyalty to the Israelites, but his loyalty to non-Israelite polities, though not prohibited, was highly circumstantial based on his current social location.

David's life also illustrates the complex behaviors that can be produced by the concurrent interaction of a person's sense of belonging and their efforts to negotiate the

politics of belonging in the societies that they inhabit. Something of the same phenomenon can be seen in the Tale of Sinuhe. Both protagonists' sense of belonging to their home and their people even when they were, or felt themselves to be, outcast remained constant. This constancy is literarily important for the arc of their characters and personally important within the world of the story because ultimately both protagonists return "home" in triumph. "Home" here is being used in the broad, mostly affective, sense used in the definition of belonging above. It is only with geographic and social distance from the place where they felt at home and a radical change in social location that opens the possibility of developing new identities and social locations with people who would otherwise be disdained. Within the story, only as long as and only to the degree that these were salient did either Sinuhe or David accommodate himself to these other people groups *as a group*.

Where David diverges from Sinuhe is his attitude toward individual members of neighboring people groups. Sinuhe's relationship with individual Asiatics was the same as his relationship with the group — situational and contingent. David, on the other hand, maintained substantial relationships with non-Israelites within his kingdom and for the duration of his reign. He maintained these relationships long after he had returned "home." The difference may speak to the difference in the final social location of the protagonists and the way all of the works of literature reviewed are designed to give the story historical realism even as they freely mixed in royal and religious ideology. Sinuhe ended up as an esteemed courtier. David became king. The author of 1-2 Samuel may be recognizing that kings would have had foreigners in their court.

To be clear, this does not assume the accuracy or historicity of these works.<sup>516</sup> The success of Sinuhe, Wenamun, Rahab, Samson, or David as characters depends, though, in part on the realism of their portrayal within the constraints of the literary conventions of the time. Their actions have to, on some level, make sense and be believable to an ancient audience. Simply put, they do not need to be historical for their stories to offer a realistic portrait of human behavior. Moreover, if the reverse were to be assumed that each of them existed in history, it must be recognized that all that we know of the *historical* person is their *literary* portrayal.

The Rahab/Jericho narrative, the Samson cycle, and the Report of Wenamun each explores, and exploits for drama, what happens when there is a breakdown in belonging. Rahab was excluded and marginalized in her society, so she negotiated a deal for herself and her family presumably to the detriment of her city. Wenamun, the delusional, imperious royalist, encountered formerly conquered people who no longer cared what their former overlords thought. The relationships were purely transactional. Samson's sense of belonging was almost exclusively to himself alone, so this caused wreckage wherever the actions of others diverged from his desires. Notably, all three of these narratives, in contrast to the life of David and the Tale of Sinuhe, cover only a few episodes in the protagonists' lives, but they offer maximum drama.

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<sup>516</sup> The historicity of David is more complex because it is wrapped up in a decades-long and still ongoing archaeological debate about the reality of 10<sup>th</sup> century Israel. By contrast, there is no external indication of a historical Sinuhe. At the very least, there are two possible references to a Davidic dynasty in the Tel Dan stele and the Mesha Inscription. These references to a Davidic dynasty are, of course, disputed.

None of the texts and iconography covered in this study are free from the ideology of their creators. It would be unrealistic to expect otherwise. This does not diminish their contribution to our understanding of how ancient Egyptians, Israelites, or anyone else viewed themselves or their neighbors. It simply adds another layer of belonging that must be understood and accounted for along with belonging within the world of the story. The world portrayed by these works also functions at the level of individual, personal belonging and the politics of belonging among collectivities. It creates tension and complexity. Apparent contradictions and inconsistencies emerge. Yet, this is as it should be because that is true to human experience. The concept of belonging came to be in the modern world for precisely that reason. Ethnicity, or even identity, alone was not broad enough to capture the complexity of the human experience. Both in ancient times and in the present, each person must navigate their own sense of belonging and do so in relation to the politics of belonging in the society around them.

## **6.2 Potential for Further Research**

The prospects for further research are abundant. The framework of belonging would prove very productive for other corpora of the Hebrew Bible such as the Torah and the prophetic literature. Narrower studies on individual books or sections of books, especially narratives, would also be profitable. While this study has focused on how belonging explains attitudes toward other ethnic groups, the inter-ethnic dimension is not necessary for the application of belonging. It lends itself to inner-group dynamics along different dimensions such as gender, class, or other subgroup hierarchies. The work on Egyptians could be expanded. Ideally, as mentioned above, contextualization of the

biblical text could have been expanded to ancient Assyria, but the limitations of time and space precluded its inclusion.

### **6.3 Relevance to the Present**

Discrimination, hatred, marginalization, violence, and ethnic tensions are not unique to the modern world. A foundational assumption for this research and the application of the modern anthropological concept of belonging to the ancient world is that human nature has not changed. Understanding the tangled and complex factors that motivated the behavior of the ancients, which often had bloody consequences, could be helpful for understanding the no less complex and bloody conflicts in the present. The voices that dominate public discourse tend to frame these conflicts in terms of simplistic categories of identity. The framework of belonging suggests we need to look beyond identity and examine the impact of social locations and normative values on how we and others behave. While belonging offers no magical solutions to intractable problems, it may contribute a more nuanced perspective on the nature of the problems.

The study of belonging in the ancient world has the benefit that, being so distant in time, the issues may not be as emotionally charged as they might be if placed in a contemporary setting. This could create an avenue to discuss difficult issues among people who might otherwise be closed to the possibility of real dialogue. *Story* has always been a powerful medium for communicating values and challenging ossified orthodoxies. The study of belonging in the ancient world may create an indirect, but productive, avenue for fostering greater mutual understanding in the present.

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