

The Two Maps of Israel's Land

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The general space of the world becomes more familiar as specific places through demarcation and domesticating practices that include identifying and naming natural features, building memorial structures, and telling stories of pilgrim ancestors.¹ Such acts also play central roles in colonization and settlement and can, for example, be easily located in the book of Joshua.² Here I investigate the making of Israel's place on the national level or, said differently, how the map of a nation comes into being. The examples are taken from throughout the Hebrew Bible and therefore the context is antiquity, yet similar processes also determine the nature of maps from subsequent eras. Biblical maps display how spatial representation of the nation relies on intersecting mythic and political standards. My analysis of this dynamic is driven by the question of why there are two different maps of Israel's land. One set of maps spans from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east and a second set reaches from the Sea to the River Euphrates. A conceptual stability results from the parallel of land spanning from river to sea, while conflicting notions of the state arise from their discrepancies. I argue that the seemingly paradoxical existence of two topographies illustrates how maps reconcile the idea of the nation with regnant mythic conceptions as well as how the nation borrows the means of self-presentation from empire.

The maps to which I refer are narratives that evoke place by consecutive enumeration of limits rather than by graphic symbols.³ We know of pictorial maps

¹ For the dynamic through which space becomes place, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 179.

² The extensive geographical description in Joshua 15–21 is replete with acts of demarcation, identifying, and naming. Additional examples of naming as a mode of staking claim can be found in Josh 5:9 and 14:12–15. Memorial structures are erected in Josh 4:4–8; 4:19–24; 8:30–32; and 24:26–27. In addition to the chronicle of pilgrim ancestors represented by the book, Josh 24:1–13 tells of this generation's intrepid forerunners.

³ Such boundary lists seem to be among the oldest cartographic relics; Sumerian documents of this nature from 2500–2200 B.C.E. have been discovered. See A. R. Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and*

from the ancient Near East such as the Babylonian *mappa mundi*⁴ and the Egyptian map of Turin.⁵ The maps of Israel's land, in contrast, are mediated in language as boundary lists. Although they first read like an inventory, a geographical corollary to the genealogy genre, the maps are rich in literary nuance and historical suggestion.⁶ J. B. Harley, the historian of cartography who initiated theoretical consideration of mapping, has shown how maps can be probed for their silences as well as for the concessions made in the margins that haunt their hierarchies. From maps we learn how those in power such as monarchs or priests circumscribe space in order that institutions such as the court or the priesthood be perceived as the center of state and cosmos alike. At the same time, the grandiosity or over-compensation of maps often bespeaks the tremulousness of power, and acknowledgments made in passing can point toward fronts of contestation or resistance.

The structure of the article follows Harley's suggested dual analysis of reading for "the cartographers' rules" of how a map must be designed and for its "signifying system' through which 'a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored.'" ⁷ I discuss these issues in two sections: The first deals with the "role of measured maps in the making of myth" and the second with the imperial standards by which the smaller nations of antiquity measured themselves.⁸ On the second count we will see the refusal of ancient Israel to measure itself against anything less than a great empire.

I. MYTHIC GEOGRAPHY

Jordan Maps

Although the Jordan maps exist in only two variations, they enjoy thematic dominance because they conform to the idea of the land produced in exodus nar-

Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean (ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 107.

⁴ "The map is really a diagram to show the relation of (these) places to the world of the Babylonians. Each place is drawn as a triangle rising beyond the circle of the salty ocean. . . . Enclosed by the circle of the salt sea lies an oblong marked 'Babylon' with two parallel lines running to it from mountains at the edge of the enclosure" (Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111).

⁵ "Turin map of a gold-bearing region, dating from about 1150 B.C., remains the only map of interest from ancient Egypt" (A. F. Shore, "Egyptian Cartography," in *History of Cartography*, ed. Harley and Woodward, 117).

⁶ Genealogies involve similar literary and historical complexities. See, e.g., Frank Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Biblical Interpretation 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 58–76.

⁷ J. B. Harley (quoting Foucault), "Texts and Contexts I: The Interpretation of Early Maps," in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (ed. Paul Laxton; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 45.

⁸ Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *New Nature of Maps*, ed. Laxton, 77.

ratives where the experiences of wandering and homecoming are distinguished on the basis of the location of the people of Israel in relation to the Jordan River. Throughout these narratives, crossing the Jordan is synonymous with national re-integration. Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua alike stage the homeland west of the Jordan and employ the river as a temporal and legal as well as a spatial boundary. Numbers 34, for example, sets the Jordan as the eastern boundary.

God spoke to Moses saying: "Instruct the Israelites by saying to them: When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that will constitute your property, the land of Canaan as defined by its borders. . . . Your western border will be the Great Sea; this border will be your western border. . . . Mark your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham. The eastern border will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain, from there the boundary will continue down to skirt the eastern edge of the Chinneret Sea (the Sea of Galilee). Then the border will descend along the Jordan until it reaches the Dead Sea; this will be your land as defined by its borders." (Num 34:1-2, 6, 10-12)

The specificity of the map transforms the land from a fantasy of nurture, "the land flowing with milk and honey," to a fantasy of power in "the land that will constitute your property" (Num 34:12). The borders allow the land to be graspable as a concept and a conquest. The place where Israel will claim its patrimony is twice termed the land of Canaan, and the borders here outlined are presented as those already associated with Canaan with or without the presence of Israel. The Mediterranean serves as the western boundary and the Jordan as the clearest eastern boundary, although the northeastern stretch cuts deep into Syria and Lebanon considerably beyond the river's edge. The inclusion of the northeastern section of the Transjordan within the land shows that the Jordan operates as the eastern border only from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This stretch of the river defines the east and west banks and is the setting for all Jordan-crossing stories (Gen 28:10-22, 32; Joshua 1-4; Judg 12:1-6; 2 Sam 17:22; 19:16-41; 2 Kgs 2:2).

The other map in which the Jordan delimits the eastern frontier occurs in the concluding vision of the book of Ezekiel.⁹ This exilic book assures the persistence of homeland by mapping it in scrupulous detail and portraying its borders as able to encompass overlapping claims.¹⁰ Self-consciously utopian, the map homologizes the land, the temple, and paradise as interchangeable topoi of symmetry and abundance. The map moves from north to east to south to west delimiting "the land that the twelve tribes can claim as an inheritance" (47:13) and then allots territory

⁹ Bodies of water set three of the four boundaries of Ezekiel's land, including the Mediterranean to the west and the waters of Meribah along with the river of Egypt to the south. While Ezek 47:19 speaks only of the "river" to the south, the parallel in Num 34:5 suggests that the river of Egypt is likely Wadi el-Arish.

¹⁰ That Ezekiel's final vision presents an alternative to exile is suggested by the way in which rivers function as a framing device. The book opens by the Babylonian River Chebar (1:1) and concludes by the homeland's River Jordan (47:8, 18).

with exacting equality to twelve non-priestly tribes. Even the nettlesome “strangers in your midst,” who prove problematic in other biblical texts and other sections of Ezekiel, are granted citizenship and ceded territory in the virtual land (Ezek 47:22–23). The tribes of Israel are inscribed in “thirteen longitudinal strips” with the twelve territorial tribes stacked to the north and south around a central portion reserved for Yahweh, the Zadokite priests, the Levites, and the archetypal monarch called *nāsī* (48:1–29).¹¹ All tribes are stationed west of the Jordan with Dan (v. 1), Asher (v. 2), Naphtali (v. 3), the two Joseph tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (vv. 5, 6), Reuben (v. 7), Judah (v. 8) north of the sacred domain and Benjamin (v. 23), Simeon (v. 24), Issachar (v. 25), Zebulun (v. 26), and Gad (v. 28) to the south.¹² Although several tribes had likely been “lost” by the time of the composition of the book of Ezekiel, all have a place in the ideal social configuration. The articulation of natural boundary markers such as mountains and seas grants legitimacy to the map and thereby enables its reimagining of homeland. Indeed, such idealized mappings are characteristic of exilic communities who remember home in novel ways.

Jonathan Z. Smith understands Ezekiel’s maps as pragmatically survivalist. Their geographic and architectural images set up systems of distinction that do not depend on the places evoked. Instead, the distinctions can be overlaid on the calendar, on notions of kinship and identity, and onto ritual practice. The representation of sacred geography then operates to marry memory to transposable distinctions, not to communicate that the absence of place entails the demise of identity. Of the four maps that Smith identifies in Ezekiel 40–48, three (40:1–44:3; 45:1–8; and 47:13–48:35) outline “a hierarchy of power built on the dichotomy sacred/profane” and one (44:4–31) “is a hierarchy of status built on the dichotomy pure/impure.”¹³ Stressing the transferability of the “complex and rigorous systems of power and status,” Smith intimates that their potential replication arises from their mythic character.¹⁴ The dichotomies, not the places, are upheld as eternal and necessary. Ezekiel’s maps and their systemic boundaries are mythic not only in their apocalyptic promise of a future Eden and in their potential for reproduction, but also in the structural sense of homologous oppositions evident in other biblical myths and other mythic systems.

The Jordan and Creation

Mythic allusions launch Ezekiel’s narrative of transport. God lets him down on “a very high mountain” whose panoramic views recall Moses’ final vision (Num

¹¹ Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48* (SBLDS 154; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 46.

¹² Hierarchy finds its place even amidst equality: “The sons of the concubines Zilpah and Bilhah are farthest away from the Portion” (Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 86).

¹³ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (CSHJ; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

27:12; Deut 32:49; 34:1–4) and whose centrality emphasizes both the temple's sacredness and its similarity to the garden of God (Ezek 28:14).¹⁵ The carved cherubs and accompanying date palms that line the temple interiors (41:18–20, 25) “re-create Eden's ambiance” (Gen 3:24; Ezek 28:14) and the presence of God moves in from the east, the primal direction, to illuminate the world and resonate like the crashing of water (43:1).¹⁶ The new Eden is arable, with abundant trees (Ezek 47:7; Gen 2:9), swarming creatures (Ezek 47:9; Gen 1:20), and immortal possibilities offered by leaves that heal instead of withering and fruits that never rot (Ezek 47:12). The replenishing fruit trees beside sanctified waters promise an imminent and inclusive paradise.

Water is the dominant feature in the paradisaical vision. As a river rises from Eden and branches out into four courses (Gen 2:10), so a single stream bubbles from beneath the temple and swells into an uncrossable river (Ezek 47:5).¹⁷ The surging waters of Jerusalem symbolize a future of surpassing Babylon, a teleologic cleansing, and national revivification catalyzed by a restored temple (Isa 33:21; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8). Such a river, like the Jordan in the exodus narratives, bifurcates terrain while also marking an era of redemption distinct from the iniquities and humiliations of the past. Indeed this river that heals staid waters and revives fish and fruit trees (Ezek 47:9–12) morphs into the Jordan as it flows in the eastern region through the Arava and Dead Sea (Ezek 47:8).¹⁸ As the unnamed, eschatological river assimilates to the Jordan River, the Jordan accrues apocalyptic associations. More to our purposes, however, the synthesis of the rivers imbricates the geographic and the mythic. Ezekiel 47 juxtaposes two visions with a coursing river, the burgeoning paradise of the restored temple, and the division of tribal territories. The river of the paradisaical vision follows the southern leg of the Jordan's path, and the Jordan of the territorial vision delimits the scope of the land

¹⁵ For the similarities between Ezekiel's mountain and Sinai, see Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 43–44. In terms of the Edenic component: “Jerusalem's temple symbolized God's cosmic mountain towering into the cosmic expanse. There, humans came closest to Eden, God's holy realm” (Stephen L. Cook, “Cosmos, *Kabod*, and Cherub,” in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* [ed. Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton; SBLSymS 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004], 185).

¹⁶ Cook, “Cosmos, *Kabod*, and Cherub,” 185.

¹⁷ Picking up on the parallel between this “fructifying river” and the rivers of Genesis 2, Susan Niditch observes that the ideology of hierarchy expressed here is more in line with the bounded cosmos of Genesis 1. She saves herself source-critical somersaults with the brilliant proposal that Ezekiel 37–48 parallels Genesis 1–11, “the main corpus of cosmogonic material in the OT” (Niditch, “Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” *CBQ* 48 [1986]: 217, 216).

¹⁸ Niditch's observation that “the slowly heightening description of the seer's immersion into a river which becomes knee-high, waist-high, and finally a torrent ‘impossible to cross’ is surely another initiation for Ezekiel with rich, symbolic possibilities” (“Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” 217) alerts me to another way in which the temple river assimilates to the Jordan, a site of initiation.

(47:18).¹⁹ The twin rivers with a parallel course merge into a symbolic unity that endows the Jordan with eternal legitimacy as the eastern border of Israel's land. Thus, Ezekiel's serial visions lay bare a complex process always at work with borders in which authoritative accounts of origin compensate for their arbitrary nature.

As the Judean Desert and Jordan River Valley transform into the new Eden (Ezekiel 47), paradisaical themes from Genesis 1–2 and Ezekiel 28 coalesce. The political tenor of Ezekiel's map has most in common with the myth of Genesis 1 and with priestly programs in general.²⁰ Ezekiel's priestly status and the book's connection with the H source have long been recognized,²¹ while less noted is the interchangeability of ritual and spatial boundaries.²² The Priestly writers/ideological schools behind the maps of Number 34 (P) and Ezekiel 47–48 (H) desire that the Jordan be the border.²³ Putting aside the questions of if, when, and how the Jordan

¹⁹ Kathryn Pfisterer Darr argues, contra Walther Eichrodt, that “the regions transformed by the river's healing waters are located within the boundaries of Israel's homeland” (Darr, “The Wall around Paradise: Ezekielian Ideas about the Future,” *VT* 37 [1987]: 271–79).

²⁰ “Indeed, the cosmogonic process of creating and rightly ordering the new world of Ezekiel 40–48, in which Ezekiel participates, is a task that resonates with priestly overtones” (Iain M. Duguid, “Putting Priests in Their Place,” in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, ed. Cook and Patton, 56).

²¹ “That there is a particularly close relationship between Ezekiel and the Holiness Code is undisputed” (Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* [Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 107). Jacob Milgrom notes that Ezekiel differs from P in its greater restriction of access to holy spheres (*Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991], 452). There are “point by point similarities between the instructions to the priests in Ezekiel 44:15–31 and the instructions to the priests in the Holiness Code (especially Lev 21:1–22:9), which make it clear at least that a common tradition underlies these two texts” (Steven Shawn Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 139). For P's predating of Ezekiel, see Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (CahRB 20; Paris: Gabalda, 1982).

²² The architectural mappings in Ezekiel enforce the primacy of the Zadokites in Jerusalem, their proximity to the divine and their political centrality (Ezek 40:46; 43:19). Part of this positioning means that rigorous gradations of purity must be upheld. At the base of the gradations are three sets of distinctions: between Israel and Others, between Levites and Israelites/Judeans, and between Zadokites and Levites. While Ezekiel's map of the land accommodates Others as citizens (Ezek 47:22–23), “aliens, uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of flesh” are barred from the sanctuary complex and temple (Ezek 44:7, 9). Implicit in the formulation is a strategy for accepting equality with strangers on the civic level while maintaining Israel's distinction on an ethnic and religious basis.

²³ Steven Tuell highlights the discrepancies between the maps in Numbers and Ezekiel: “The two accounts are almost direct opposites, beginning at opposite points, moving in opposite directions, each strong where the other is weak and weak where the other is strong.” He explains the fact that the “Ezekiel text is as fulsome on the northern border as Numbers is on the southern” as arising from the literary context of Numbers, which presents the land from the perspective of the migrating Israelites coming from the south, which in turn must reflect a southern or Judean

functions as a border, it can be said with certainty that the Priestly school in its various avatars would very much like this to be the case. The reasons why include that, as a topographical feature, a river naturalizes the sort of religious and ethnic divisions that the priestly class puts in place and because the Jordan, associated with Israel's beginnings, authorizes the very premise of necessary borders. "A certain circularity obtains here: cosmogonies reinforced existing power structures by presenting them as derived from the divine order asserted by the cosmogony."²⁴ Traditions of contamination trouble biblical representations of the east side of the Jordan (Gen 19:30–38; Numbers 32; Joshua 22), while notions of a river-bounded land clarify the scope of purity. Although the Jordan as a border narrows the land's midsection, when it is upheld, priestly systems of differentiation correlate with creation and appear unassailable. As we will see, mythic elements are equally at work in Ezekiel's territorial vision and in biblical maps as a category.

Euphrates Maps

The second, more ubiquitous set of maps fixes the land's eastern boundary at the Euphrates and appears in Genesis, Exodus, and the Deuteronomistic History. To Abraham, God defines the land intended for his descendants as spanning "from the River of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Gen 15:18). In the book of Exodus, God promises to set the borders of the land "from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia and from the wilderness to the river" (Exod 23:31).²⁵ Solomon's rule is praised for extending "over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the boundary of Egypt" (1 Kgs 5:1). The Euphrates also figures as the eastern boundary in Moses' recapitulation of the promise of the land made at Sinai (Deut 1:7) and in God's delineation of the boundaries "from the wilderness to the mountains of Lebanon and from the River, the Euphrates, to the Western Sea" (Deut 11:24). As it is highly improbable that any configuration of ancient Israel included the northeastern expanse outlined in Numbers 34, it is even more implausible that Israel at any stage included land to the east of the Transjordan, let alone to the Euphrates.

The Euphrates maps offer a glimpse of an unfulfilled vision of military

perspective (*Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, 155). I stress an element missing from his thesis—the Numbers map and the Ezekiel map both bound the land with water in three of four directions. Although one might want the northern border to be set with a river such as the Litani, it is associated in certain maps (Num 34:7) with a mountain. This notion of a northerly mountain reflects the Ugaritic topos of Zaphon, the gathering place of Canaanite gods (see also Isa 14:13). A mountain to the north or at least the lack of a river accommodates this local mytheme.

²⁴ Julie Galambush, "God's Land and Mine: Creation as Property in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, ed. Cook and Patton, 91.

²⁵ "The river" indicates the Euphrates here as in Gen 31:21; Josh 1:4; 24:2, 3, 14, 15; 1 Kgs 5:4; 1 Chr 5:9.

strength and imperial influence. This vision runs alongside the insistence that the Jordan distinguishes the land from foreign lands. No matter the informing map, the east bank is always the other side of the Jordan and the Israelites cross over to enact a return. Whereas the Jordan map presents an image of the land that corresponds to other dichotomies, the Euphrates map generates tension between these dichotomies and the boundary of the land. Such tension becomes particularly apparent in chapters that include a map spanning from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates (Deut 11:24; Josh 1:4), yet proclaim that possession of the land begins only after the national, westward crossing of the Jordan (Deut 11:31; Josh 1:2).²⁶ This tension renders the space between the Jordan and the Euphrates, particularly the east bank, ambiguously both Israel and Other.²⁷ The Transjordan, included in one vision of the land and excluded from another, is suspended in the pull of conflicting ideologies.

Why does the Euphrates then persist as a represented border? This river is associated with the patriarchal place of origin (Gen 12:31), and Abraham's crossing inaugurates Israelite history.²⁸ The time of Israelite history is thus associated with the space to the west of the Euphrates.²⁹ Since the land to the east of the Euphrates is directly associated with Israel's dark beginnings in idol worship (Josh 24:15), it cannot be included in any definition of the promised land. The wanderings of Abraham and Jacob, however, are narratives that domesticate the land west of the Euphrates. The Euphrates maps, particularly those in which the "River of Egypt" or "Sea of Reeds" constitutes the southern border (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:31), include the lands of Israel's wandering as part of its territory.

The River as Cosmic Boundary

In both sets of maps, the portrait of land bounded by water resonates with cosmological descriptions in which the world spans "from sea to sea" or "from the

²⁶ Despite the Euphrates map with which the book of Joshua opens, at book's end Joshua bequeaths the territory "from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea in the west" (Josh 23:4) to the tribes of Israel.

²⁷ David Jobling examines "the text's creation of Transjordan as ambiguous land. It belongs, at some level, to Israel; yet there is the suspicion of another level at which it belongs rather to someone else, so that Israel's occupation of it is not Yahweh's intention (this 'someone else' is Israel's affines, Moab and Ammon)" ("The Jordan a Border: Transjordan in Israel's Ideological Geography," in *The Sense of Biblical Narrative*, vol. 2, *Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* [JSOTSup 39; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986], 116–17).

²⁸ Zechariah Kallai refers to the coordinates of the Euphrates map as "the patriarchal borders" ("The Borders of the Land of Canaan and the Land of Israel in the Bible: Territorial Models in Biblical Historiography" [in Hebrew], *ErIsr* 12 [1985]: 29).

²⁹ The Euphrates plays a central role also in the Babylonian world map. "Despite the absence of a name, it is clear that the parallel lines running to and from Babylon represent the river Euphrates" (Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111–12).

river to the ends of the earth" (Zech 9:10; Ps 72:8). The image of the cosmos behind these descriptions is a three-tiered universe in which the sea encircles the disc of the earth and the heavens rest both beyond and above the earth and the sea.³⁰ This type of cosmic map is well documented in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean. In the Babylonian *mappa mundi* dated around 600 B.C.E. and displayed at the British Museum (BM 92687), the earth is surrounded by a river from which otherworldly regions stem.³¹ As examples of ancient cartography, the Phoenician bowl found at Praneste and Egyptian papyri depict the encircling ocean or river as a serpent that surrounds the world and swallows its own tail.³² The "earliest literary reference for cartography in early Greece . . . is the description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* of Homer, thought by modern scholars to have been written in the eighth century B.C."³³ Achilles' shield shows "the Ocean River's mighty power girdling round the outmost rim of the welded indestructible shield" (*Il.* 18.606–8).³⁴ The combination of biblical allusions and parallels in other ancient Mediterranean cultures supports the idea that a mythic view of the world as encompassed by a world ocean/river is the common framework for the two biblical maps.

The designation of seas and rivers as boundaries conveys a sense that the order of the land reflects the structure of the cosmos. The parallel asserts that the land, implicitly associated with the state and the cult, is natural, divine, and as inevitable as creation. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's descriptions of his imperial influence similarly speak of a span "from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea."³⁵

³⁰ See Isa 40:22, 28; Job 22:7; 26:10; Prov 8:27. See A. J. Wensinck, *The Ocean in the Literature of the Western Semites* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1918), 23; and P. S. Alexander, "Geography and the Bible," *ABD* 2:977–87.

³¹ The map "is universally admitted to be a copy made after 600 B.C." (Robert North, S.J., *A History of Biblical Map Making* (Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients: Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaft 32; Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979), 13. "The Babylonian Map of the World and The Bilingual Creation of the World by Marduk demonstrate that Babylonians, at least, believed that a cosmic ocean encircled the continental portion of the earth's surface. The most familiar parts of this ocean were the Upper Sea (Mediterranean) and the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean)" (Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 321. For the otherworldly regions, see Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111; and Nanno Marinatos, "The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus," *Numen* 48 (2002): 9.

³² See Marinatos, "Cosmic Journey," 4, 11.

³³ Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 131. Also P. R. Hardie, "Imago Mundi: Cosmological and Ideological Aspects of the Shield of Achilles," *JHS* 105 (1985): 11–31.

³⁴ Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Robert Fagles; New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 487. The Shield of Heracles in Hesiod's *Shield* 314–15 portrays a similar encircling ocean; see James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13–14. "The idea of an encircling Ocean was a very old one, perhaps inherited from early Babylonian maps and reinforced by Greek mythology as interpreted by Homer" (O. A. W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps* [Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1985], 24).

³⁵ David Stephen Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter*

Geography, here a subfield of cosmology, sanctions states through symbols of primordial beginnings.³⁶ As the boundary between the earth and the sea separates the order of creation from the primordial chaos associated with water, so the land is separated from the threat of the foreign by boundaries of water. The image of the Euphrates, like the parallel rivers of Ezekiel 47, further links the land with the Garden of Eden, the river's source (Gen 2:14).³⁷

Since the social configuration of Israel claims divine order as its root, the correspondence between the land and creation serves as a necessary precondition for the territorialization of the divine promise. Therefore, even when the borders of the land are construed differently, the east–west axis must span from sea to river in order that the land appear as a microcosm of the cosmos itself.³⁸ These borders offer geographic proof of the enveloping character of God and state alike. The flexibility concerning which river forms the eastern boundary results from the fact that the mythic morphology prevails over cartographic specifics. The two sets of maps can coexist because their configurations of the land do not conflict, both corresponding to the authorizing cosmological system.

II. IMPERIAL GEOGRAPHY

While ordering space and orienting conviction, maps also fuse locales with various forms of economic and military power. The cartographic impulse, it seems, arose from a dual motivation to demarcate ownership and survey lands for conquest. Mapping was tied up with kingship, which perpetuated itself through colonization, raids, and temporary alliances with future opponents. “Maps were used to

Prophets (HSM 59; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 36. Vanderhooft further picks up on some scribal dissent: “the rhetoric of universal hegemony in Nebuchadnezzar’s texts is meant to point to his newly expanded imperial power, but the scribes appear to have recognized a disjunction between the rhetoric and reality” (p. 40).

³⁶ Similarly in the *Aeneid*, the Roman Empire is prophesied to span the shores of the world ocean (1.287; 7.101). The America that extends “from sea to shining sea” in the patriotic song “America the Beautiful” likely operates under a similar cosmological/imperial premise.

³⁷ In the Babylonian world map, the Euphrates “within the inner circle is portrayed as a band nearly vertical and almost as broad as the ocean” (North, *History of Biblical Map Making*, 20). The equivalence between the Euphrates and the ocean thus appears as a trope in ancient Near Eastern geography. Josephus sees the rivers of Eden and the world ocean as constituting one waterway. In his map, the four rivers of Eden have their source in the “the one river which encircles the whole earth” and branches from the Garden of Eden (*Ant.* 1.1.3 §§37–39) (Philip S. Alexander, “Geography and the Bible: Early Jewish Geography,” *ABD* 2:979).

³⁸ Henri Lefebvre speaks of sacred spaces found in Thomas Aquinas and in the *Divine Comedy* in a similar vein: “Such spaces were interpretations, sometimes marvelously successful ones, of cosmological representations” (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991], 45).

legitimize the reality of conquest and empire. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of the territorial status quo.³⁹ Ancient monarchs' sense of destiny, which elevated gods, drove urban architecture, and necessitated memorials as well as court literature, also found expression in the measurement of their spatial sovereignty. Territories were thus indexed as part of the royal core, the conquered or unconquerable, or part of an amorphous and unknown beyond. By creating a spectrum of proximity, maps emplaced home between enmity and alliance and brought variegated relationships into a unified spatial system. Perhaps their hyperbolic dimensions and approximations are not a result of inchoate cartographic technologies, but rather are born of the necessity that a range of incongruous relationships fit into a larger scheme.

Before I show how the maps of ancient Israel emulated those of local empires, let me concede to the ways in which they differed. To begin, the span of the promised land tends not to be associated with any one leader. Although the very notion of promise evokes ancestral recipients and the Euphrates as a border conjures up Solomon, the most mythic of Israel's kings, the maps tend to be contextualized as future realizations rather than present accomplishments. In the book of Numbers, the map stipulates the place that the people of Israel will reach at the conclusion of their wanderings, and in Ezekiel it functions as an eschatological palimpsest. In their narrative contexts, the Euphrates maps predict the future in some cases (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:31; Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:3–4) and declare the accomplishment or potential of a Davidic monarch in others (1 Kgs 5:1). For the most part, however, the maps do not describe an Israel as it is now, but point to a glorious state to come. Rather than exalting kings, the Jordan maps seem to sideline them in order to promote priestly ideologies. The Euphrates maps enunciate more support for monarchs, but only for the kind of whom the Deuteronomists approve. Biblical maps, then, concern the idea of the nation much more than they concern the manifestation of the nation under any one ruler. As we saw in the previous section, they promote a certain mythic worldview in line with a larger Mediterranean/Near Eastern pattern and, as we will see here, they measure Israel's importance in imperial terms.

Moshe Weinfeld accounts for the two sets of maps as the products of divergent views held by different schools of biblical scribes. The Priestly school with geographic roots in Shiloh draws the maps in which the Jordan is a boundary, and the Deuteronomic school, comfortable with the idea of territorial expansion, extends the border to the Euphrates.⁴⁰ In Weinfeld's opinion, it is the disputed status of the

³⁹ Harley, *New Nature of Maps*, 57.

⁴⁰ In his study of the geography of the Davidic state, Baruch Halpern explains the Euphrates map as a result of the intentional vagueness concerning the river at which David established a stela (2 Sam 8:3). The omission of the river's proper name (filled in by the *qere* as the Euphrates), according to Halpern, aims to give the impression that David's empire reached the Euphrates, when in fact it only spread to the Jordan or just beyond it. This missing name, in his estimation, is the seed that grows into the Euphrates maps. To begin, too much of this explanation rides on a

Transjordan that leads to the cartographic discrepancy. In other words, the Priestly school does not recognize the east bank as legitimate Israelite territory, while the Deuteronomic school both recognizes and includes the east bank in its conception of the land. As far as the Shilonite priests are concerned, the Jordan separates the holy and the profane and thus corresponds to other spatial and symbolic borders. The Deuteronomic writers, in contrast, are comfortable with a Transjordanian land claim and even associate it with their near-paradigmatic kings David and Solomon (1 Kgs 4:1–5:1).⁴¹ Weinfeld does not explain why the Deuteronomists reach all the way to the Euphrates only to absorb the east bank, but I have accounted for why the eastern boundary must be a river. Building on his thesis, I want to push it a bit further and propose that the Jordan maps conceive of ancient Israel in Egyptian imperial terms and that the Euphrates maps configure Israel as a counterpart to Babylonia.

The maps are different because they measure ancient Israel against particular imperial forces. The Jordan maps correspond to ancient Egyptian maps of Canaan, but replace pharaonic rule with Israelite hegemony. The Euphrates maps imagine an Israel mirroring Babylonia, with vast stretches of terrain defined by a mighty river that originated with creation (Gen 2:14). The lexicon of empire then helps Israel, caught more often than not in the pull of its tides, to constitute and perpetuate a national identity.⁴² Where the Jordan maps inscribe Israel's emergence and differentiation from Egypt in represented space, the Euphrates maps coalesce various sorts of Babylonian memories such as Abram's departure and Israel's exile.

Israel in Terms of Egypt

The Jordan map of “the land of Canaan and its borders” in Numbers 34 is, according to scholars such as Benjamin Mazar, Roland de Vaux, and Weinfeld,

missing term. In addition, the Jordan is never referred to in the text of the Hebrew Bible as “the River Jordan,” but only as “Jordan” or “the Jordan.” Thus if, as Halpern believes, the stela was set up at the Jordan, then the omission of the proper name is an instance not of ambiguity but of outright deception, since the term “river” before the name of a river always indicates a river other than the Jordan. He makes a similar argument about the lack of specification of the river in 2 Sam 10:16. Again, the river here named cannot be confused with the Jordan since it is called “the river” —also a designation that never refers to the Jordan but more often to the Euphrates. See Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Bible in Its World; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 164–259.

⁴¹ The connection between David and Transjordan recurs; he rules the terrain (2 Sam 24:5–6), escapes there during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 17:16–22; 19:16–20:2), and requests sanctuary for his parents from the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3–4) perhaps, as alleged in the book of Ruth, because of his Moabite ancestress (Ruth 4:22).

⁴² For the intensity and *Realpolitik* of the pull, see Anthony Spalinger, “Egypt and Babylonia: A Survey (c. 620 B.C.–550 B.C.,” *Studien zur Ägyptischen Kultur* 5 (1977): 221–44.

“simply the designation then customary for the Egyptian province in Syria and Eretz-Israel,” which underwent a series of changes but was “more or less stabilized by the treaty signed between Ramesses II and the Hittite king in ca. 1270 B.C.E.”⁴³ Biblical writers borrowed the Egyptian concept of Canaan and made it their own. This observation, according to Weinfeld, conveys literary as well as historical meaning.

The land of Canaan as given to Israel encompasses the same boundaries as the province of Canaan that had been delineated beforehand under the rule of Egypt. Just as God took the Israelites out of Egypt, so he took away the land of Canaan from the hand of Egypt and gave it to Israel. Therefore, “the land of Canaan with its boundaries” in Num. 34 corresponds to the land of Canaan as it was in the days of the Egyptian empire.⁴⁴

By assuming the Egyptian map, the Priestly Writer stakes a claim in which the land belongs to Israel as reparation for the suffering of slavery. Because the corruption of the Egyptians caused them to lose the land, Israel is assured as it inherits the territory that, should they corrupt it, Israel too will forfeit the land.

The land due Israel does not exceed the Egyptian holdings in Canaan, nor does the claim diminish according to the outcomes of war and annexation.⁴⁵ According to textual and archaeological evidence, these were the borders of the Egyptian province of Canaan, not the borders of Israel at any particular historical moment. The Egyptian purview is significant, since the map is oriented around the relationship between Israel and Egypt.⁴⁶ It follows a kind of narrative logic that, in a story about Israel leaving Egypt for the land of Canaan, Canaan would conform to Egyptian standards. The Priestly writers, absorbing an Egyptian Canaan, initially exclude Transjordan in order to put Israel entirely in Canaan's place.⁴⁷ When placed in an Israelite context, the Jordan as the eastern border facilitates the cen-

⁴³ Benjamin Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (ed. Shmuel Ahituv and Baruch A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 115.

⁴⁴ Weinfeld, *Promise of the Land*, 64.

⁴⁵ Moshe Weinfeld, “The Extent of the Promised Land—the Status of Transjordan,” in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit: Jerusalem-Symposium 1981 der Hebräischen Universität und der Georg-August-Universität* (ed. Georg Strecker; GTA 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 65.

⁴⁶ The ambivalent status of Transjordan may also be an inheritance from Egypt. According to Kallai, at least two Transjordanian cities (Pahal and Zaphon), and potentially the Transjordan as a whole, are claimed in some Egyptian sources and not claimed in others (“Borders of the Land of Canaan,” 28).

⁴⁷ “Since Egyptian records never mention the Gilead or southern Transjordan—archaeology informs us that they were unsettled until the thirteenth century—it is clear that the Jordan was the eastern border of Egyptian Canaan” (Jacob Milgrom, “The Boundaries of Canaan,” in *Numbers [=Ba-midbar]: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990], 501).

tral premise of a holy land distinct from other lands. The geographic border further serves Priestly notions of Israel's difference and the need for ritual separation from other peoples. The map in its Ezekielian context shows how the images of a bounded Israel and a holy land become ingredients in utopian imaginings.

At most narrative junctures, however, Egypt maintains the status of a paradigmatic Other. One is left asking why, then, Israel would take its map from, of all places, Egypt. Here I do not wish to debate whether some portion of an Israelite or later-to-become Israelite population actually lived in or served Egypt or whether memories of an anti-Egyptian uprising in the mountains of Canaan can be recovered from the biblical texts. Instead I want to make an alternate proposal that biblical writers, influenced and impressed by imperial Egypt, borrowed its map along with other cultural institutions as material with which to assert Israel's greatness.⁴⁸ I am not stressing that empires set the parameters of political discourse, although this is certainly true, but rather arguing that those who conceived and constructed ancient Israel did so with elements derived from empire. Yet Israel, for the most part, neither sought to become an empire nor saw itself as such. Disdain for Egypt and Babylon, the Assyrians and the Hittites runs through narrative and prophecy alike. This clever turn is a wonderful example of adaptation—cooptation even—in which biblical writers access the imperial lexicon in order to portray a nonimperial but nonetheless momentous and mighty nation of Israel. What Israel lacks in territory, it makes up in narrative.⁴⁹

My argument here operates on a few levels. As I have shown, the old Egyptian map of Canaan became the map of Israel's land both because Israel's state institutions were influenced by Egyptian ones and because a tightly circumscribed land embodied priestly ideologies of Israel's ethnic and religious distinction.⁵⁰ Perpetu-

⁴⁸ Ideas of a centralized state and bureaucratic organization may have also been borrowed from Egypt. See Nili Fox, "Royal Officials and Court Families: A New Look at the *yeladim* in I Kings 12," *BA* 59 (1996): 225–32.

⁴⁹ The way in which the maps emulate empire while representing an Israel that is "strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" indicates an instance of what Homi Bhabha names mimicry. Resembling the maps of empire, Israel's maps diverge by replacing the colonists with the colonized. The ambivalence of mimicry, on which Bhabha also insists, arises from the maps' inherent difference from those of empire and the defense of Israelite hegemony on the one hand and the rights of conquerors to territory on the other. Both the presence of Israel in the land and the ubiquity of empire are justified through metonymy or, said differently, by the partial portrait of the map. See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

⁵⁰ For the argument of Egyptian influence on Israel, see R. J. Williams, "'A People Come Out of Egypt': An Egyptologist Looks at the Old Testament," in *Congress Volume: Edinburgh 1974* (VTSup 28; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 231–52. For the argument against such strong influence, see Donald B. Redford, "Specter or Reality? The Question of Egyptian Influence on Israel of the Monarchy," in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 365–94. Redford does, however, concede to parallel geographic divisions "between Solomon's

ated by priestly schools, the map persisted and, I argue, placed Israel in an imperial context from which it could maneuver among empires. The survival of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah depended on the ability to appraise correctly the ascendant empire and to position diplomacy, military, and economy accordingly. Although representative of a pre-Israelite period, Egypt's map of Canaan helped launch the territorial idea of Israel and remained a relevant point of reference. The question of Egypt's strength combined with speculation about whether it could match that of Babylonia was a particularly vital issue in the latter days of the Judean monarchy. Such speculation in tandem with the ongoing reality of vacillating alliances led to the coexistence and preservation of the two maps.

The bidirectional self-figuration makes sense, since "ancient Israel historically developed, came to an end, and was reconstituted within the bipolar system of political contestation in the Fertile Crescent between Egypt, on the one hand, and various Mesopotamian and Syrian states, on the other."⁵¹ To face Egypt at some times and Mesopotamia at others, then, was born out of the necessity of managing the potential influence and military menace from either direction. Mapping Israel in grandiose terms can also be seen as a strategy of resistance, a refusal to let the idea of the nation be diminished by the loss of territory or autonomy or to be defined solely by the maps of emperors and generals. Rather than accept a peripheral placement or no notice on someone else's map, Israel appropriated the maps of empire and placed itself at the center. This kind of big thinking impacts the representational power of the Jordan. The Jordan maps put the river on a par with the Nile, and the comparative context of the two maps equates the Jordan with the Euphrates. As the Nile and the Euphrates respectively signify Egypt and Babylonia, the insertion of the Jordan into this category enables it to signify Israel and to assume a symbolic import incommensurate with its size.⁵²

In addition to emulating empire, the maps speak to a complicated sense of origin. Alongside the tenet of a homeland west of the Jordan are concessions to ancestral beginnings east of the Euphrates, national burgeoning in Egypt, and the inevitable diasporic revisitation of both locations. A late chronology could offer an easy detour by proposing that the maps, along with most of the Hebrew Bible, were

twelve districts, designated one per month to supply the court with food, and the Egyptian practice of dividing the tax base into twelve parts to meet an ongoing budgetary requirement on a calendrical basis" (p. 372).

⁵¹ F. V. Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity* (JSOTSup 361; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 3, rephrasing A. Malamat, "The Kingdom of Judah between Egypt and Babylon: A Small State within a Great Power Confrontation," in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham* (ed. W. Claassen; JSOTSup 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 117–29.

⁵² "A river may serve as an emblem of the landscape and, as such, may advertise the identification of people with place" (Prudence J. Jones, *Reading Rivers in Roman Literature and Culture* [Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005], 41).

written in exile in Babylon or during the homecoming sanctioned by Persia. According to this line of reasoning, the maps reflect the places to which Israelite/Judean communities and their scribes fled or were exiled rather than the empires with which Israel contended in an earlier stage.⁵³ Although the theory that the two maps reflect Egyptian and Babylonian sources of influence holds regardless of the precise chronology, I lean toward an earlier dating in both cases. The Jordan map corresponds to Egypt's Canaan holdings in the period just before Israel "appeared" on the scene and plays a formative role in Israel's self-definition. Furthermore, the idea that the Jordan delimits the land, traceable to the Canaan map, runs through texts of multiple periods.

Israel in Terms of Babylonia

The Euphrates maps seem to reflect the political climate during the Neo-Babylonian period, when the threat to the kingdom of Judah peaked from beyond the Euphrates and alliance with the Transjordanian states was among the self-protecting tactics (Jer 27:2–3). The geographic schema within the Babylonian *mappa mundi* likely emerged from the Neo-Babylonian expansionist heyday under Nebuchadnezzar, who vaunted himself as "the protector of all humanity" and his capital as "the economic and administrative center of the world."⁵⁴ The Euphrates maps emulate these geographies and acknowledge Babylonian hegemony east of the river, while situating Israel as a kind of mirror image just to the west. With Babylon on the rise, the idea of Israel reaching to the Babylonian shore as a mighty counterpart would both lessen the fear of the growing empire and strengthen, depending on the moment, either allegiance or oppositional resolve. The Euphrates map can be explained as such a technique introduced by Deuteronomic (Dtr.) scribes and reproduced in later versions by their successors.

Where the Jordan maps appropriate the imperial terrain of Egypt, the Euphrates maps enact a parallel assimilation. Neo-Babylonian imperial geography referred to the sweep of land west of the Euphrates as Eber Nari or Transeuphrates.⁵⁵ This geography did not account for all of the differing peoples situated between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast, but rather marked them as

⁵³ Along with the exile to Babylon, Judeans seem to have fled to Egypt in the wake of the Babylonian attacks of 597 and 586. Jeremiah refers to Judean communities in Egypt; see chs. 40–43; 44:1.

⁵⁴ Bill T. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* (SBLABS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 96.

⁵⁵ This is the case, for example, in the Etemenanki cylinder, which "delineates the cities and regions that contributed corvée laborers or raw materials for work on Marduk's ziggurat in Babylon" (Vanderhoof, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 36, based on the edition of F. H. Weissbach, *Die Inschriften Nebukadnezars II im Wādi Brisā und am Nahr el-Kelb* (WVDOG 5; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 44–48.

conquered people distinct from the “true” Babylonians east of the Euphrates. The biblical writers seem to pick up on this map and reformulate it from their own perspective. The amorphous land west of Euphrates becomes the realization of the great Hebrew nation, and along the way the reality of Babylonian subjugation is erased. In another twist, the otherness conferred by being on the wrong side of the river is also refigured. In the biblical maps, it is not the non-Babylonian peoples who are separated from the Babylonians by the Euphrates but rather Israel that is distinguished from its neighbors by the Jordan. Not only is the Babylonian empire scaled down in the biblical writings, but since “the vanquished wrote the history” they also “produced perhaps the most influential portrait of Babylon to survive antiquity.”⁵⁶ Babylon is most remembered as Judah’s archetypal foe. For the empires that inherited a biblical legacy, the Judean hierarchy of west over east certainly trumped the Babylonian hierarchy of east above west.

Israel between Egypt and Babylonia

The Euphrates maps of Deut 1:7 and 11:24, which fail to provide a southern border, perhaps leave the question of Egyptian influence open in the wake of Babylonia’s rise. In the other Euphrates maps as well as in Jordan maps, Egypt remains a point of reference abutting Israel at the southern border. Some maps reach to the Nile (Gen 15:18); some more specifically recall the exodus by using the Red Sea as a marker (Exod 23:31); and others halt more generally at the desert (Josh 1:4) or “the border of Egypt” (1 Kgs 5:1), or more specifically at the wadi of Egypt (Josh 15:4, 47). It is possible that the omission of an Egyptian boundary in Deuteronomy speaks to perceived Egyptian quiescence.

With the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire and the Egyptian challengers of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, “the small state of Judah, located at the particularly sensitive crossroads linking Asia and Africa, was influenced more than ever before by the international power system, now that the kingdom’s actual existence was at stake.”⁵⁷ The enmity between Egypt and Babylonia was determined by Egyptian participation in the Assyrian challenge to Babylonian predominance.⁵⁸ With the decline of Assyria, the antagonistic relationship was played out on various fronts, including Judea, which became a site of contestation as well as a bellwether for the

⁵⁶ Vanderhoof, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 5.

⁵⁷ Malamat, “Kingdom of Judah,” 119. “The latter years of the Judean monarchy were dominated internationally by the collapse of the Assyrian empire and the emergence of a bipolar system of confrontation between the rising Neo-Babylonian empire and the Saite or 26th dynasty of Egypt” (Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch’s Ideological Map*, 249).

⁵⁸ “In the late summer of 616 B.C. as Nabopolassar and his troops ravaged the land of the middle Euphrates, an Egyptian expeditionary force appeared and in concert with Assyrian forces pursued the retiring Babylonians partway down the Euphrates” (Redford, “Egypt and the Fall of Judah,” in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 430–69).

two. Josiah, the Deuteronomic hero, lost his life in the battle to impede Pharaoh Necho II from reaching the Euphrates (2 Kgs 23:29–30; 2 Chr 35:20–27). Donald Redford interprets Josiah's actions as proof that he correctly understood the defeat of Assyria and the Babylonian advance as “the wave of the future.”⁵⁹ Necho's setback at Megiddo brought consequences of Egyptian hostility and an unchecked Babylonia. The pharaoh exacted his vengeance by imprisoning Jehoahaz and instating Eliakim, reinvented as a vassal to the pharaoh rather than a son to Josiah, with the name Jehoiakim (2 Chr 36:1–4).⁶⁰ Against prophetic admonition (Ezek 29:6–7; 17:17), the Judean leadership remained invested in Egyptian alliance. Not even Nebuchadnezzar's successful march on Jerusalem convinced Jehoiakim to resign himself to subordinate status. Following an unsuccessful Babylonian bid for Egypt, he led a successful rebellion that further imperiled Judah (2 Kgs 24:1). Jehoiachin, the next king, surrendered to Babylon and allowed Nebuchadnezzar's troops to skim off the treasures and notables of Jerusalem and carry them into exile. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar had his opportunity to name and install a vassal, yet Zedekiah, nee Mattaniah, still looked to Egypt for signs of Babylonian weakness.⁶¹ The Babylonian eclipse of the Egyptian empire combined with the false sense of Judean security as an Egyptian protectorate led to the first destruction of Jerusalem.

The struggle for hegemony between Egypt and Babylonia took form in the battle for the land “from the Egyptian wadi (Wadi al ‘Arish) and the River Euphrates” (2 Kgs 24:7), the very territory at stake in the Euphrates maps. In the midst of imperial machinations and clash, Judah/Israel was defined both in terms and in place of the dueling powers. This portrait does not express imperial aspiration as much as it functions as an ideological safeguard in the face of attenuating territory and autonomy. If the armies of Babylonia and Egypt could not be ousted from the land, then at least they could be confined behind their own waterways in symbolic renderings. The simultaneous dynamic of using its hegemonic tropes in order to negate empire at work in the maps has additional manifestations. Weinfeld recognizes the attributes of Assyrian emperors and characteristics of Mesopotamian royalty in the Isaianic depiction of the ideal king who will reign in the redemptive era to come.⁶² Even visions of a divine kingdom arising from the humbled ground of

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 448.

⁶⁰ The Judean population was itself divided along pro-Egyptian versus pro-Babylonian parties (Redford, “Egypt and the Fall of Judah,” 449).

⁶¹ “Nebuchadnezzar's failure to invade Egypt in 601 only underscored the feeling that the supremacy of Babylon under the Chaldeans was a passing phenomenon. . . . Consequently, the ‘triumphal progress’ of Psammetichus II to Palestine in 592, though basically a peaceful journey was intended. . . . ‘to galvanize his allies and subjects in hither Asia by his presence against the Babylonian menace’” (Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988], 323).

⁶² Moshe Weinfeld, “Protest against Imperialism in Ancient Israelite Prophecy,” in *The*

annexed territory are spun of imperial language. Without the images of an oppressor's glory, utopia has no legs on which to stand. The Euphrates maps offer such a utopia on a spatial plain. Beyond historical specifics, the two sets of maps situate Israel in the midst of a pull between Mesopotamia to the east and Egypt to the south and employ the standards of imperial cartography in order to map a nation.

The insistence on borders marking the land from neighboring peoples and engulfing empires brings into being a contiguous national space. Once the space is emblazoned in collective memory and enlists adherents, it need no longer correspond to actual dimensions of sovereignty. As I have discussed, symbolic potency and mythic allusion trump topographic accuracy to begin with. In the case of Israel, geographic borders signified practices and rituals that maintained a manner of separation within intercultural interaction. The two maps communicate the complicated message that we are part of Egypt, Babylonia, and the empires yet to rise; however, we belong to a group whose uniqueness is indelible. One might think that the double message combined with the alternate identities outlined by two maps would be too complicated to remember and transmit or that the more definite the sense of home, the easier its preservation. Israel, however, is a case of the opposite. Jan Assmann remarks that during the Persian period Israel alone emerged as a "nation" "able to separate itself from the outside world and create an internal community entirely independently of political and territorial ties."⁶³ I suggest that this was the case in imperial epochs prior to the Persian. It seems, then, that the more fluid the sense of home, the easier it is to establish discrete community structures both at home and elsewhere.

Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations (ed. S. N. Eisenstadt; SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 181–82.

⁶³ Jan Assmann, "Five Stages on the Road to Canon: Tradition and Written Culture in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism," in *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 72.