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Reshaping the Memory of Zedekiah and His Period in Chronicles

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1 Introduction and Basic Considerations

As per its title, the goal of this contribution is not to shed light on the details of the historical events around 586 B.C.E. or to shape a historically accurate mini-biography of King Zedekiah. Instead, the goal is to reconstruct another historical king Zedekiah, namely the Zedekiah of memory that existed within a particular community that consisted of early Second Temple literati who encountered, constructed, and remembered their own Zedekiah through social acts of imagination grounded on their readings and re-readings of (past shaping/evoking) texts that existed within their core, authoritative repertoire, and in our case, especially, Kings, Chronicles, Jeremianic, and Ezekielian texts.¹ In particular, this essay focuses on the contribution of reading and rereading Chronicles to the shaping of this socially shared Zedekiah of memory. Since the contribution made by Chronicles can be reconstructed only against the background of the contributions of other texts, this work touches, even if in general strokes, on the latter as well.

Given the crucial role of matters of and approaches about (a) social memory and (b) readings and re-readings in the present endeavor, it is 'good practice'

* The present essay is an integral part of larger, multi-year project on Social Memory in the Early Second Temple supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC).

1 I locate these literati at the earliest in the late Persian period and at the latest in pre-Hasmonean times. We may refer to this period as the Early Second Temple period or perhaps and more precisely, the late Persian/early Hellenistic period. An exact date for each of these texts and more relevantly for the mnemonic system that emerged out of and became reflected in readings of each one of these texts in a way informed by all the others within one community (see below) is impossible to prove. But such a precise date is neither required nor relevant to the present study. The general time range established by the temporal boundaries mentioned above suffices. It is to be stressed also that the analysis advanced here does not require that the relevant texts existed exactly in their present forms at the time. It assumes, however, that the present forms—note the plural—of the books are significantly *representative* of the texts read by the community at that time. Most scholars would grant that point.

to state explicitly from the very outset some general remarks that provide the grounds out of which the approach taken here emerges. Four key observations, none of which is controversial in any way but whose implications are not always thoroughly thought out, are particularly important in this context.

First, social memories exist in all human groups. Significant transcultural trends can be discerned, as studies in social or cultural memory have shown.² This being so, it stands to reason that approaches raised by (transcultural) social memory studies are likely to be, at least, a good heuristic tool for the reconstruction of the memory of Zedekiah in our particular group. Minimally, these approaches would suggest issues to bring up, questions to ask, and ‘particularities’ that can be noticed only against the existence of general trends. In other words, it is not reasonable to dismiss ‘memory studies’ when one conducts research on ancient Israel’s social memory.³

Second, no group, or individual for that matter, can construe and possess a memory of one individual without involving memories of others. Memories of any person or place are always set in a large mnemonic landscape that not only involves, but also intertwines multiple memories. Very often, the very significance associated with the relevant memory is grounded in and depends on the ways in which it is intertwined with others. In other words, we are always faced

2 E.g., Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscales: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); idem, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). My approach to social memory is more informed by those of Zerubavel and Barry Schwartz than those of, for instance, Aleida and Jan Assmann. Of course, all are intellectual descendants, in one way or another, of Maurice Halbwachs. For basic literature about all these approaches, in addition to the works mentioned above, see, for instance, Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity and Community* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), idem, “Collective Forgetting and the Symbolic Power of Oneness: The Strange Apotheosis of Rosa Parks,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72 (2009): 123–42; Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). I am also influenced by approaches such as those present in James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

3 This is not deny that on certain areas one needs to ‘fine-tune’ some common approaches and concepts that emerged within a field of Memory Studies in which social studies of ancient communities are still in a clear minority. I have addressed these issues elsewhere, cf. my “Remembering the Prophets through the Reading and Rereading of a Collection of Prophetic Books in Yehud: Methodological Considerations and Explorations,” in *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; FAT 85; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 17–44; esp. 18–28.

with some mnemonic system of interrelated memories, not with a stand-alone memory of a person, place, or event.

Third, communities interact with the text ‘as they read it,’ that is, they interact with the text that emerges in their own readings. For the community their own *read* text is ‘the text.’⁴ It is only their *read* text that evokes the memories of the figures of the past that the community itself construes and remembers. Of course, no text was ever read by a community in a vacuum. Reading communities read texts in a way that is informed by (a) other texts that exist in their repertoire—to be sure, as each of them is read and understood by the reading community—and (b) their general social mindscape, or to use a different terminology (and approach), their general discourse.⁵ Since social readings and memories are historically contingent, one must state clearly whose readings and memories one is attempting to reconstruct. In this case, as stated above, the focus in this essay is on a community of, at least, ideologically, Jerusalem-centered literati in either the late Persian or the early Hellenistic period who encountered, constructed, and remembered their Zedekiah through social acts of imagination grounded on their readings and re-readings of texts within their core repertoire, and especially, Kings, Chronicles, Jeremianic, and Ezekielian texts.⁶

Fourth, communities strongly tend to read their texts synchronically. It is extremely unlikely that the literati of the early Second Temple period went about reading these texts by first separating each of them into its multiple redactional layers, assigned each of them to a particular period in their construed past, and then looked for and reconstructed the other texts that populated each one of these periods and which may have informed that particular layer. In other words, their mode of reading texts was not like the one of our redactional critical colleagues and for a reason. The latter do not ask the same questions from the text than the former did. One may say that the historical literati of the period read their texts in a mode of reading akin to what we tend to call ‘synchronic’ and that, as they read the text before them, even in ways

4 In fact, the community of readers construes its own ‘implied author,’ as it reads the book in its own way. If authorial intention is considered significant within the discourse of the community, then they would strongly tend to identify the intention of their ‘implied author’ with the intention of the ‘author’ of the book. In other words, the construed character of their implied author becomes invisible to them and thus they trust and imagine that they are reading according to the intentions of ‘the author.’

5 This is the reason that there is a need for a careful study of the *Sitz im Diskurs* alongside with and to large extent in a way interwoven with that of the (more traditional) *Sitz im Leben* of texts, and *vice versa*.

6 See n. 1.

that they were not fully aware of, they were informed by their world of knowledge, including their repertoire of texts.

To be sure, this does not mean at all that the kind of textual tensions that redactional critical scholars tend to highlight simply vanish or become irrelevant. To the contrary, these tensions become, from the viewpoint of the community reading the whole book, representative of a set or sets of multiple voices that the community cannot but end up associating with the implied author of the text they are reading. A corollary from these considerations is that from the perspective of the reading community, all these voices had to be construed as complementary, at least at some level, since they all go back to the same implied author or central character.

2 Social Memory and Last Rulers

Rulers who are construed and remembered as (the real) 'last rulers,'⁷ just as those remembered as (real) 'first rulers,' tend to be memorable characters, or in more precise language, they tend to carry substantial mnemonic mindshare in the relevant mnemonic communities. A number of processes converge to create such a systemic preference to turn last and first rulers into memorable characters. For one, they are associated with turning points within core narratives about the past upon which the group agrees. Turning points draw attention to themselves because of the crucial role they play in shifting the trajectory of the plot in core mnemonic meta-narratives and because of their associated role in the shaping of periodization. The latter (i.e., periodization) is a crucial structuring device in mnemonic narratives and plays important roles in conceptualizing the past. Last rulers whose memories are intrinsically associated with those of turning points become thus memorable signposts for these discontinuities and at times even an embodiment of the pre-change society.

The more memorable a character becomes, the more likely it will turn into a 'magnet' for different attributes, positive or negative, that are important to the remembering community and the more likely central issues and images in the community will become associated or 'embodied,' as it were, in the character. As a result, that which the remembering society strongly values or rejects tends to be associated with these characters. In turn, this very feature makes the character even more memorable and thus an ongoing positive feedback tends to emerge.

7 E.g., last rulers within a dynasty, or of a polity; last leaders of particular groups or the like.

Moreover, mnemonic (meta)narratives tend to provide the community with explanations for what happened at the turning points, i.e., to construe a sense of reasonable causality that contributes to the socialization of the group. Thus memories of first and last characters tend to become an important mnemonic playground for negotiations between various proposals concerning why the community reached the turning point and the significance or lack thereof of the turning point itself in the large scale of things, as construed by the community. This very process generates a strong tendency to turn memories of the last and first rulers into didactic lessons. It is not surprising then that at times memories of last rulers become involved in constructions and negotiations of 'self' and 'other.' Implied questions such as "why did 'we' (notice the element of identification of the remembered group) suffer that upheaval?" or "what can 'we' learn from it?" or, alternatively, "why did 'they' (notice the element of 'otherization') suffer such a calamity and what can 'we' learn from it?" often play important roles in the social construction and use of memory.

In sum, last rulers are often memorable characters, populate relatively memorable times, and provide good didactic reasons. Since memory is the main language in many societies, including ancient Israel, for thinking of and exploring core concepts and sets of concepts, the particular ways in which these characters were remembered at particular times and by particular groups provides significant information about the remembering groups themselves, their world-views, and one may say their shared social mindscape.

Finally, turning points, by their very virtue of being such, evoke a sense of discontinuity between what was before and what followed. This said, when the remembering community identifies with the one it imagines as experiencing the turning point, the turning point, as a site of memory and particularly because it serves as a marker of discontinuity, conveys also a strong, implied sense of a higher-level, trans-temporal continuity that transcends the vagaries of time, including temporal turning points. After all, the remembering community identifies with and to some extent 'is' also (another temporal manifestation of) the remembered community and *vice versa*.⁸ These considerations

8 A good example of the *vice versa* aspect of the mentioned relation: the David that the literati imagined, construed and remembered when reading וְהַצִּילֵנוּ וְהַבְּצִינוּ וְשָׁעֲנוּ אֵלֵהֶי' יְשׁוּעָנוּ in 1 Chr 16:35 is one who identified himself with, reflected, and reinforced the self-perception of the remembering community. I expanded on this example and the general issues associated with it, in the context of Chronicles, in Ehud Ben Zvi, "Who Knew What? The Construction of the Monarchic Past in Chronicles and Implications for the Intellectual Setting of Chronicles," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (ed. Oded Lipschits et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 349–60.

cannot but affect the ways in which, at least some times, last rulers, strongly associated with these turning points, are remembered.

Given all the above, it is not surprising that last rulers tend to be remembered as characterized by certain sets of attributes. For instance, since they embody endings of polities, they are often remembered as evil, weak, or both. Good examples, and across times and cultures, are Naram-Sin, “Sardanapolus,” Nabonaid, King Jié (the last king of the Xia dynasty, the first dynasty in Chinese records), and King Zhou (=Di Xin; the last king of the Shang dynasty that followed the Xia dynasty), Nero, Domitian, “Boabdil”/Abu ‘Abdallah Muhammad XII, George III, the last king of the “American colonies,” and to use relatively contemporary example, Gorbachev as he is often remembered within significant sections of the population in present day Russia.⁹

King Jié and King Zhou became both archetypical tyrannical emperors in Chinese memory.¹⁰ Interestingly enough, in this case, some memories associated with one became associated with the other, including references to sexual wantonness and the negative influence of women on them. Similar mnemonic roles lead to partial mnemonic overlaps. The Naram-Sin of memory becomes, for the most part, an archetype of the sinful king who defies the gods rather than submitting to their will, as painful as the latter might be in ancient Near Eastern lore, though he was also imagined as a repentant king to be emulated by future generations (see the Cuthaeen Legend). Sardanapalus is a Greek version of Ashurbanipal that stands as a primary example of the oriental “Other” in Greek literature. Nabonaid is mad, thinks that he is wise but is a fool and acts against the proper cult. Nero is crazy and bloodthirsty, Boabdil cries like a woman instead of fighting like a man, whereas George III is a tyrant (and a mad man). In all these cases, the remembering community construes the last

9 Just a few days after I read the paper at the Congress in Munich, a false rumor about Gorbachev's death spread in Russian social media. Most of the reactions to his (alleged) death in Russia, as posted in Russian social media, were virulent and strongly confirmed the point made above. See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/false-story-about-gorbachev-death-unleashes-wave-of-hate-a-915670.html> [cited 8 January 2014]. (It is worth noting that Gorbachev is usually remembered very differently in ‘Western’ countries. Social memory is always contingent.)

10 Additional last kings were considered particularly bad rulers. See Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *History and Legend: Ideas and Images in the Ming Historical Novels* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 148–49; Xuezhong Guo, *The Ideal Chinese Political Leader: A Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 9–10. The following examples involve, for the most part, well-known characters among the target readership of this volume. For the sake of brevity and space, I have included below notes only for figures who may not be as well-known among, at least, significant sectors of readers.

king as the Other who embodies features that the remembering group considers negative.

Significantly, the way in which these last rulers are remembered may have little and, at times, nothing to do with 'history' as we know it; some may not even be historically speaking last kings (e.g., Naram-Sin and Ashurbanipal), but all of them were remembered in ways that served didactic purposes for those remembering them and that suit well their own narratives about themselves. This is not surprising, since social memories that suit well the main meta-narratives and social mindscape of a particular group tend to be preferred by the relevant group over potential others.

But, of course, evil and/or weak last rulers are not the only option. At times, other patterns may end up being preferred, exactly because these characterizing patterns fit better the main meta-narratives and social mindscape of the remembering group. Thus, last rulers may be imagined as doomed, but defiant heroes embodying resistance. Clear examples are Cuauhtémoc in contemporary Mexican society,¹¹ Boudica, the Celtic queen, some twentieth century constructions of Bar-Kochba (or of the leaders of the first war against Rome), and Prince Lazar who fell in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 in a widespread version of Serbian social memory.¹² Often, in these cases, the last leader becomes not only a heroic martyr to be remembered and to some extent an embodying symbol of the entire remembering group, but also a type of a future leader or leader to come, thus creating a narrative that moves from calamity in the remembered past to a glorious period in the remembered (and socially imag-

11 On Cuauhtémoc, see, e.g., Lyman L. Johnson, "Digging Up Cuauhtémoc," in *Death, Dismemberment, and Memory: Body Politics in Latin America* (ed. idem; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 207–44. There are numerous places and individuals carrying the name Cuauhtémoc in contemporary Mexico. (Not surprisingly, there are almost no places carrying the name 'Cortés'). Cf. also Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), esp. 83–86; significantly, Paz's detractors in Mexico have maintained that he is no Cuauhtémoc but 'La Malinche,' that is, the very opposite of Cuauhtémoc; cf. Sandra Messinger Cypess, *Uncivil Wars: Elena Garro, Octavio Paz, and the Battle for Cultural Memory* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 33. In other words, the Cuauhtémoc of memory serves to construe and adjudicate important issues in contemporary Mexico.

12 See, e.g., Sabrina P. Ramet, "Dead Kings and National Myths: Why Myths of Founding and Martyrdom are Important," in *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the Post-Milošević Era* (ed. Ola Listhaug et al.; Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 267–98, esp. 281–92; cf. Laurie Johnston, "Religion and the Balkans—Blessing or Curse?" in *Understanding the War in Kosovo* (ed. Florian Biebe and Židas Daskalovski; London/Portland, Oreg.: Frank Cass, 2003), 184–95; 187.

ined/construed) future.¹³ The ‘last of’ is thus a pre-figuration of the next great first. Remembering the past becomes a way of constructing and remembering the future, and thus necessarily the latter conditions much of the former.

At times, however, last kings or rulers are relegated to very secondary mnemonic roles or practically forgotten. Such a process also says much about the main mnemonic narrative of the community, the construction of turning points in its plot, and about its identity. An obvious example is the case of Charles X who was the last king of France—Louis Philippe was king of the French, but even he is nowhere as remembered as Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The obvious issue at stake here is, of course, the centrality of the French Revolution. The much higher social mindshare allocated in ancient Israel to Saul over Ish-Ba'al is another example. Not surprisingly, from a perspective of social memory, Chronicles moves the narrative from Saul directly to David (1 Chr 10:13–11:1).¹⁴

Let me summarize the discussion up to this point: Last rulers tend to be memorable and when they are not, it is worth exploring why this is the case. When they are memorable, they are construed and remembered according to several main ‘types,’ some around the realm of images of the evil, sinful, weak, tyrannical ruler and some around that of the tragic, heroic leader, and even in some cases, the type of the future leader or leaders. When the last ruler tends to be construed as sinful and the like, this tends to involve some process of otherization, which at least, helps us as historians to construe what the remembering community considers to be the most negative traits. When the leader is linked to the future, constructions of that future play a generative role for the development of memories of the last king.

13 While—one may add—at the same time advancing a self-understanding of the present-day remembering community as a current manifestation of a long-suffering/martyred group and often, when appropriate, as even a Christ-like community. To be sure, self-identification with the suffering Christ carries in all these cases, even if in an implicit way, also a self-understanding as a future victorious Christ. Within these narratives, suffering and death lead to resurrection and victory. In fact, the suffering is seen as a pre-condition for the eventual final victory.

14 As the case of Saul demonstrates, multiple patterns may also be at work in the same community. There is no doubt that he was remembered as a sinner, worthy of death and 1 Chr 10:13 contributes to the shaping of his memory particularly by emphasizing this very aspect, but this is not the entire story. Readers of Chronicles were also readers of other texts in the community and vice versa. Saul was also remembered along the lines of a tragic and heroic last leader. Moreover, there existed also an underlying, minor mnemonic tendency reflecting and activating a connection between Saul and some form of future leadership (see Esth 2:5).

To be sure, there will always be cases in which these patterns are not present, and there will always be cases in which multiple patterns seem to be at work. These are the most interesting cases. It is possible that such complex sites of memory evolved as such because they emerged, originally, out of mnemonic struggles within a community or between communities or through processes of social or at least discursive encompassment of the 'other' (see the case of General Lee).¹⁵ Whether this is the case or not in a particular instance, when these complex sites of memory become an integral part of the social memory of a group that is removed from those in which the original mnemonic struggles or encompassment processes may have taken place, and likely has not much or any awareness of these past circumstances, a very different situation emerges. In such cases, various features, at times, in tension with each other co-exist within a particular figure of the past. The result is a sense of fuzziness and an inherent process of continuous balancing created by the embodiment of multiple, and at times seemingly contradicting, images in one single mnemonic figure.¹⁶

In what follows these considerations will guide the present construction of a reasonable reconstruction of the memory of Zedekiah within the frame of the general comprehensive and integrative social memory of the literati of the early Second Temple and the contribution of Chronicles to the shaping of such a Zedekiah of memory. Since shaping and negotiating the memory of Zedekiah among these literati had to involve, whether directly or indirectly, an engagement on matters such as the catastrophe of 586 B.C.E., constructions of exile, constructions of the Davidic dynasty, divine ('historical') causality, political thought, and crucially important, also images of Israel's future, this Zedekiah of memory is very much worth exploring. This holds true whether Zedekiah was minimized, maximized, characterized as wicked or as pious, as a type of a future leader or not; whether he was partially or fully 'demoted' from being the last king of Judah or not at all. Since all the above hold true to some extent within the remembering community discussed in this contribution, the figure of the Zedekiah of memory that existed among these literati serves in many

15 On grammars of encompassment, see Gerd Baumann, "Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach," in *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach* (ed. idem and Andre Gingrich; EASA Series 3; New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 18–50.

16 E.g., the case of Saul, see n. 14. See also Ehud Ben Zvi, "Exploring the Memory of Moses 'The Prophet' in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 335–64.

ways as an excellent ground to explore memories, worldviews, and key issues within the social mindscape of the community.

3 The Mnemonic Environment of the Zedekiah of Chronicles

To understand the contribution of Chronicles to the shaping of the memory of Zedekiah within the general mnemonic system of the community, it is imperative that, even if necessarily just from a bird's-eye view, the contributions of other texts to that image be explored, both for what they say by themselves and what they say about the mnemonic system at work within the community.¹⁷

Even the most cursory study of the partial memories of Zedekiah¹⁸ evoked by reading Kings shows—in the light of the transcultural mnemonic trends to construe last rulers discussed above—a very strong tendency to minimize the impact of this last king. To be sure, he was remembered as sinful, but readers of Kings were asked to understand that neither the end came about because of him nor tentative new beginnings have any connection with him; in fact, as much as Kings hints at them, they are connected to a previous king, Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 25:27–30).¹⁹ Obviously, the Zedekiah evoked by reading Kings was not

17 This is so, because the community read and was aware of all these texts and considered the implied authors of all of them to be godly and authoritative voices. Thus all the partial memories about Zedekiah evoked by reading one of these texts were directly or indirectly informed by and informing one another, drawing attention to or away from features associated with Zedekiah in each of the works, while at the very same time, integrating them by embodying them all in their Zedekiah of memory. The same holds, of course, for any important figure of ancient past whose memory was reflected, shaped and evoked by more than text considered to be 'authoritative'/'godly' within the community (e.g., David, Isaiah, and Moses).

18 Obviously, this is not the place for a comprehensive analysis of the account of Zedekiah in Kings. See, e.g., Emma Abate, *La fine del regno di Sedecia* (Textos y estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" 76; Madrid: CSIC, 2008). On the account in Kings, and the question of its historicity and its relation to other accounts, see also Juha Pakkala, "Zedekiah's Fate and the Dynastic Succession," *JBL* 125 (2006): 443–52. On redactional and text critical issues in the relevant text in Kings see also Raymond F. Person, "11 Kings 24,18–25,30 and Jeremiah 52: A Text-Critical Case Study in the Redaction History of the Deuteronomistic History," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 174–205.

19 On the surface, one may have anticipated that in a community or at least in a text that asked the community to associate new beginnings with Jehoiachin, a tendency to remember, at least, this king as not an evil-doer—and as a substantially memorable character would have emerged. But such a tendency would have been strongly dis-preferred by the ideological and narrative grammar at work in a book such as Kings. After all, in Kings, the

patterned as a heroic resisting figure,²⁰ but also not even as a tragic but still positive character. In fact, the real, ‘good’ tragic hero in the story of Kings is Josiah, whose great deeds cannot stop the calamity from coming and who is well aware of this fact.²¹ It is particularly noteworthy that whereas the previous great reforming king Hezekiah is remembered as followed by a memorable villain who undoes his reforms (Manasseh) in Kings, there is no room for such a character following Josiah. After the king dies, the gates of calamity open and neither memorable villains nor heroes have a place.

Of course, all this requires an emphatic rejection of the position that the last king is the worst and the very reason for the calamity. Interestingly, Kings

kings following Josiah had to be evil-doers and not very much worth remembering. The basic evaluation of Jehoiachin in 2 Kgs 24:9 is not explicitly balanced elsewhere in Kings and certainly this book does not draw particular attention to any attenuation of such evaluation. It is worth noting that the tendency to positively characterize Jehoiachin as a king eventually emerged, though not in Kings. For instance, Josephus explicitly depicts monarchic period Jehoiachin in positive terms in *Ant.* 10.100; see also 2 *Bar.* 1:3 (“for the former tribes were forced by their kings to sin, but these two [Judah and Benjamin] have themselves forced and compelled their kings to sin”), which likely refers to both Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

20 See 2 Kgs 25:4–5; a point even heightened in the parallel text in Jer 52:7; see Abate, *La fine del regno di Sedecia*, 189.

21 I discussed elsewhere the Josiah of the Persian period. See Ehud Ben Zvi, “Imagining Josiah’s Book and the Implications of Imagining it in Early Persian Yehud,” in *Berührungspunkte. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Rüdiger Schmitt et al.; AOAT 250; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2008), 193–212; idem, “Observations on Josiah’s Account in Chronicles and Implications for Reconstructing the Worldview of the Chronicler,” in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman* (ed. Yairah Amit et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 89–106 and idem, “Josiah and the Prophetic Books: Some Observations,” in *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; LHBOTS 393; European Seminar in Historical Methodology 5; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 47–64. For another reconstruction of the Josiah of the Persian Period, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Remembering Josiah,” in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 236–56. For Josiah in Chronicles, see also Louis C. Jonker, *Reflections of King Josiah in Chronicles: Late Stages of the Josiah Reception in 2 Chr 34f* (Textpragmatische Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel 2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003); Hee-Sook Bae, *Vereinte Suche nach JHWH. Die Hiskianische und Josianische Reform in der Chronik* (BZAW 355; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005) and Ken A. Ristau, “Reading and Rereading Josiah: The Chronicler’s Representation of Josiah for the Postexilic Community,” in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Ken A. Ristau; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 219–47.

communicated to its target readership that actually this is more of a rule than an exception. To be sure, this is the case insofar as it concerns Hoshea, the last king of the Northern Kingdom (see 2 Kgs 17 and esp. 2 Kgs 17:2). Ahab is a complex figure in Kings, but still the main villain for the house of Omri within Kings and in the accepted memory of the period among the literati (see 2 Kgs 21:3, 13; cf. Mic 6:16 and *passim* in Chronicles²²). Of course, Ahab was not the last king of the Omrite dynasty. The same pattern holds true for Jeroboam I, who is the king remembered for causing the fall of his dynasty, but not its last king. Neither Elah (see 1 Kgs 16:8–10) nor Zechariah (2 Kgs 14:29; 15:8–11), who are actually last kings of their respective dynasties, are remembered as main or memorable villains. In fact, the Kings suggests that there is very little worth remembering about these two, except for their being assassinated.

This strong and repeated emphasis on the last king as neither the worst monarch nor the reason for the fall of a dynasty or polity informed the reading community. This sustained preference for constructions of the last king as neither a memorable great villain nor an heroic character, but actually someone whose actions are not something that is so worth remembering (note the lack of details in 2 Kgs 17:2), could not but create an expectation within that readership for a somewhat similar construction of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, as neither the worst king of Judah nor the real cause of the fall of Judah. The book of Kings delivers on that expectation.

When one encounters consistent, strong deviations from usual, cross-cultural mnemonic grammars of construing last rulers, it makes sense to examine them carefully, for usually there is a reason for the divergence (see above, section 2). Often deviations from common cross-cultural mnemonic patterns are explainable by and point at some important and crucial feature of the discourse of the remembering society. Such deviations from ‘normal’ patterns of memories of last rulers are often associated with or a response to a lack of correspondence between (a) significant aspects of the community’s main mnemonic (meta-)narrative or some important section of it and (b) any substantial stress on the figure of the ‘actual’ last ruler.

Clearly, this is the case in Kings. The slot of the sinful king whose evil brings about the end is not only allocated to Manasseh in Kings, but also, and to a large extent, *has* to be assigned to him. This is so, because Manasseh and Josiah are, in this book, the main two characters of the late monarchic period and

22 I discussed elsewhere the house of Ahab in Chronicles, see my “The House of Omri/Ahab in Chronicles,” in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; LHBOTS 421; European Seminar in Historical Methodology 6; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 41–53.

they are shaped as heightened opposite figures. In other words, the main mnemonic narrative is partially structured around and remembered in terms of a 'hero' and a corresponding 'villain' (and *vice versa*)—a situation common to many memorable narratives. The hero and the villain complement and necessitate each other. In Kings, Manasseh plays the role of the evil king whose actions bring about the end and Josiah that of the tragic pious character. The former multiplies wrongness and ensures that YHWH will act against Jerusalem and Judah, whereas the other although successfully removes all worldly signs of the previous wrongdoing, still cannot remove their lasting effects on Judah, in YHWH's economy, as construed in this book.

Of course, there is a reason for structuring the memory of the past in such a way in this particular book. It serves well to maximize the social mindshare for the pious hero, and above all the remembered reform of Josiah—whether historical or not. It ensures that the reform becomes the high point of the remembered late monarchic period and strongly legitimizes it, against any potential counter-argument.²³ Preference for such structuring of the mnemonic narrative of the fall of the monarchic polity and Jerusalem goes together (and cannot but go together) with a strong preference for minimizing the chances for the development of extremely memorable, royal characters after the death of Josiah.

There are, of course, additional and complementary plots at work. For instance, the community is also asked to remember that the people from the very beginning behaved in sinful ways and caused the well-anticipated calamity, which was already foreseen by Moses (e.g., Deut 30:1–5; 32:19–25 and, among others, the pragmatic message in late Persian Yehud of Deut 28:15–68; 29:13–27; 30:17–19; 31:19–22). This plot serves to emphasize agency in post-monarchic Israel, the figure of Moses, the primacy of *torah*—a point strongly communicated also by the central role the reform of Josiah—and the importance of prophetic voices teaching *torah* (2 Kgs 21:8–9; cf. 2 Kgs 17:13), who in the past were rejected, but hopefully will not be in the future if further calamity is to be avoided.

Within this mnemonic narrative, there is again little room for Zedekiah to become a major character. Thus it is not surprising that the reference to the failure to listening to *torah* and commandments is explicitly mentioned within Manasseh's account not within Zedekiah's; although Zedekiah was presented

23 On these matters, see esp. Hermann-Josef Stipp, "Remembering Josiah's Reforms in Kings," in *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; FAT 85; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 225–38. The (partial) 'Mosaic' portrayal of Josiah, obviously, reinforces this point.

as an evil-doer, nothing explicit about the evil he did was construed as worth remembering, and even the crucial decision to rebel was framed primarily as an outcome of YHWH's pre-existing decision to destroy the temple (lit. to "expel the people of Judah and Jerusalem from YHWH's presence," see 2 Kgs 24:20) rather than as the (real) cause of its destruction. Finally, since the book of Kings associates hope for the future with Jehoiachin, it is not surprising that the text would create memorable images of the end of Zedekiah's line. He is a dead end and may be counted as 'childless' (contrast with Jer 22:28–30; see below).

Jeremianic texts also evoked images of Zedekiah.²⁴ Readers of the prophetic books encountered and learned from and about the prophetic characters that they evoked as they read the different books. A crucial role of the prophetic books was actually to bring to the present of the community, as it were, the prophets of old. Reading Jeremianic texts was bound to turn Zedekiah into a secondary, but still necessary character to remember, because of his many interactions with Jeremiah. In other words, to construe, remember, and encounter vicariously Jeremiah, the literati had, at times, to remember, construe, and encounter Zedekiah. This not only allowed Jeremianic texts to encode and communicate memories whose inclusion in Kings would have been strongly dis-preferred, but actually required them to do so.

This said, clearly there is a Jeremianic voice evoking memories of Zedekiah that recalls among the literati the voice of Kings on the matter, as extensive parallels occur (cf. 2 Kgs 24:18–25:21 and Jer 52:1–27; see also Jer 39:1–10). At times, there are, however, substantial differences between some Jeremianic voices and those in Kings. Reading Jer 38:17–18 and remembering Zedekiah is remembering that had Zedekiah acted differently, the city would not have fallen. Doing so is bringing memories of Zedekiah in line with a common tendency in memories about last rulers, that is, the last ruler and his or her deeds cause the 'end.' In other words, reading Jer 38:17–18 and remembering Zedekiah involves 'normalizing' social memory and 'correcting' the strong deviation

24 For studies of Zedekiah in (the book of) Jeremiah, mainly though not only from redactional critical perspectives, see, e.g., Hermann-Josef Stipp, "Zedekiah in the Book of Jeremiah: On the Formation of a Biblical Character," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 627–48; John Applegate, "The Fate of Zedekiah: Redactional Debate in the Book of Jeremiah," *VT* 58 (1998): 137–60; idem, "The Fate of Zedekiah: Redactional Debate in the Book of Jeremiah. Part II," *VT* 58 (1998): 301–8; Elena Di Pede, « Jérémie et les rois de Juda, Sédécias et Joaquin », *VT* 56 (2006): 452–69; Juha Pakkala, "Zedekiah's Fate"; Abate, *La fine del regno di Sedecia*; Rannfrid I. Thelle, "Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah (MT): Negotiating a Power Shift," in *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (ed. Hans Barstad and Reinhard G. Kratz; *BZAW* 388; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter; 2009), 187–232, esp. 224–32.

communicated by Kings, on precisely these matters. A tendency to stress that Zedekiah was responsible for the calamity is likely to go ahead with tendencies to heighten a negative characterization of the king, and this actually happens within a voice within the Jeremianic tradition.

But there are other voices also embodied in the Jeremiah of the literati's memory. Reading Jeremiah meant also that Zedekiah was to be imagined and remembered *also* as a ruler who was not necessarily so much an evil king, but an ineffective one (see, for instance, MT Jer 37:17–21).²⁵ Remembering him as a king who is not in control of his subjects or at least the elite among them (e.g., Jer 34:8–11) and whose will in practice was subordinated to that of his officers who actually lorded over him (e.g., Jer 38:4–28) is remembering a king who may not necessarily be evil, but who let disorder overcome order and whose image is to some extent, within the discourse of the period, partially feminized and certainly far removed from the 'masculine' warrior king. He is the weak ineffective king who ends up paying for his weakness with his kingdom and his life (e.g., Jer 34:21–22).²⁶

This aspect of the Zedekiah of memory associated with Jeremiah's voice serves also to shape a partial contrast to Jehoiakim that in itself encapsulated a significant narrative: Whereas Jehoiakim overrules the wishes of, at least, some of his advisors, to do evil (Jer 36:10–26; esp. vv. 19, 25), Zedekiah is overruled by (some of) his officers and thus still evil doing prevails and catastrophe ensues.²⁷ Whether the king is an evil-doer or a weak and perhaps even pathetic character, calamity awaits. Although the images of the evil and the weak king are in this case divided between two figures, from a conceptual and communicative perspective, they converge and together conform to some typical patterns of constructing last kings.

Yet at the same time, the not necessarily evil Zedekiah may evolve to fulfill another one of the basic characterizations of last kings. By listening to Jeremiah's voice through their readings, the literati activated also memories

25 The LXX text presents a more negative image of Zedekiah. For a comparative study of MT Jer 37:18–21 and its LXX counterpart, LXX Jer 44:18–21 and for a similar case between MT Jer 38:9 and LXX Jer 45:9, see Stipp, "Zedekiah," esp. 638–41; cf. Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1981), 296–98. Both versions could have co-existed within the repertoire of the Jerusalem-centered literati of the early Second Temple period.

26 Although the context suggests that Zedekiah was not among those who "turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them again into subjection as slaves" (Jer 34:11; NRSV), he is still punished.

27 Cf. with memories of Zedekiah reflected, shaped in and evoked by *Ant* 10.103–105, 10.120 or, 2 *Bar.* 1:3 and in an even later society, *b. Arak. 17a*; *b. Sanh. 103a*.

that at the very least hinted at a construction of Zedekiah as a positive character and thus one who is worthy of providing a link to the future (see Jer 23:5–6).²⁸ This tendency ended up being clearly manifested in 4Q470.²⁹ But it is unlikely to have emerged out of nothing in the late Second Temple period. It builds on Jer 23:5–6, and on Jer 32:5 and Jer 34:2–5 that communicated to the literati that the end of Zedekiah portrayed in Kings was probably not the end of his story in YHWH's view. To be sure, this development was facilitated by memories of Zedekiah as a weak, overpowered, but not necessarily a villain king that were mentioned above, but was not necessitated by them.

At the same time, the book of Jeremiah, just as Kings shaped a link between Jehoiachin and hope in the post-calamity future that clearly and explicitly skips Zedekiah. This tendency taken to its full potential would entail demoting the latter from the slot of the last king in social memory. Significantly, this generative mnemonic tendency to skip Zedekiah finds its most clear expression in yet another book, Ezekiel, in which the last king is actually Jehoiachin.³⁰

Moreover, even within this mnemonic tendency there are some differences. Kings, as one would expect, along with the parallel text in Jeremiah (see 2 Kgs 25:27–30 and Jer 52:31–34), emphasizes Jehoiachin himself and the royal family as an opening for the future. Jeremiah 24 shifts the focus from the king to the people who are symbolically associated with the king. Of course, from a

28 The name of the future king in the LXX version is *Iosedek*. Cf. Johan Lust, "Messianism and the Greek Version of Jeremiah: Jer 23,5–6 and 33,14–26," in idem, *Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays* (ed. Katrin Hauspie; BETL 178; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 41–67; 42–54, 66; and also Stipp, "Zedekiah," 644. Note, however, that for the present purposes what counts is how the literati of the Late Persian or Early Hellenistic Judah may have read this text, both at the denotative and connotative levels.

29 On 4Q470 see Erik Larson, "4Q470 and the Angelic Rehabilitation of King Zedekiah," *DSD* 1 (1994): 210–18; Erik Larson, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and John Strugnell, "4QText Mentioning Hezekiah," in *Qumran Cave 4, XIV: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (ed. Magen Broshi et al.; DJD 19; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 235–44; Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–1998).

30 Following Christophe Nihan, we may note that "the oracles and visions in Ezekiel are dated according to the year of the deportation of this king (see 1:2), as though he were still the legitimate ruler in Judah"; idem, "The Memory of Ezekiel in Postmonarchic Yehud," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 415–48; 441. Significantly, there is a voice in Ezekiel, according to which he (embodying, of course, his descendants) is to be imagined as the last who becomes the new 'first' (see Ezek 17:22–24). Significantly, there is no negative portrayal of Jehoiachin in Ezekiel. As for Zedekiah, in contrast, see Ezek 12:12–14; 17:11–21; 21:30 and Nihan, "The Memory of Ezekiel," 440–41.

system perspective, both interact with a text such as Jer 22:28–30, which concludes by stating “none of his [Jehoiachin’s] offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah.” Here we have yet another Jeremianic voice to which the literati cannot but pay attention and which also influences their memories of the past and the future that they vicariously experience through their readings and social imagination.

Obviously, this analysis may be further developed, but the main picture suffices for the present purposes. The mnemonic environment in which the Zedekiah of Chronicles functions is characterized by multiple voices that mutually inform, highlight, and activate or balance others. All these Jeremianic voices reflect, in one way or another, common generative grammars for memories of last rulers. Whereas the various images were, on the surface, in ‘logical’ tension with one another, all of them were embodied in one single character of the past (Jeremiah). The result is that Jeremiah becomes a site of memory characterized by integrative fuzziness. This, however, is actually to be expected within the discourse of these literati and fits well the tendency within their social mindscape towards a substantial degree of fuzziness, particularly in relation to their main sites of memory.³¹

Finally, similar images may be expressed in different books and embodied in more than one communicator in the past of the community. This is so, because, after all, the underlying grammars generating preferences (or dis-preferences) for certain types of memories are, above all, society bound.

4 Chronicles’ Contribution

What did Chronicles bring to the mix? How did remembering the Zedekiah of Chronicles contribute to the shaping of a multi-faceted, communal site of memory, a Zedekiah who integrates all these perspectives and embodies all these images in one person?³² At one level, just as Kings, Chronicles communicates to

31 Cf. with their Moses, who spoke in ‘D’, ‘H’ and ‘P’ and communicated multiple messages, some of them in logical tension with each other, and still all of them were associated with Moses, embodied and integrated all in their Moses of memory. Cf. with the community’s image of $\Upsilon\text{H}\omega\text{H}$. I discussed these matters in Ben Zvi, “Exploring the Memory of Moses,” esp. 362–64.

32 For recent approaches and questions about Zedekiah and Chronicles other than those advanced here, see, e.g., Bob Becking, “More than a Pawn in Their Game: Zedekiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 2 Chronicles 36:11–21,” in *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes* (ed. Jeremy Corley and Harm van Grol; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 7; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011),

the community that the last four kings of Judah should not occupy a lot of its mindshare and thus reinforces this message. Certainly, once Josiah dies, the story moves quickly into the calamity. In fact, in Chronicles only twenty verses separate between the crowning of Jehoahaz, Josiah's successor, and the burning the temple (2 Chr 36:1–19). This is less than the narrative space assigned to a story ending with a non-functioning, but still standing temple, namely the account of Ahaz (2 Chr 28:1–27), or for that matter, to the story of Manasseh (2 Chr 33:1–20). It is certainly far less than the space allocated to the account of Hezekiah, the king who re-opened the gates of the temple, after Ahaz, or that of Josiah. Chronicles suggested to its readership that all these periods contained more matters worthy of being mentioned in the book, that is, remembered by the community, than the account of all the last kings together.

The point of Chronicles, here, is that as soon as Josiah died, the gates that withheld the divine punishment promised by Huldah, and understood by Josiah, were finally broken. On these matters, Chronicles and Kings mutually reinforce the points communicated by the other and a particular preferred trend in social memory in ancient Israel is noticeable.³³

Moreover, it is even more remarkable that even within the little narrative space assigned to the last four kings, the account of Zedekiah proper which covers eleven regnal years is allocated in Chronicles only three verses (2 Chr 36:11–13). This is exactly the same number of verses assigned in the book to the account of Jehoiahaz that covers only three months (vv. 1–3) and just one more than Jehoiachin's, which covers a bit less than 100 days (vv. 9–10). Even Jehoiakim, who reigned eleven years like Zedekiah, is allocated five verses (vv. 4–8). Most significantly, the longest section within 2 Chr 36 begins with the *disappearance* of Zedekiah from the story and the concurrent appearance of the priests and the people and ends, of course, with the exile. This section is, however, only eight verses long (vv. 14–21).³⁴

As we all know, allocations of narrative space are only a part of the story. Chronicles contributed to the shaping of the memory of Zedekiah not only

257–71; idem, "Zedekiah, Josephus and the Dating of the Books of Chronicles," *SJOT* 25 (2011): 217–33.

33 See n. 21.

34 The length of the section has something to do with Chronicles' construction of exile. Clearly this is not the place for addressing the matter and in any case, I discussed the matter elsewhere. See Ehud Ben Zvi, "Toward a Sense of Balance: Remembering the Catastrophe of Monarchic Judah/(Ideological) Israel and Exile through Reading Chronicles in late Yehud," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (ed. Paul Evans and Tyler Williams; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 247–65.

by what it did not directly evoke, but also by what it did ask the community to remember about his reign. Japhet has maintained that Chronicles attributes the destruction of Jerusalem exclusively to Zedekiah's generation.³⁵ It is clear that reading and rereading Chronicles conjured within the reading/remembering community a memory of Zedekiah as responsible for the fall of Jerusalem. Chronicles did so by stressing that he "did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of the LORD" (2 Chr 36:12b) and that he "rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God" (2 Chr 36:13a).

The first reference not only conforms Zedekiah to the well-known pattern of those who rejected the godly prophets, but also draws attention to and activates the memories evoked within the community through the reading of numerous Jeremianic texts. Remembering Zedekiah through the act of reading Chronicles was remembering his relation to Jeremiah and activating memories such as those evoked by Jer 38:17–18. Thus reading texts such as Jer 38:17–18 in Jeremiah informed the community that Chronicles was particularly on target, but also *vice versa*, reading Chronicles reinforced memories evoked by some voices and texts in Jeremiah. In other words, a mutually reinforcing mnemonic loop emerged and reinforced the involved voices.

The reference to Zedekiah's breaking an oath of loyalty sworn by God shaped another mutually reinforcing mnemonic loop, this time between the memory of Zedekiah evoked in Chronicles and that in Ezek 17:19. This loop, just as the one mentioned above, carried a strong didactic message. In addition, the fact that Chronicles parallels Kings, but did not directly ask the readers to recall the crucial statement in 2 Kgs 24:20, contributed to the shaping of an important message: Zedekiah was responsible for the destruction.³⁶

From the perspective of the larger mnemonic system, one may say then that some Jeremianic and Chronistic voices mutually reinforced each other, and even integrated Ezekielian memories and all served to shift the memory of Zedekiah to a more 'normalized' situation, that is, one in which the last ruler is blamed for the ruin of his (or her) polity.

35 See Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 1069.

36 But so was his generation (see 2 Chr 36:14–16) including those who were particularly responsible for maintaining the purity of the temple and the people in general, who also rejected the prophets. I will address to this point and its significance in what follows. Second Chronicles 36:14–16 raises similar memories to those in, for instance, Ezek 36:17, raising thus another mutually reinforcing mnemonic loop, though advancing a complementary but still different message than those discussed above.

Since this construction of Zedekiah is one of the preferred outcomes of a transcultural mnemonic generative grammar, it is not surprising that this Zedekiah of memory will keep appearing in various remembering communities across time, and, for instance, it populates some memories encoded in some rabbinic material.³⁷ But this does not mean that this is the only potentially preferred characterization of Zedekiah as a last ruler, and it is clearly not the only voice that the literati of the late Persian or early Hellenistic period ‘heard’ when reading and rereading Chronicles.

For one, the reference to 70 years of Sabbath rest that is so crucial to the explanation of exile in Chronicles (see 2 Chr 36:21) implies both a span of 420, not 11 years—the length of Zedekiah’s reign according to 2 Chr 36:11—preceding the catastrophe and a clear notion of a cumulative burden of impurity caused by sin.³⁸ Significantly, within this perspective neither the land’s cumulative impurity can be cleansed by Josiah’s or anyone’s reign, for that matter, nor can be caused only by one generation (cf. 2 Chr 36:14; cf. also Ezek 36:17). Finally, the explanation given in 1 Chr 9:1 for the exile of Judah (and Israel; cf. 9:3)—*בְּעַלְמָוָה*—cannot refer only to the “unfaithfulness” of those living during the reign of Zedekiah.

In addition, Chronicles adds to the mnemonic marginalization of the blame of Zedekiah and his generation by allocating a small amount of text (and social mindscape) to Zedekiah or to the post-Josianic period for that matter (see above). Had Chronicles wanted to convince its intended and primary readership that the fall of Jerusalem, the exile and the worst catastrophe in Israelite history were all the results of Zedekiah’s sins and those who followed him during his relatively short rule, the community would have expected a substantial recounting of them. Nothing of the sort appears in Chronicles. As mentioned above, the sins of Zedekiah receive, if anything, less narrative attention than those of other kings (e.g., Ahaz;³⁹ see above).

One may be tempted to maintain that from a mnemonic system perspective, memories of Zedekiah evoked by Chronicles and Kings mutually reinforce

37 E.g., *Deut. Rab.* 5.11.

38 Cf. for instance, Hugh G. M. Williamson, *1–2 Chronicles* (NCB; London: Marshall Morgan & Scott and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 418; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 2324–25.

39 It is worth mentioning that in Chronicles, the main ‘hero’—‘anti-hero’/‘villain’ pair of the late monarchic period consists of Ahaz and Hezekiah, not Manasseh and Josiah. A study of reasons for and implications of this shift in terms of social memory requires a separate discussion that cannot be taken up here.

each other in terms of marginalizing Zedekiah's blame. While this is true, an important distinction has to be made. A strong voice activated when reading 2 Kgs 24:3, and mutually reinforcing with the Jeremianic voice activated by reading Jer 15:4, assigned the blame to Manasseh. In Chronicles, Manasseh partially stands for Israel. Like Israel, he is punished and goes to Babylon, but there he repents and returns to the land and becomes an important reforming king and the prototype of repenting Israel. To some extent, he is even a prototype of a future Israel that is still living in the current world—not the world at the 'end of history,' but one who directly rules the land, even if as a vassal unlike the present Israel of Chronicles.⁴⁰

As it is well known, since social memory tends to be organized in terms of narratives, personages from the past are most often remembered as characters within particular memorable plots and in relation to other important figures. It is not surprising thus that features of the remembered Zedekiah were interwoven with those of Manasseh/Israel, but the particular ways in which this is manifested and communicated in Chronicles are worth exploring. In fact, the first and most significant deed that the community was asked to remember about Zedekiah when reading Chronicles is that "he did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of YHWH" *וְלֹא נִכְנַע מִלְפָּנָי יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא מִפִּי יְהוָה* (2 Chr 36:12b). The crucial turning point in Manasseh's/Israel's story, however, was that when taken captive to Babylon, "he humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors" *וַיִּכְנַע מְאֹד מִלְפָּנָי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָיו* (2 Chr 33:12b).⁴¹ The connections are obvious and the language of these texts draws the reading community's attention to them.

40 The construction of Manasseh in Chronicles strongly suggests that from the perspective communicated by this book, Israel repented in exile. Although the return of Israel and Manasseh to the land parallel each other and conveyed a sense that the figure of the 'king' is overtaken by that of the 'people' (see below), there is still the issue that Manasseh was remembered as ruling Judah in a way that was *not* fully comparable with the political roles of the 'people' in Yehud, during the time of the Chronicler. Manasseh thus provides a sense of hope for a future increase in local autonomy, within the general imperial frame.

41 A full discussion on the Manasseh evoked by Chronicles cannot be carried out within the scope of this contribution. The argument here is simply build upon some of the points developed in Ehud Ben Zvi, "Reading Chronicles and Reshaping the Image of Manasseh," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (ed. Paul Evans and Tyler Williams; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 121–40. For a different (and to a significant extent complementary) study and set of questions about the Manasseh in Chronicles see Gary N. Knoppers, "Saint or Sinner? Manasseh in Chronicles," in *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor*

On the one hand, the plot moves temporally from Manasseh to Zedekiah, from the pious to the sinful king and as it does so, it goes along the grain of common temporality and communicates an explanation of the calamity, namely Zedekiah/Israel failed to listen to YHWH's word just as Manasseh/Israel did before exile (2 Chr 33:10). To be sure, according to Chronicles, Manasseh/Israel humbled itself, but only after he/it was deported to Babylon. Zedekiah and his people in 2 Chr 36:11–13, however, are not yet deported in the world of the story and so they cannot humble themselves. When read in this way, a plot moving from Zedekiah/Israel before exile to Manasseh/Israel after the exile was shaped and given that the second section of Manasseh's reign is better than the one in the present of the community (note the proliferation of prophets implied in 2 Chr 33:18, Manasseh's rule over the land), it is also a plot whose trajectory led into a hoped and hopeful future. As such, it converged with and activated plots that the community was aware of (see Jer 32:5, cf. Jer 34:5) and with images of Zedekiah as a link to the future, which again reflected common, transcultural processes of memory formation meant to bridge the discontinuity created by the figure of the 'last ruler.'

But there is more, since Manasseh/Israel must leave the land for exile, Manasseh could not be mnemonically associated only with Zedekiah in Chronicles. The figure of Zedekiah had to be complemented for these purposes by that of Jehoiakim (cf. 2 Chr 36:6 with 2 Chr 33:11). Zedekiah is thus construed not only as a counterpoint to Jehoiakim (as in some Jeremianic memories about Zedekiah), but also and mainly as a complement to him, and both of them together, provide a type of pre-exile Manasseh.⁴²

This is consistent with and reflects strong preference for a mnemonic pattern that closely associates the last kings of Judah. This tendency will eventually be expanded to almost all kings in Sirach (see Sir 49:4–7).⁴³

Returning to the issue of responsibility for the destruction, Chronicles conveys a sense that the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed because of the

of Pancratius C. Beentjes (ed. Jeremy Corley and Harm van Grol; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 7; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 211–29.

42 Since Chronicles does not report and thus does not ask the remembering community to remember anything particular about the eight-year-old Jehoiachin (2 Chr 36:9), besides the usual statement יהוה בְּעֵינֵי יְהוֹיָכִין הָרַע, Jehoiachin could not have taken the role of Jehoiakim as counterpart of Zedekiah for these purposes.

43 In Sirach all the kings, except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah are considered one group of unworthy rulers who were great sinners, because they abandoned the law of the Most High and thus justifiably, the kings of Judah came to an end (Sir 49:4–7), to be replaced eventually by a High Priest like Simeon (see below). The explicit reference to Jeremiah (vv. 6–7) suggests that to some extent all these kings have been 'Zedekianized.'

actions of Zedekiah and in multiple and quite emphatic ways also that what he did actually did not matter much. This is not surprising because Chronicles emerged out of a well attested worldview reflected in multiple mnemonic narratives in which dual causality plays a central role. A few examples suffice to make the point: on the one hand the ‘reason’ that Amnon raped Tamar and Absalom killed Amnon, rebelled against David and had intercourse with his wives is David’s sin and YHWH’s punishment for that sin, but on the other, this never relinquished Amnon or Absalom from their deeds. In fact, the community remembered that they were punished for them. Likewise, YHWH decided that the king of Babylon has to destroy Jerusalem, but Babylon will still be punished for destroying Jerusalem; Jacob has to cheat Esau, according to YHWH’s plan, but this does not exonerate Jacob.

Double causality plays an important role in socializing the community, by means of mnemonic narratives, because it inculcates (and balances) both YHWH’s determination of the future and human agency and responsibility. The community knows that the temple had to be destroyed and the land purified, knows of the divine announcement communicated to Josiah, but still has to remember the responsibility of Zedekiah. Moreover, and, as mentioned above and see 2 Chr 36:14–16, not only his responsibility, but also that of his generation.

To be sure, as Chronicles brought up saliently the generation of Zedekiah it shaped within the community a network of multiple and mutually reinforcing images involving memories encoded in Jeremianic and Ezekielian texts (e.g., Ezek 36:17). But reinforcement points at mnemonic significance, it is not ‘significant’ by itself.

Foregrounding the role of the people and the priests during Zedekiah’s time was not only a reflection of a trend to a more consultative/collaborative monarchy in a strand of political thought,⁴⁴ but also a way to connote identification between the Israel of Zedekiah’s time and Israel in general. After all, rejecting prophets was associated with Israel already during Moses times. Moreover, 2 Chr 36:13b reads וַיִּקַּשׂ אֶת-עֲרֹפוֹ וַיִּאֱמָן אֶת-לְבָבוֹ מִשׁוֹב אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. The explicit and salient reference to the “stiffening the neck” recalled and activated memories that go well beyond Zedekiah and his generation. They evoked and activated those of Moses and the Israel of his time, and actually turned Zedekiah into a type of sinful ‘all’ (trans- and cross-temporal) Israel” and *vice-versa* (see Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; Deut 9:6, 13, 16; 31:27; 2 Kgs 17:14; Jer 7:26; 17:23; 2 Chr 30:8).

44 Cf. Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* (2d rev. ed.; BEATAJ 9; Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1997), 416–28.

But there is more at stake from the perspective of social memory in the way in which Chronicles asked the community to consider shaping the past. The readers of Chronicles were asked to draw particular attention neither to memories of Zedekiah the deportee (unlike 2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 39:7; Ezek 12:13; 17:16) nor to memorable images of the punished Zedekiah evoked by 2 Kgs 25:3–7; Jer 39:2–7; 52:6–11. The literati reading and rereading Chronicles were ‘told’ that whatever happened to Zedekiah the person was not worth remembering. In fact, after 2 Chr 36:13, he is not mentioned again, and even v. 13b more than hints at its transition into Israel (see above).

Zedekiah’s presence fades from the text and from activated memory once he rebelled against the King of Babylon, as he both had to and chose to do. After that event that set in motion the next narrative move, he is construed as irrelevant in terms of social memory. As the historical narrative of Chronicles moves towards the calamity, it is the people who come to the forefront and take the leadership role, beginning with the heads of the priests. The king, the kingdom, and the monarchic polity begin thus their transformation into priesthood and temple oriented community.⁴⁵

Moreover, just as Kings highlights the message that the last is not the worst by shaping and recalling various and diverse memories all converging on that point, Chronicles highlights its point by construing and communicating memories of another falling and fading king and kingdom, namely that of Northern Israel (see 2 Chr 28). Significantly, within that narrative/memory, as the king fades among Northern Israelites, those who are first imagined to be in positions of authority are tribal chiefs and army leaders (see 2 Chr 28:9–15). But when it comes to Judah and Jerusalem, as in the case discussed here, the heads of the priests, the priests and the people come to the forefront. This said, it is as important to notice that Chronicles reminded the readers that the priests and the people failed, unlike the heads of Ephraim, because the Judahites did not listen to their “Oded” (i.e. their prophetic voice) and because they, at this stage in the narrative, have *not yet* been in exile. In other words, those who take the place of Zedekiah have yet to become Manasseh, humble themselves and listen to the prophets (2 Chr 33:18).

Chronicles used a mnemonic narrative to make a major point: the community stands now for the previous, faded king. The temple stands now for the faded palace; the Davidic line becomes Israel and the latter is both partially kingized and priestized.⁴⁶ The collective tragedy takes over that of the last

45 Cf. Sirach (see n. 43).

46 To be sure, images of a kingized and priestized Israel are not unique to Chronicles (cf. with the image of the covenant between YHWH and Israel; or see a text such as

ruler, and a collective image of hope for the future takes over the image usually associated with the last ruler (contrast with 2 Kgs 25:27–30//Jer 52:31–34).

But as we all know, this is not the only voice in Chronicles or in the discourse of the community.⁴⁷ To be sure, this is certainly one important voice present and activated through memories, both inside and outside Chronicles, but just one voice, again both inside and outside Chronicles.⁴⁸

Chronicles here participated in a larger social and ideological endeavor of exploring, balancing and above all, negotiating various positions on the matter of the future of Israel (and the Davidides) and of shaping integrative fuzziness through the memories it evoked in the community. To be sure, Chronicles was not alone. These activities involved interacting in various ways with multiple ‘godly’ voices shaping memories of the past that were evoked within the community by texts and sets of texts—within and across literary genre boundaries—that existed within the core textual repertoire of the community. Needless to say, these voices informed each other and at times were ‘embodied’ as it were in single characters of the past that turned into important sites of memory (e.g., Zedekiah, Jehoiakim, David, Josiah, Jeremiah).

Exod 19:6). Basic concepts are bound to be manifested in multiple works, because they are not essentially book-dependant, but a reflection of an ideological world and its corresponding generative grammar for preferred memories of the past or the future.

47 There is considerable debate as to whether Chronicles shows a royalist, messianic tendency or a non-royalist, non-messianic, communal and temple-centered tendency, and to what extent these agendas are future and possibly utopian or present focused—the latter in particular, but *not exclusively*, for the non-royalist, communal/temple-centered agenda. For a recent survey of many of the important positions taken in research on the matter and substantial bibliography, see Mark Boda, “Gazing Through the Cloud of Incense: Davidic and Temple Community in the Chronicler’s Perspective,” in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (ed. Paul Evans and Tyler Williams; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 215–46. Although I tend to stress the communal, non-messianic voice, I would argue that all these “voices” are present in Chronicles and that they complement and balance each other, but certainly do not “cancel” each other out. I would further argue that it is the intertwining of these multiple voices that represents both the discourse of the period and the “voice” of the implied author of Chronicles as construed by the literati in the late Persian/early Hellenistic period.

48 Compare and contrast with the emphasis on the continuation—even if in a very substantially diminished state—of the genealogy of David. See Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9* (AB 12; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 333–36. Both the continuity and the potential that it connotes and the low status that it also communicates are present in the text and read by the community. Likewise, associating kings with Israel is an enterprise that may work in both ways.

In other words, we have here a complex mnemonic system at work. Memories within that system become a language to explore (though not necessarily to decide) matters that are important for the remembering community—directly the literati, and possibly and indirectly any other social group at the time that was strongly informed by the literati's construed past. Exploring these memories, participating in the ongoing process of balancing them, and the act of doing so as a group bound them together and indirectly, from their perspective, to the 'Israel' of their times, and the latter to their 'trans-temporal Israel' across time. Remembering Zedekiah in the early Second Temple period was part of that process, and Chronicles contributed its share to it.