THE CRUEL SEA: AN EXAMINATION OF EXODUS 13.17 – 15.21 THROUGH THE LENSES OF TRAUMA THEORY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY STUDIES

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Abstract

The Reed Sea episode is often read as a moment of liberation and vindication for the Israelites. However, it is also a moment of overwhelming violence and divine rage. This thesis offers a new perspective on the violence of the Reed Sea episode.

Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is likely to have been influenced by trauma deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonia. Some of the authors of the text, working during the Persian period, may not have directly experienced the destruction of Jerusalem at first hand, but inherited trauma from their parents and their wider community. Exod 13.17 – 15.21 contains evidence of several markers of trauma, giving strong grounds for seeing this text as influenced by the authors' trauma: it has many features of survivor literature.

Trauma has a profound effect on a community's shared identity and on the collective memory which underpins that identity. With insights from collective memory studies, we can see that the Reed Sea episode represented a foundational myth for the Yehud community and that trauma affected how that memory was formed and communicated.

For Jack and Levi

Like I said, it all comes out sooner or later.

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Contents

Introduction

A few years ago, I visited friends in Algeria. Towards the end of my stay, we spent a day at the beach, lounging on the sand and splashing in the beautifully warm waters of the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, the sea's pleasant temperature made me overlook its hidden hazards. After swimming a short distance from the shore, I waited for a wave, planning to use its momentum and ride the crest back to the beach. Needless to say, I miscalculated. The wave didn't look powerful but it was strong enough to knock me off my feet and to my alarm, the current then took me, pounding me against the seabed, holding me there and squeezing the breath out of my lungs. After a frightening few seconds, I managed to stand up and, because I was now well within my depth, I was able to stagger the few yards to the beach, gasping and spluttering.

From that very brief glimpse of the sea's power, I believe I understand a little why more imaginative minds than mine perceive the sea as a sentient and malevolent force. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the 1953 film *The Cruel Sea*, in which the warring sailors are the heroes and the eponymous 'cruel sea' is the villain.

The Reed Sea[1] is different. It is not portrayed within Exodus as cruel in itself, but it is used for cruel purposes as a weapon in the hands of the deity. Having manipulated the hearts of Pharaoh and his army to pursue the Israelites (Exod 14.8, 17), YHWH prepares a trap for the Egyptians (14.25) and uses the waters of the Reed Sea to drown them so that not a single one survives (14.28). YHWH drives back the sea to allow the Israelites to cross (14.21), turns it back to block the Egyptians' onslaught and hurls the Egyptians into the now torrential waters (14.26-27). It is even possible that the word used to describe the seabed in 14.21

[1] Throughout this thesis, I favour 'Reed Sea' over 'Red Sea'. The sea referred to in the story is יַם־סוּף, literally 'Sea of Reeds', and is unlikely to correspond to what the modern reader knows as the Red Sea (see Cole [1973: 117]; Bruckner [2008: 125]).

(חרבה) is a pun on 'sword' (חרב), emphasising the sea's role as a divine weapon.[2] The sea is not personified as inherently cruel but it is assuredly used for cruel ends.

I have always found the Reed Sea story compelling, especially because it is so central to both the Jewish and Christian faiths. But in recent years, I have begun to find it disturbing too. While the story represents a moment of triumph and vindication for the Israelites, it means only terror and destruction for the Egyptians. At the start of this project, I was drawn to study the Reed Sea episode by a desire to reconcile my own evangelical Christian faith with a biblical story which portrays the deity as violent, vengeful and cruel. I began searching for an explanation of this divine violence which avoided either retreating into theodicy or decrying the deity as a tyrant.

Trauma theory offered the prospect of this kind of explanation. From my initial research into existing studies of trauma within the Hebrew Bible, I noticed that this approach yielded useful insights into other texts which depicted violence, anger and grief. I therefore hypothesised that it might offer equally useful insights into the origins of the violence in Exodus 13.17 – 15.21.

My initial theological focus has faded into the background over the course of my studies. I still believe the question of the character of the deity as revealed in Exod 13-15 is very important, and I hope to have the opportunity to write on the subject in the near future. But as I studied the Reed Sea episode through the lens of trauma, I began to realise that this model truly is a rich seam of insight. When I later noticed how trauma can affect collective memory, another layer of complexity and nuance was added to my research and it became impossible to investigate the character of the deity in sufficient depth, while adhering to the

[2] See Bruckner (2008: 133).

permitted word count. My interest in YHWH's character and its implications for confessing readers had to be sacrificed, at least for now.

My primary research aim is to investigate what light trauma might shed on our understanding of the Reed Sea episode: more specifically, to what extent trauma influenced the composition of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 and what evidence of trauma the text shows. Relating to this primary aim and conditional on my conclusions in that regard, I want to explore how trauma affects the function of the Reed Sea episode as an example of collective memory. Another secondary aim is to offer a heuristic dating schema for the composition of Exod 13.17 – 15.21; itself a necessary step in arguing for specific events which might have created a traumatic influence on the text.

Within this thesis, I seek to demonstrate three things:

1) that Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 is profoundly influenced by the authors' trauma, deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylonia[3] and (for the later editors of the text) inherited from their parents and others of their parents' generation, within the exiled community;
2) that the text therefore bears markers of trauma;
3) that the text functions as an example of a collective memory, with this function in itself affected by trauma.

Thesis outline

My thesis is structured as follows:

[3] A good deal of scholarship on the Exile tends to efface the difference between Babylon as a city and Babylonia as an empire. Strine (2018a) offers a particularly instructive explanation of why the difference between the two must be kept in view, and I have done my best to follow his lead.

1. *Trauma theory and its application to biblical studies*

I begin with a short overview of trauma studies, identifying key thinkers and tracing the development of trauma as a recognised psychological phenomenon. I explore the nature of psychological trauma, the symptoms commonly ascribed to it and how those symptoms have manifested themselves in the survivors of severe traumas – especially the Holocaust. Recent work by Caruth (1995, 1996) and Herman (1997) is particularly illuminating on these subjects.

While applying trauma theory to the Ancient Near East offers unique insights into the likely effects of the destruction of Jerusalem (for example) on its survivors, there are also important cautions to bear in mind in this application. I therefore highlight the insights and cautions involved.

Next, I examine the appearance and development of the concept of survivor literature, important examples of such literature and what characteristics these works tend to display.

I conclude this chapter with a short survey of trauma in biblical studies: where evidence of trauma has been found in a text; examples of texts being characterised as outpourings of pain and grief; other texts which can be said to function as traumatised theology; and where trauma seems to intrude into the Hebrew Bible, apparently without the author's intention. The study of biblical texts through the lens of trauma is still in its infancy, but some very exciting work has been done in this area by the likes of Garber (2011, 2015), Morrow (2004, 2011), Janzen (2012) and Smith-Christopher (2011). From this survey, I derive several useful lines of inquiry into Exodus 13.17 – 15.21.

2. *The composition of the Reed Sea episode*

In order to argue for a traumatic influence on Exod 13.17 – 15.21, I must establish what the source of this trauma is most likely to have been. My second chapter will therefore investigate when and by whom the Reed Sea episode was written and, in view of that dating, what event(s) is most likely to have traumatised the authors. I argue that there is good reason for believing that Exod 13-15 (and the wider Pentateuch) were composed during the Exile and extensively reshaped during the Persian period, following the return from Babylonia.

I also draw some conclusions on the authorship of Exod 13-15, proposing that a guild of scribes is more likely than a single literary genius 'Yahwist' to have been responsible for its composition, and that these scribes would have drawn on at least some pre-existing traditions in their work. Finally, I explore differing ideas on why the text was written at all, concluding that the Pentateuch functions as a national history of Israel and that the Reed Sea episode therefore plays a role in articulating Israel's origins and identity.

Based on this heuristic dating and authorship, I conclude that the fall of Jerusalem and forced displacement to Babylonia are the most likely events to have traumatised the authors of the Reed Sea episode. Any markers of trauma within the text would therefore have their origins in these experiences.

3. *Exodus and transgenerational trauma*

The obvious difficulty raised by this argument is that if Exod 13-15 was extensively shaped in the early Persian period, its authors are very unlikely to have experienced the fall of Jerusalem or displacement to Babylonia at first hand. They would not, therefore, have been directly traumatised by these events. In chapter three, I address this difficulty by outlining the transgenerational transmission of trauma: how trauma can be passed on from a survivor to

their child, and how this child can be traumatised despite not experiencing the traumatising event for themselves.

Firstly, I make the case for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile being truly traumatic for those who survived them. I conclude that, although there is insufficient evidence to insist that the Exile was traumatic in itself, the very experience of being forcibly removed from their homes and displaced to another nation would have been inherently traumatic for the exiled Judaeans.

In exploring the concept of transgenerational transition, I focus on studies carried out by several eminent clinical psychologists (e.g. Baranowsky *et al* [1998], Kellermann [2001] and Yehuda [1998, 2000, 2001, 2008]). I explain how trauma is passed on from parent to child, illustrating this particularly by reference to children of Holocaust survivors. Informed by these studies, I contend that the scribes who reworked the Reed Sea episode in the Persian period may have experienced transgenerational trauma, and that this transmitted trauma is manifested in the text they created.

Indeed, it is possible for an entire society to be traumatised and to pass on this collective trauma from one generation to the next. I move on to discuss the concept of 'chosen trauma', and highlight how a shared trauma can be passed on for several generations after the fact, even constituting a marker of belonging within a large group. Although there are limitations to how far 'chosen trauma' can be applied to the Reed Sea episode, I show how the idea underscores trauma's enduring influence on a society.

4. *Reading Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 through the lens of trauma*

In chapter four, I highlight specific elements within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 which could be designated as markers of trauma. The heart of the chapter and the crux of the thesis is a

close reading of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, revisiting the key features of survivor literature identified in chapter one and analysing to what extent these markers of trauma apply to this text.[4] Through this close reading, I demonstrate that the Reed Sea episode bears similarities to more modern examples of survivor literature and that there is thus good reason for reading the text in this light.

I preface this study of the Reed Sea episode with a justification for treating the Holocaust as an analogy for the Babylonian oppression of Judah: an important point, in order for the comparison between literature produced in the aftermath of the Holocaust and literature produced following the destruction of Jerusalem to be legitimate.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of whether the Reed Sea episode can be described as 'survivor literature' in its truest sense, or whether a different term is necessary to sum up its nature and purpose. I explain why I believe the text is better described not as 'survivor literature' but as '*survival* literature', and how the two terms differ.

5. *Traumatised memory in Exodus 13.17 – 15.21*

Having presented my argument for the authors of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 being influenced by transgenerational trauma, I explain in chapter five why I believe they chose this specific story to express their suffering. To do so, I summarise the concept of collective memory, its relationship to trauma, and how the Reed Sea episode preserved a traumatised memory, shaping the shared identity of the community in which it was composed.

The chapter first explores the origins of collective memory as a concept and its most significant features: the purpose of collective memory, the significance of 'memory figures', the reconstruction of historical events and individuals, and how collective memories are

[4] My analysis of the text is based on my own translation of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, included in this thesis as Appendix 1.

preserved. For this summary, I draw particularly on the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and Jan Assmann (2011).

I next show how memory studies and biblical studies have intersected, both in terms of Bible scholars interpreting specific texts through the lens of collective memory and in memory theorists using the Hebrew Bible to illustrate their ideas. Structuring my argument around the features of collective memory identified earlier, I outline how scholars such as Hendel (2001, 2005) and Ben Zvi (2013) have used memory theory within studies on the Hebrew Bible.

In the next section, still following the same key features of collective memory, I show how these features are altered when a society experiences a collective trauma. Once again, the Holocaust offers an illuminating (although awful) example of how trauma affects what a society remembers and how they remember it. With these effects in view, I highlight how several scholars – especially Janzen (2019) and Houck-Loomis (2018) – have applied the concept of traumatised memory to biblical texts.

Finally, I investigate how trauma deriving from the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon, present within the Reed Sea episode, would have affected the collective memory of the community in which the text was composed. I present the Reed Sea episode as a proxy memory: a myth created by its authors to express their traumatised rage and desire for revenge, when to express this rage directly was impossible. As such, the story enables the Yehud community to work through their shared trauma, to imagine a future free from pain and persecution, and not merely to articulate their suffering but to transcend it. Ultimately, the story helped shape Yehud's collective identity as victorious, vindicated by the deity and liberated from oppression and servitude.

Conclusive proof of trauma within any text remains elusive. Trauma is, by its nature, an experience 'missed' by the survivor and imperfectly assimilated into their conscious mind (as Caruth explains, for example [1996: 56]). Proving the presence of trauma in a text, especially in the absence of clear authorial intention to portray a traumatic experience, is therefore highly problematic. However, it is still possible to present a compelling case for a traumatic influence on a text. With regard to the Reed Sea episode in particular, I have set out to present just such a compelling case. The context of the story's composition, the extent of the violence and destruction enacted against Jerusalem by Babylon, and the enlightening findings of clinical research into transgenerational trauma, when combined with markers of trauma within the text itself, form a convincing argument for trauma influencing the Reed Sea episode.

Chapter 1 – Trauma theory and the Reed Sea

Trauma has come of age. The psychological concept of trauma has developed from its first meaningful studies by Freud into a nuanced and well-rounded idea. The concept gained traction following the Vietnam War, when thousands of American soldiers returned home, clearly carrying deep psychological wounds from their experiences of combat. Psychotherapists began to notice that victims of sexual assault exhibited symptoms very similar to combat veterans (Herman, 1997: 31), and realised that trauma was not limited to any single cause, but could be triggered by overwhelming experiences of all kinds, involving violence, threat, destruction and loss. However, it took several years for trauma to be codified and widely accepted as a medical condition: it was not until 1980 that the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder finally appeared in key psychology reference works (Caruth, 1995b: 3).

Survivors of all kinds of catastrophes (both personal and communal) are now understood as 'traumatised' if they exhibit some or all of a commonly agreed set of symptoms (outlined below). Survivors of the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, the Vietnam War and atrocities in Uganda, Sudan and Sierra Leone have all shown these symptoms, as have countless individual victims of sexual and physical assault.

Trauma theory has also had an impact on the study of literature and the arts, with theorists seeking to identify how a trauma suffered by (for example) a writer, artist or cinematographer might manifest itself in the finished work.[5] And since the late 1990s, Bible scholars have begun to ask similar questions of biblical texts: where can signs of trauma be seen in the Bible, and how should these signs affect how the texts in question are interpreted?

[5] For example, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* has attracted a good deal of discussion on how the A-bomb influenced its tone and content (c.f. Caruth, 1996: 25-27), *Badenheim 1939* has been interpreted as an allegory for the Holocaust (Lang, 2000: 26), and even the fiction of William Faulkner has been described as influenced by trauma (Vickroy, 2015: 100-102).

In this chapter, I offer a brief overview of the history of trauma studies and of trauma's key features. I then outline the concept of 'survivor literature' and identify features common to works within this category. Finally, I review the existing body of work which applies trauma theory to biblical studies, explaining why this application is not only legitimate but innovative and enlightening, and suggesting how this approach might be applicable to the Reed Sea episode. In all this, my primary objective is to establish that reading Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 through the lens of trauma is justified, that it is well supported by precedents and a sound theoretical framework, and that it offers new and fruitful avenues into understanding the text.

The value and limitations of comparative analogy

Before I begin the overview of trauma studies, a short interjection is warranted to outline why I have used comparative analogy within a thesis focused on the Hebrew Bible, and the benefits and potential pitfalls of this approach. Although my thesis is not a social-scientific study, it makes use of comparative analogy, which is a key social-scientific tool. (For example, I give particular attention in chapter three to a comparison between the Holocaust and the Babylonian subjugation of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E.) Therefore, although I will not give an extensive overview of the contribution of social-scientific criticism as a whole to biblical studies, I will highlight the value and limitations of using relatively recent events as a model to inform our interpretation of biblical texts. In doing so, I will focus on a case study of such an approach: Philip Esler's application of the 'challenge-and-response' model of social interaction, found in modern Mediterranean cultures, to Galatians 2.1-14.

Benefits

The use of comparative analogy has several clear benefits to biblical interpretation. Firstly, comparative analogy opens up new potential sources of data to enhance our understanding of a text. Any study of the direct historical and cultural background to a biblical text is hampered by the limited quantity of extrabiblical evidence available, from which to draw conclusions about this background. And while an anthropologist might derive a valuable perspective from immersing themselves in a society foreign to them in order to study that society's structures and norms, that approach is simply impossible where ANE societies are concerned. A great benefit of social-scientific criticism – and of comparative analogy in particular – is that it can offer insights into the biblical context from other, similar cultures with more extensive data sets (Elliott, 1993: 92-93).

Secondly, comparing a modern society to an ancient near eastern one can help create a vivid impression of how the ancient society may have been. It can make an ancient people more relatable and their texts more lively to a modern reader of the Bible (Elliott, 1993: 101). As Esler expresses it, such social-scientific models, 'offer the best strategy for dealing with the cultural distance between us and the biblical texts' (2000: 107).

Thirdly, comparative analogy can open avenues of understanding into a text which a conventional historical-critical approach might overlook. For example, Esler's study of Galatians through the lens of contested honour (of which, more below) opens up new possible connotations of the Greek phrase usually translated as 'to give the right hand [of fellowship]' (Esler, 1995: 298-304). These connotations are largely unnoticed by scholars who do not consider Galatians in the light of social practices from the modern Mediterranean region.

This is not to say that comparative analogy (or social-scientific criticism as a whole) is superior to other interpretative approaches; merely that it has as much value as these other

approaches and deserves to be acknowledged as such. Neither is it necessary to make a simplistic choice of a single approach to a biblical text, to the exclusion of all others. Indeed, comparative analogy is best used in parallel with another approach, especially the historical-critical method. These two approaches can enhance each other and result in a well-rounded understanding of the text being studied (Aunger, 1995: 112).

Methodology

Esler's study of Gal 2.1-14, through the lens of the 'challenge-and-response' model of debate, offers an instructive example of the methodology involved in using comparative analogy to interpret a biblical text. There are other such examples which relate more directly to texts from the Hebrew Bible rather than the New Testament[6], but Esler's study, Horrell's critique of it and Esler's later response are particularly helpful in highlighting not just the methodology but also some of the objections raised by opponents of this method.

Esler's essay demonstrates the following approach:

1. Consciously 'jettison' modern Western assumptions (1995: 288). Of course, it is a moot point to what extent it is possible for a scholar to simply leave aside their inherent culturally-bound assumptions. But the use of comparative analogy rests on at least aiming for this.
2. Adopt a particular model relating to social relations, deriving from a society similar but distinct from the one which produced the text in question. Esler focuses on a model from the modern Mediterranean[7], as revealed by anthropologists (1995: 288-289). Esler chooses the concept of honour and how it affects social

[6] For example, Carol Meyers uses observations on the link between women and music from Ancient Greece, Egypt and Sumeria to argue for a similar link in the Hebrew Bible (1999a), and uses informal women's associations in agrarian societies to interpret Ruth 4 (1999b).
[7] Esler identifies several anthropologists, predominantly working in the mid-1960s (1995: 289).

interaction in modern Mediterranean cultures. He outlines this concept, identifying four clear steps in honour-based social interactions: i) one individual challenges another, with a claim by which the former attempts to enter the social space of the latter; ii) the recipient of the challenge weighs up how to respond; iii) a response is issued; and iv) the wider community pass judgment on which parties have gained or lost honour (1995: 290-292).

3. Apply the analogy to the biblical text in question. Rather than a simplistic layering of a modern model onto an ancient context which might not fully support it, Esler uses his analogy as a heuristic tool. He begins with an assumption; not that the analogy will be a perfect fit for Galatians 2, but that applying the analogy will raise new questions to put to the text and open up new avenues in interpreting it (1995: 289; 2000: 110). As he puts it, he wants to 'try out' the model on the text and see to what extent data from the text fits the model (2000: 112). For example, with the concept of honour brought to the fore, Esler wonders how Paul's visit to Jerusalem might have been received: might the leaders of the church have perceived it as a challenge? (1995: 293).

   Apparently anxious to avoid imposing an artificial framework onto the text, Esler does not simply look for the four-stage challenge-and-response pattern within Galatians 2. Instead, he takes the text as a whole, seeing within it a process of Paul making and breaking an agreement with the church in Jerusalem (1995: 292, 304). He then notes evidence within that structure of Paul challenging the honour of the church leaders and the leaders responding.

4. Support any conclusions with reference to other studies on the text. Esler's case does not rest purely on his modern Mediterranean analogy. He buttresses his

argument with reference to existing scholarship on Galatians: specifically, a fourth century commentary (1995: 311).

Assumptions and limitations

Despite the fresh insights offered by Esler's study, it has provoked stiff criticism from some other scholars, most notably David Horrell.

The most obvious risk for a scholar using a comparative analogy to interpret a biblical text is to assume from the outset that their chosen analogy must be applicable to their object of study. This is not necessarily the case. A comparative analogy is largely a heuristic tool, used for the purposes of comparison and further investigation of an ancient context. The analogy is not always perfect and does not need to be in order to produce valuable insights into the text. Similarly, a scholar should not use a contemporary model to cover over a lack of evidence from other sources – 'to plug holes in ancient data' as Esler puts it (1995: 289). Nor does Esler fall into either of these traps.

Secondly, the imposition of a modern social-scientific model onto a text might be seen as a simple anachronism. To this suggestion, I would respond (as Elliott and Matthews do) that any Bible scholar brings a bundle of inherent biases and culturally-bound assumptions to their understanding of the text, which would constitute a model of their own, whether or not they realise they are doing so (Elliott, 1993: 36-37; Matthews, 2016: 148-149). A scholar using comparative analogy as a tool will at least be aware of the model they are using, and acknowledge that.

Next, there is the risk of confirmation bias: the scholar identifies an analogy they think might be applicable to a particular biblical text, applies this analogy and, in looking for evidence that it might indeed fit the text, forces the evidence within the text to fit the model.

(Horrell implies that Esler has done just this [2000: 90], although I believe that accusation is unwarranted.) While critics of this approach observe that the result can be influenced more by the model than by the text itself, a thorough scholar will then return to the model and adapt that, in the light of their findings. Rather than a simplistic layering of a modern model onto an ancient context which might not fully support it, comparative analogy should be a matter of a to-and-fro journey between the two contexts, to make sure the conclusions arising from this approach are sound (Elliott, 1993: 48).

Related to this, when using a modern context as an analogy for an ancient one, the temptation is to highlight only the similarities between these two contexts. But to yield to this temptation risks offering a distorted impression of the ancient culture. A scholar using comparative analogy must acknowledge the differences between the modern and ancient cultures under scrutiny, as well as their similarities (Elliott, 1993: 93). Esler's study on Galatians seems somewhat lacking on this point.

A comparative analogy is, by nature, based on a simplified impression of a modern reality. Applying a simplified understanding of a modern reality to an ancient context risks producing a simplified understanding of the latter, too. Horrell protests that a simplified model reduces human beings to typical and predictable parts of a society, depriving them of individual agency and the possibility of differing from the norm (2000: 84). Esler seems aware of this risk and argues in return that any individual is profoundly influenced in their thoughts and actions by the culture which has surrounded them for most (or all) of their life. Therefore, while an individual still has the capacity for independent thought and unilateral action, they can never be entirely separated from the values and beliefs of their culture (2000: 111). So, to use a comparative analogy effectively, a scholar should ask questions to do with

patterns and social structures within an ancient culture, while still taking seriously an individual's potential for independence: not always an easy balance to strike.

A further weakness of this approach to biblical interpretation is the tendency among its adherents to refer to 'modern Mediterranean cultures', without specifying which culture(s) they are focusing on. (Esler does just this [1995: 289].) This creates the impression that modern Mediterranean cultures are monolithic and overlooks differences between such societies (Horrell, 2000: 90). A scholar's conclusions are likely to be more convincing if they adopt one specific context as an analogy for another.

Finally, Esler states that his key question was whether his conclusions were 'historically plausible' (2000: 109). But Horrell observes that this is not necessarily the same as judging the conclusions as valid or true (2000: 88). This then raises the question of how the reader can know whether the conclusions arising from comparative analogy are valid. In fact, Esler and Horrell are arguing for the same thing, but using different terminology to describe it. In his later response to Horrell's critique, Esler clarifies that 'historically plausible' means, 'results that a reasonable number of experienced readers might regard as a possible or even probable account of the meaning of Paul's interaction with the leaders in Jerusalem' (2000: 109). If nothing else, their dispute serves to underline the importance of thorough research from other sources, as well as the analogy itself. For example, any study on a biblical text should be rooted in several commentaries on the text in question.

Relevance to my own thesis

In view of these potential pitfalls, I will exercise caution in my application of modern analogies to Exodus 13.17 – 15.21. Firstly, I will treat these analogies as a heuristic tool – a starting point for introducing a new set of questions – rather than as a simple framework to

layer over the text, unthinkingly. And where this investigation suggests adaptations to the initial model (specifically, the model of survivor literature), I will suggest adaptations to the model.

Although avoiding confirmation bias is not a simple matter, I will take steps towards this by acknowledging where a modern analogy differs from the ancient context, as well as where the two are similar.

Specificity is less of an issue for me than for Esler. I do not intend to treat 'modern Mediterranean culture' as a single phenomenon but will draw on modern traumata from specific times and places, and show how these diverse contexts have all contributed to the overarching category of 'survivor literature'.

I am very aware that applying a comparative analogy to a biblical text will not provide convincing conclusions in itself, and must be married with other interpretative approaches to produce a rounded understanding of the text. My research is therefore deeply rooted in a close study of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, including attention to numerous commentaries and my own translation of the Hebrew.

And naturally, despite acknowledging the potential pitfalls of my approach to Exod 13-15, I will not downplay its benefits. Using modern traumata as comparative analogies for trauma in ancient Israel and Judah has the potential to make an ancient trauma vivid and immediate for a modern reader. It foregrounds the human cost of ancient terror and its enduring impact on the survivors, their community and their literature.

Identifying key thinkers on trauma

Within the fields of trauma studies and survivor literature, I have focused on the thinkers who have written most extensively, offer the most illuminating comments on trauma

and are most directly relevant to my thesis. Freud (1922) and Janet (1925) were instrumental in forming the notion of trauma as we now understand it and could be said to have laid the foundation for the entire field of study.[8] No study of trauma would be complete without, at the very least, acknowledging their contributions. Caruth (1996), Herman (1997) and Laub (1995) are among the most influential thinkers since PTSD was first defined as a phenomenon in the early 1980s, setting the agenda for the study of trauma. For a thesis concerned with the effects of trauma on an individual and a community, their insights are invaluable. Judith Herman, a specialist in the clinical treatment of trauma, and Cathy Caruth, who applies observations from the psychological study of trauma theory to literature and other cultural phenomena, are particularly influential, referenced in numerous other works in the field.[9]

Lifton (1991) and Des Pres (1973) have done ground-breaking work on the study of survivor literature; work which is significant because of its level of influence on their peers, because of the sheer gravity of the traumatic experiences they address (Hiroshima for Lifton, the Holocaust for Des Pres) and because of the likely parallels between literature produced in these contexts and literature influenced by the sack of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile. Lifton's and Des Pres' observations are tremendously useful in outlining the nature and key characteristics of survivor literature.

My research has also included studies of traumatic experiences in recent memory, including the civil wars in Sudan and Uganda, and the displacement of African refugees to

[8] It should also be pointed out that Freud's work on trauma was underpinned by that of Charcot, under whom Freud studied in Paris, and from whom originated the embryonic idea of 'moral trauma'; psychological damage, deriving from a 'shock' with a physical cause but without a physical wound (Hacking, 1998: 170-171). Somewhat surprisingly, Caruth does not mention Janet's weighty contribution to the field of trauma studies (1891, 1925), focusing instead on Freud (1996: 1-2, 4, 12-13, 15, 20 ff) and (to some extent) Lacan (1996: 91-112). Herman is more enlightening on Janet's influence on the field, referring to his work on traumatic memories within her description of repetitive memories (Herman, 1997: 38; c.f. Janet, 1925: 589-600, 661-663).

[9] Caruth is most often cited for *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), but is also acknowledged for the 1995 volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, for which she acted as editor, and also for her more recent works, *Listening to Trauma* (2014) and *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013).

America. These studies are worthy of attention, again because of their influence on other writers on trauma, but also because the experiences they describe are comparable analogies for those likely suffered by the Judaeans besieged and exiled by Babylon. Young men carrying the physical and psychological scars of warfare and displacement in 21st century Sudan may be able to tell us something about the mental state of those carrying similar scars in ancient Judah and Babylonia.

The application of trauma theory to biblical studies has generated a small body of research so far, but work within the field is gathering momentum. I have focused particularly on the contributions of Garber (2011) and Smith-Christopher (2002, 2011), as they have been pioneers within this field. In reading several other passages from the Hebrew Bible through the lens of trauma, they help illuminate my own study of the Reed Sea episode. I have also referred to scholars such as O'Connor (2002, 2011) who have interpreted specific books of the Hebrew Bible in the light of trauma, and to Janzen (2012), who has adopted a different perspective on trauma from other Bible scholars.

For now, I am leaving aside an investigation of transgenerational transmission – how trauma can be passed on from one generation to another – as this chapter does not allow space for the in-depth discussion this subject deserves. But I revisit the discussion in chapter three, with particular attention to the findings of psychologists such as Baranowsky *et al* (1998), Kogan (2012), Loewenberg (2012) and Volkan (2001).

What is trauma?

i) A psychological wound

The concept of 'trauma' derives from the Greek word for a bodily injury, adopted by psychologists to refer to a mental wound, as well as a physical one (Caruth, 1996: 3).[10] In the early stages of its formation, trauma was predominantly understood as an example of 'neurosis': language derived from Freud (1922: 8), suggesting a kind of inherent mental defect in the sufferer. Studies in the later twentieth century developed the concept, distancing it from those connotations. Trauma came to be understood as a psychological injury inflicted on an individual by forces external to them, rather than the result of any kind of weakness in the individual themselves (Herman, 1997: 33).

More specifically, trauma can be described as an emotional, social and behavioural response to a terrifying and overwhelming event (Caruth, 1995: 4). This response is involuntary and most often manifests itself in helplessness, deep and enduring fear, and a feeling of loss of control (Herman, 1997: 33). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is distinct from trauma itself: it is a complex of specific symptoms often discernible in survivors of overwhelming events and often associated with a severe trauma. These symptoms include uncontrollable intrusion of memories related to the trauma, avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatising event, dissociation, detachment, and a heightened sense of threat (*DSM V* [American Psychiatric Association], 2013: 271-272; *International Classification of Diseases* [WHO], 2018: online). Since trauma is characterised by a generalised emotional response and PTSD is a complex of specific symptoms, it is possible for a survivor to be understood as 'traumatised' without necessarily being diagnosed with PTSD.

ii) An overwhelming experience

[10] Of course, the word 'trauma' is still widely used within medicine to refer to physical injuries.

Trauma is caused by 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.' (Caruth, 1996: 11). Caruth's description is by no means the last word in defining trauma, but it is at least a helpful starting point. It highlights that trauma results from an event – any event – which the survivor perceives as a threat to their life or bodily integrity, and which they feel helpless to prevent or control (see also Herman [1997: 33]). This description also mentions trauma's enduring effect on the survivor, and its intrusion into the survivor's consciousness, both of which I discuss below.

Since any kind of overwhelming experience can traumatise its survivors, psychological studies have identified trauma in survivors of events as diverse as the Holocaust[11], the Vietnam War[12] and the bombing of Hiroshima[13], as well as individuals who experienced sexual abuse in general and incest in particular.[14] Research has also included survivors of more recent traumata, such as victims of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 1997), African immigrants to America (Kamya, 2007), and a particular group of Sudanese youths relocating to America following the civil war (Goodman, 2004), to give just a few examples. A short but arresting article in *Time* magazine from 1999 also presents the harrowing experiences of two victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone (Linton *et al*, 1999). The subjects of all of these studies have undergone overwhelming

[11] See in particular Felman and Laub (1992), and several of the contributions to Caruth's 1995 volume.
[12] For example, Sonnenberg *et al* (1985), van der Kolk *et al* (1984).
[13] Lifton (1991) provides essential reading on Hiroshima and trauma.
[14] Burgess' 1985 volume gives a comprehensive overview of the psychological effects of rape and sexual abuse of all kinds. And Tal (1996) gives attention to the literature produced by survivors of incest and sexual assault of other kinds, as well as the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Vietnam.

experiences and report that these experiences have affected their day-to-day lives in similar ways.[15]

iii) Impossible to grasp

So overwhelming is the traumatising event that the survivor finds it impossible to fully grasp and process their experiences. As Freud posits, a traumatic experience passes too soon and too unexpectedly to be grasped and processed; hence a survivor's involuntary repetition of this experience (Freud, 1922: 36-37; Caruth, 1996: 4). Because the experience utterly overwhelms the survivor, they are unable to fully understand it as it happens. Their mind therefore begins to repeatedly rehearse the experience in an attempt to properly 'know' it (Freud, 1922: 34, 36; Caruth, 1996: 6).

Trauma's repeated and uncontrollable intrusion into the survivor's consciousness is one of its key characteristics. These intrusions most often take the form of dreams, flashbacks or hallucinations: all examples of the psyche struggling to understand and grasp the truth of the traumatic experience. Again, Freud seems to have been the first to notice the compulsive repetition common to trauma sufferers (Freud, 1922: 19, 37; see also Caruth [1996: 2]).[16]

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[15] As an aside, I should mention that, although sexual abuse is a very common cause of trauma, I will make little reference to trauma deriving from sexual abuse within this thesis. This is because the great majority of the available research into the psychological effects of sexual abuse focuses on individual women subjected to one-off incidences of sexual violence, or even on childhood rape within families. This research is therefore less immediately applicable to the plight of the people of sixth century Jerusalem than psychological studies of trauma deriving from war, destruction and captivity. I am also particularly interested in what might have traumatised the authors of Exodus, who were almost certainly men and therefore less likely to have been subjected to sexual assault. That said, sexual violence is all too often part of a woman's experience of warfare and captivity, in both modern and ancient contexts (see, for example, Abas [2017] on Islamic State's use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, and the high incidence of PTSD among survivors of such attacks), and the Hebrew Bible itself sanctions the rape of female prisoners of war (c.f. Numbers 31.7-18; Deuteronomy 21.10-14). The Hebrew Bible gives no voice to the women ravaged by the Babylonians or, indeed, by the Israelites. I am anxious that my thesis should not perpetuate this erasure of the female experience. Lemos (2011) is very illuminating on the use of sexual violence in the ANE, as means to assert dominance over defeated enemies, both male and female.

[16] Janet, working at a very similar time to Freud, noticed 'fixed ideas' in his patients who had experienced trauma, and a repetitive aspect to such memories (Janet, 1925: 600, 661-663). Caruth could equally have credited Freud's contribution or Janet's.

Caruth suggests that a traumatised dream has a significance beyond simple, involuntary repetition. She draws on Lacan (1973) as well as Freud, seeing a traumatised dream as a reminder of another person's death and of the impossibility of responding to it (Caruth, 1996: 100). Caruth holds that the dream therefore functions as a marker of responsibility towards the one who has suffered and died (1996: 102). Where a traumatising event itself involves a death, this may be true. But this is by no means the case for every trauma. It seems a stretch to apply Caruth's theory to traumatised dreams following a sexual assault, for example.

iv) Affects the survivor, long after the event

Trauma casts a long shadow over the survivor's life. It has been linked with long-term physical health problems, including hypertension, blood clots, type II diabetes and problems relating to the immune system: evidenced by the symptoms reported by a cohort of African immigrants to America (Kamya, 2007: 258). More directly, trauma often leads to a complex of psychological symptoms known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If left untreated, a survivor can continue to experience symptoms of PTSD for decades after the traumatising event, and such symptoms can still recur after lying dormant for an extended period.

Judith Herman, who writes for professional psychoanalysts, offering advice on how best to treat trauma survivors and enable their recovery, gives especially helpful descriptions of trauma's effects and treatments. She astutely observes that severe and/or prolonged experience of trauma can result in continuous hypervigilance, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms and intrusion, for many years after the experience ends (Herman, 1997: 86-87). For example, Herman shows how several Holocaust survivors experienced the effects of trauma

for an extended period after the event (1997: 87), and gives a case study of a World War Two veteran who reported a recurrence of his symptoms of intrusion after a delay of 30 years (1997: 48).[17]

We have already established that intrusion is a classic feature of trauma's effects on the survivor, but trauma has several other behavioural markers, among them: 'constriction', whereby the victim freezes and simply surrenders to his/her fate; emotional detachment; hyperarousal; self-limitation in order to minimise exposure to danger; guilt and shame, and profound loss of trust (Herman, 1997: 42-53).[18]

The characteristics of trauma (indeed the symptoms of PTSD) are equally applicable to survivors of the Holocaust (Krystal, 1995: 76-82), combat, and sexual assault (Herman, 1997: 20-32), and have also been observed in Yazidi women liberated from Islamic State (Abas, 2017: 512-513) and in children reporting for treatment after escaping the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 1997: 43). This variety of traumatising events suggests that neither geographical setting nor historical context makes a significant difference to the symptoms a trauma survivor experiences, or to the severity of those symptoms.

Anger and desire for revenge are particularly common in trauma survivors. For example, survivors of attacks often express the wish that the perpetrators should suffer for what they have done (Herman, 1997: 44, 189). This kind of rage can be seen in Linton's

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[17] In the case of the Holocaust, trauma has often been passed down from survivors to their children. Herman does not describe transgenerational trauma of this kind and I will address it in chapter three.

[18] While Herman offers a broad understanding of the clinical effects of trauma, Caruth appears to limit her study of trauma solely to repetition, to the exclusion of the numerous other symptoms. However, Caruth shows slightly more nuance in her 2014 book, mentioning 'numbing' once as a symptom of PTSD in her conversation with Robert Jay Lifton (2014: 6), and discussing dissociation (perceiving a traumatic experience as happening to someone else rather than to oneself) with van der Hart (2014: 179-211). The book also includes the transcript of a conversation between Caruth and Herman, in which she comments on Herman's observations on shame as an element of trauma. 'When I first encountered shame in your writing I was surprised because I had been used to the models of fear and anxiety associated with trauma… you emphasize the importance of the shame element to the relational aspects of trauma' (2014: 148).

visceral interviews with two survivors of the Sierra Leonean civil war. Issatu Kargbo has had her hands amputated so cannot hold a pen and therefore cannot return to school, and Abdul Sankoh, suffering the same mutilation, faces the humiliation of having to ask for assistance with toileting (Linton *et al*, 1999: online). Abdul's response to his tormentors is bitter: 'If the government forgets about us, we'll take revenge. I can't do it myself, but I would tell my family to take revenge on the person who did this to me. We have no guns, but we have the traditional ways of revenging.' (1999: online).

v) Recovery is possible

A survivor or group of survivors can recover from trauma, given the right support. In the second half of her clinical handbook on trauma, Herman outlines the stages of recovery. She mentions that healthy, supportive relationships (1997: 133-154), restoring the survivor's sense of control over their circumstances (1997: 155-174) and allowing the survivor to mourn (1997: 175-195) can all be healing processes. Survivors can also gain a sense of empowerment by becoming part of a community with other individuals who have undergone similar experiences (1997: 214-236).

Underpinning all of these strategies is the assumption that trauma – even PTSD – need not be permanent: it can be and is treated. Goodman provides illustrative examples of how these treatment strategies can be beneficial. The young Sudanese refugees on whom her study focuses come to terms with their trauma partly through 'making meaning' from their experiences and through a sense of 'collectivity' in their suffering (2004: 1183).

It is interesting to note that the process of mourning which enables a survivor to express and come to terms with their pain and grief often includes encouraging them to tell the story of their traumatic experience (Herman, 1997: 175-177). Bearing witness to this

experience can, in itself, help a survivor to come to terms with their trauma and move beyond it. This act of bearing witness can even include a revenge fantasy; an expression of rage against the perpetrator of the trauma (1997: 189). The idea of coming to terms with trauma by bearing witness to it is borne out by the significant volume of survivor literature available to us. I outline the phenomenon of survivor literature below, along with its relevance to biblical texts.

As I make my case for dating the completion of the Reed Sea episode to the post-exilic period, I examine where the text shows evidence of trauma deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylonia. Later, I examine how creating this text might have helped its authors to come to terms with their trauma.

Applying trauma theory to the Ancient Near East

Trauma theory offers insights into how the invasions, deportations and sacking of major settlements within the ANE might have affected the people of the time. More specifically, it may shed light on the Judaeans' experiences of the destruction of Jerusalem and exile in Babylonia, and on how those experiences influenced the biblical literature composed during and following that period.

From recent studies of trauma survivors[19], we can infer that displacement, transition and resettlement are all intrinsically stressful (Kamya, 2007: 257-259), and that violence, threats of violence, sudden separation from home and loved ones, hunger, capture, witnessing death, and being forced to carry out atrocities are all extremely psychologically damaging to an individual (Goodman, 2004: 1177, 1181; Human Rights Watch, 1997: 13-20, 43). These experiences also offer comparable analogies to the plight of Judaeans who lived through the

[19] Refugees from Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 1997) and Sudan (Goodman, 2004), and African immigrants to America (Kamya, 2007).

siege and sack of Jerusalem, and were then forcibly displaced to Babylonia. When we consider that the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. are likely to have experienced many of the horrors common to modern trauma survivors, the possibility that these ancient people were deeply traumatised becomes unsettlingly real. In chapter three, I investigate exactly how likely this is and what, specifically, might have traumatised the Judaeans. (In fact, there are two potential sources of trauma for the Judaeans: the prolonged siege and eventual fall of Jerusalem, and the subsequent forced displacement to Babylonia.)

We should be cautious, though, in applying the label 'traumatic' to all of these circumstances. It is a moot point as to whether all of these experiences will overwhelm a survivor completely enough to render him/her 'traumatised'. For the purposes of this thesis, I believe it is enough to observe where modern survivors show evidence of trauma, and to extrapolate that there are reasonable grounds for supposing survivors of comparable experiences in the ANE may also have been traumatised.

There are also potential dangers in unquestioningly applying trauma theory – which derives from observations of modern trauma survivors – to an ancient society with a culture very different from our own and even from that of twentieth century European Jews (as Bible scholars Daniel Smith-Christopher [2011: 268] and David Garber [2011: 310] emphasise). But notwithstanding this caveat, there remains the possibility that the Judaeans exiled to Babylonia would have experienced these very same symptoms of trauma, with just as prolonged an influence.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to assume that all ancient trauma survivors responded to their experiences in an identical way. As Garber observes, the Hebrew Bible exhibits a 'diversity of responses to destruction and exile' (2011: 321). In studying a specific

biblical text, it is therefore important to pay close attention to the particular response to trauma revealed by that text in its own right.

Survivor literature

Out of the mass traumas of the twentieth century, an impressive and often harrowing body of literary work has emerged. The Holocaust, the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, and the Vietnam War have all birthed literature of this kind, which has come to be known as 'survivor literature'. However, the definition of survivor literature as: 'literature produced in the aftermath of a major catastrophe and its accompanying atrocities by survivors of that catastrophe' (Linafelt, 2000: 18) is too narrow. It is accurate insofar as 'survivor literature' equals 'literature of survival', but the concept is wider and more nuanced than that. The literature produced by survivors of trauma can encompass memoirs (Lang, 2000: 19-20), documentary descriptions of the events which traumatised them (Lifton, 1991: 456), fiction set against the background of those events (Lang, 2000: 21-22), or even a hybrid of fiction and autobiography, in which the boundaries of fact and imagination are blurred (Lifton, 1991: 399). Vickroy has even argued that evidence of trauma can be seen in earlier literature: the pre-war fiction of William Faulkner apparently bears witness to the trauma caused by slavery, the oppression of women and the tyrannical societal norms which made these possible (Vickroy, 2015: 100-102). Thus, 'survivor literature' might bear no obvious relation to the traumatic experience which underlies it. For example, *Badenheim 1939* offers an allegory for the Holocaust, so refers to it only obliquely (Lang, 2000: 26), but the novel can only be fully understood against this background. Stephanie Hutton's prose poem 'You don't have to talk about your daddy in counselling if you don't want to' (2017) depicts an abusive father by using the planet Jupiter as an extended metaphor. And *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (admittedly a

film, not a work of literature) does not refer to the A-bomb at all, instead depicting a relationship between a Japanese man and a French woman, set in Hiroshima.

So, if one is to argue that Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 might be categorised as 'survivor literature', one must clarify in what respect(s) it might be categorised in this way. In the subsequent chapters, I will explore carefully exactly what kind of literature the narrative and song represent: whether a memoir, a documentary description of events, pure fiction, or something else altogether. I will examine how the events described in the text might convey the authors' trauma, despite being far removed from the authors' own time.

Despite encompassing several different genres and approaches, survivor literature can still be said to share a few common features:

i) Guilt and shame

A sense of guilt and shame on the survivor's part, a sense of self-blame for the traumatising event(s), can be seen in many examples of modern survivor literature (Des Pres, 1973: 678; Lifton, 1991: 35, 489)[20], not to mention biblical texts which have been categorised in a similar way (Garber, 2011: 319; Morrow, 2004: 84). Since guilt is characteristic of trauma, it should not be surprising if guilt and other symptoms of trauma appear in literature produced by trauma survivors.

Indeed, guilt is a common marker of survivor literature. In his memoir of the aftermath of the Hiroshima bomb, Michihiko Hachiya expresses guilt at surviving and receiving medical treatment while others were dying in excruciating pain: 'When I thought of the injured, lying in the sun begging for water, I felt as though I were committing a sin by being where I was.' (1995: 18). Likewise, *Kiss Daddy Goodnight*, Louise Armstrong's anthology of

[20] Although Des Pres and Lifton disagree on the extent to which trauma survivors experience and are motivated by guilt.

incest survivor narratives, conveys a grappling with guilt and a sense of responsibility for the abusers' behaviour (see Tal, 1996: 162-164).[21]

Obviously, such guilt is not deserved. Any sense of guilt on the survivor's part is more due to how society responds to the survivor than to any responsibility of his/her own. A society both clamours to hear the survivor's story and seeks to ignore them, mitigating its responsibility for allowing the survivor's suffering by suggesting they might be somehow complicit in causing this suffering (Des Pres, 1973: 41). It is to be expected, then, that literature which represents survivors' efforts to articulate their experiences often bears evidence of guilt.

ii) Anger and desire for revenge

As an extension of this guilt, trauma survivors often express rage, railing against the perpetrator of their trauma in a bid to get rid of guilt and shame (Herman, 1997: 189). This rage will often result in an outright revenge fantasy. Abdul's testimony, following the civil war in Sierra Leone, illustrates this rage and desire for revenge (see above). Desire for revenge against the oppressor spills over into survivor literature, too. Profound anger – a conscious decision to embrace conflict and resist attempts to erase the traumatising event – underpins the very act of depicting traumatic experiences (Tal, 1996: 7).

Survivor literature therefore flows with anger and rage. For example, Louise Armstrong's sexual assault literature is 'an impassioned and furious work' (Tal, 1996: 164) and Carolivia Herron's *Thereafter Johnnie* conveys 'bitterness, rage, self-hatred and the silence that results from suppressed anger' (1996: 157). W.D. Ehrhart's poetry likewise gives

[21] In a slightly different vein, W.D. Ehrhart's poetic reflections on the Vietnam War express perpetrator's guilt at the violence he and his unit carried out against Vietnamese civilians. This is especially powerful in 'Making the Children Behave', in which Ehrhart compares himself to a monster or bogeyman in a child's imagination (2019: 39).

vent to deep anger: in his case, anger at the military and political authorities who compelled him to enact violence in their name (2019: 20). The Hebrew Bible reflects this kind of anger, too. It can be seen in the divine wrath and punishment in several exilic and post-exilic biblical texts, especially Ezekiel (Garber, 2011: 320), which suggests the authors' desire for revenge against their enemies.[22]

If a survivor experiences a desire for revenge, they will usually articulate this desire as part of the process of recovery from a traumatic experience. Within the context of remembering the event, reflecting on it and mourning their losses (usually with the support of a therapist), they will begin to express their rage against the perpetrator of their suffering (Herman, 1997: 188-189). By implication, a desire for revenge is not always an instantaneous reaction to a traumatising event: it can develop gradually, some time later. This being the case, literature composed in the immediate aftermath of a traumatising event might show no obvious desire for revenge, but a text composed later – even by the same author – might show evidence of a revenge fantasy.

Since the Reed Sea episode depicts overwhelming violence by Israel's god, against their enemies, this suggests that the text might have been born out of its authors' revenge fantasy against their own contemporary enemies. This is an important idea which demands further investigation. I will investigate it in depth in chapters four and five.

iii) The imperative to bear witness; the impossibility of doing so

Probably the single universal factor within survivor literature and the key to understanding the entire body of work, in all its diversity, is the simultaneous imperative for

[22] Ruth Poser (2012) develops the argument for Ezekiel as revenge fantasy at length and in compelling detail. I explore her ideas in chapter four.

the survivor to bear witness and a sense of the inadequacy of any words one could use to do so.

Survivor literature is, first and foremost, the product of a survivor's determination to bear witness to what they have experienced (Des Pres, 1973: 668-669). As Des Pres emphasises, especially with regard to Holocaust survivors, it was this sheer will to tell the story which enabled many to go on living, in the face of insuperable odds (1973: 671). Not only this, but several Holocaust survivors describe their witnessing in terms of a 'sacred mission'. As Alexander Donat puts it: 'I felt I was a witness to disaster and charged with the sacred mission of carrying the ghetto's history through the flames and barbed wire until such time as I could hurl it into the face of the world.' (Donat, quoted in Des Pres, 1973: 671). Bearing witness to the traumatic experience is, for the survivor, an imperative and driving force, even to the point of becoming an enormous burden.

However, the survivor's relentless drive to draw the attention of an unwilling world to the evil they have experienced is countered by the impossibility of telling the story. The sheer profundity of their suffering and of the evil perpetrated against them, along with often unspoken assumptions of the survivor's guilt in living through it, combine to render them silent (Des Pres, 1973: 675, 678-681). Thus, the survivor wrestles with the imperative to tell their story, while feeling that telling this story is impossible. 'Silence is the only adequate response, but the pressure of the scream persists.' (Elie Wiesel, quoted in Des Pres, 1973: 675).[23]

A Holocaust survivor interviewed as part of Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* echoes Des Pres's thoughts: 'No one can describe it. No one can recreate what happened here.

[23] And Aleksandrowicz's 1973 study of 34 families directly affected by the Holocaust refers not just to the impossibility of telling their story but to their 'need for massive repression of traumatic memories' (1973: 385-392).

Impossible? And no one can understand it. Even I, here, now… I can't believe I'm here. No, I just can't believe it.' (Unnamed survivor, quoted in Felman and Laub, 1992: 224). This disbelief and incomprehension is echoed in Hachiya's *Hiroshima Diary*:

> Reason as I would, I could not make the ends meet when I considered the destruction that followed… Whatever it was, it was beyond my comprehension. Damage of this order could have no explanation! All we had were stories no more substantial than the clouds from which we had reached to snatch them. (1995: 25).

For survivors of extreme trauma, the story must be told, not primarily to communicate the experience to others but in order to know, understand and come to terms with the experience for themselves. And yet, the experience is so beyond the language of everyday life that no words seem adequate (Laub, 1995: 63). For some survivors, the only way to express their suffering is a simple scream: an 'inarticulate wailing' of the kind employed by Louise Armstrong (Tal, 1996: 197). Moreover, the survivors of the Holocaust feel so dehumanised that they begin to question their own memories. To tell the story is impossible and, 'The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's conception of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events.' (Laub, 1995: 64).

Caruth explores this dichotomy further in her discussion of trauma's implications for literature and the arts. She takes another step in the argument, suggesting not just that trauma is beyond articulation but that because of this, attempting to describe it begins to erode its reality (Caruth, 1996: 29). Indeed, any attempt to do so is an act of betrayal against those who suffered because of this experience. In this case, perhaps the best a survivor can do is to tell a story about their traumatic experience, without describing the event itself. Thus, paradoxically, a faithful history of the event can be conveyed, without depicting it directly (1996: 27).

This line of thinking derives from reflections on Resnais's film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* – a grappling with the subject of the A-bomb, taking place at the site of its impact,

without ever directly addressing the explosion itself. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* reveals the profound difficulties of witnessing, understanding and articulating a traumatic experience. Something of the missed-ness of the traumatic experience comes across through the film. 'It is indeed the enigmatic language of untold stories – of experiences not yet completely grasped – that resonates, throughout the film' (Caruth, 1996: 56).

If we accept this idea, it implies that any work of art or literature (including biblical literature) created by a traumatised author, may be a deliberate recapitulation of the event which traumatised the author, in the guise of an unrelated story. So the Reed Sea story could potentially be a retelling of the destruction of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile, and a manifestation of trauma affecting the authors' community and indirectly affecting the authors themselves.[24] Alternatively (and to my mind, more likely) it could be a fantasy: a deliberate use of an unrelated story set in the distant past, by which the authors attempted to depict the experience of their recent ancestors. Caruth does not demonstrate that this idea holds true for any work other than *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, but she never sets out to do so. The possibility remains that a story portraying one event may actually be a representation of another.

It must be acknowledged that there are voices which challenge the inexpressibility of trauma. While the majority of scholars comment on the impossibility of describing the traumatising event, a few stand in opposition to this idea. For example, Lang comments: 'I propose at the outset… to "de"-figure this figure of the Holocaust; to claim instead that the Holocaust *is* speakable, *has* been spoken, *will be* spoken (certainly here), and, most of all, *ought* to be.' (2000: 18, emphasis original). This is correct insofar as many have written accounts of their experiences of the Holocaust, or fiction which draws on this most horrific of

[24] The authors of the Reed Sea episode are unlikely to have directly experienced the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon for themselves, as I explain in chapter two. However, the phenomenon of transgenerational trauma makes it entirely possible that the authors may have been traumatised by these events at second hand (see chapter three).

episodes in Europe's history, and that we could be said to face a moral imperative to confront and discuss the subject. But it does not convey the sense of paralysis amongst Holocaust writers; the sense of torment that, however they might beat their brains and marshal their literary skill, no words could ever fully do justice to their experiences and to the suffering of their dead loved ones. In this sense, the Holocaust, like any overwhelming trauma, remains unspeakable, however many words are hurled at it.

iv) Other-worldly language

The unspeakableness of the traumatic experience lends a singular tone to survivor literature. In the face of overwhelming suffering and evil, a dry description of the facts is totally inadequate and results in 'either cynicism or despair' (Des Pres, 1976: vi). On the other hand, an overly-emotional response could seem hysterical and self-indulgent (1976: vi).[25] This explains why, in Des Pres's work on the Holocaust, he adopts 'a kind of archaic, quasi-religious vocabulary' in his work, since 'only a language of ultimate concern can be adequate to facts such as these' (1976: vi). We should not apply this idea hastily to all survivor literature, when Des Pres makes these comments primarily with regard to his own work.

That said, a quasi-religious tone does indeed seem to come across from discussions of traumatic experiences. Donat describes his attempts to share his experiences as a 'sacred mission' (Des Pres, 1973: 671). Emmanuel Levinas claims that describing the Holocaust is to say something profound about the nature of humanity (quoted in Eaglestone, 2000: 98). One 'A-bomb writer' laments that 'past literary methods… are inadequate for dealing with the A-

[25] In Garber's description of Des Pres's conclusions, 'to allow feeling much play when speaking of atrocity is to border on hysteria' (Des Pres, 1976: vi) strangely becomes 'survivor language cannot be characterized by a sense of linguistic play – such language would border on the hysterical' (Garber, 2015: 26). Garber appears to have distorted Des Pres's thoughts and, in doing so, contradicts himself when, in the same paragraph, he points to 'wordplay' as an essential characteristic of survivor literature (2015: 26).

bomb' (quoted in Lifton, 1991: 400), and *The World is in Dread*, an A-bomb-inspired film, is nightmarish and other-worldly, using a 'dream language' to convey confusion, danger and terror (Lifton, 1991: 458). Hachiya also conjures this kind of nightmarish atmosphere in *Hiroshima Diary*: 'It was all a nightmare – my wounds, the darkness, the road ahead. My movements were ever so slow; only my mind was running at top speed.' (1995: 4). Finally, Ehrhart's 'The Ambush' gives a fragmented, disjointed account of combat in Vietnam, in which reality and fantasy become confused (2019: 17-18).

In the face of the scale of the trauma, conventional artistic language and forms seem inadequate. A profound trauma is inherently 'other', inherently 'strange' (Felman and Laub, 1992: 7). To depict a traumatic experience demands a language and tone which are equally 'other'. Perhaps Des Pres's claims should be taken as indicative of survivor literature as a whole, after all.

'Quasi-religious' language is very common in biblical literature, of course. That in itself is not sufficient to establish that a text claimed as religiously authoritative must fall into the category of survivor literature. This possibility is bound up with the debate on whether the writers of the Hebrew Bible intended their work to become canonical scripture. If the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible were meant primarily as a national history rather than a religiously authoritative document, then their quasi-religious language may indeed be indicative of trauma informing the text.

v) Extreme and enduring fear

Experiences of trauma are frequently associated with extreme fear. The World Health Organisation's *International Classification of Diseases* identifies 'overwhelming emotions such as fear or horror' (2018: online) which often accompany traumatic nightmares or

flashbacks. Among psychologists, van der Kolk and van der Hart note that 'Severe or prolonged stress' can lead to 'context-free fearful associations, which are hard to locate in space and time' (1995: 172). In other words, a trauma survivor can experience profound fear without clear association to any specific stimulus. Herman also observes that 'intense fear' is indicative of trauma (1997: 33) and that a survivor will often restrict or alter their behaviour to help 'control their pervasive fear' (1997: 46).

My survey of survivor literature in general has not identified extreme and enduring fear as a marker of this kind of literature. However, there are hints of extreme fear in *Hiroshima Diary* (Hachiya, 1995: 2, 26) and in Ehrhart's Vietnam poetry. (For example, 'The One That Died' adopts a consciously detached and callous tone, apparently as a defence mechanism against fear and grief [2019: 14; see also Tal, 1996: 84].) This aspect of trauma has also been accepted by several Bible scholars who apply trauma theory to biblical texts. Carr draws on Caruth's idea of 'speechless terror' to describe the experiences of the Judaean exiles and explain the Hebrew Bible's silence on day-to-day life in Babylonia (2011b: 295-297). Similarly, O'Connor singles out fear as a key aspect of the overwhelming impact of trauma relating to the fall of Jerusalem, and contends that fear underpinned biblical texts written in its aftermath, particularly Lamentations (2011: 21; 2002: 3-6).

vi) Other possible characteristics

It is possible that learned helplessness might be a marker of survivor literature. It is a lone Bible scholar – William Morrow – who makes this case. In his study of Second Isaiah, Morrow argues that the text reveals learned helplessness on the part of the Judaean exiles (2004: 80, 83-84). Although I am not convinced that this holds true for survivor literature as

an overarching category, Morrow's paper at least raises the possibility that learned helplessness might characterise the particular response to trauma of the Judaean exiles.

Survivor literature may also be characterised by a sense of being watched. Again, this idea is put forward by a Bible scholar, Daniel Smith-Christopher, who highlights a feeling of being watched within the book of Ezekiel and suggests this is characteristic of being controlled and subordinated by an oppressive power (2011: 262-263). However, the suggestion does not appear to have support from trauma theorists or indeed from other Bible scholars, to any great extent. It must also be acknowledged that Smith-Christopher's work does not always make it clear where the literary out-workings of trauma end, and the indicators of imprisonment, displacement and colonialisation begin. The sense of being watched may properly belong to one of these latter phenomena rather than to trauma.

Trauma thus finds expression in literature through a range of characteristics which appear to be common to survivor literature as a whole, regardless of genre and of the times and places in which individual pieces were written. If the Reed Sea episode was composed in the aftermath of a national trauma – as I believe it was – this trauma might therefore have influenced the form and content of the text, just as the Holocaust (for example) influenced the literature produced in its wake. It is my contention that some, if not all, of the markers of survivor literature identified above are visible in Exodus 13.17 – 15.21. I demonstrate this in chapter four, in which I offer a close reading of the text with reference to these markers.

Trauma theory and biblical studies

My study of the Reed Sea episode through the lens of trauma comes in the context of a burgeoning body of research, in which passages from several books of the Hebrew Bible have

been analysed with reference to the psychological study of trauma. The study of biblical texts informed by trauma is still developing, but what work has been done in the field is engaging and thought-provoking. Garber, Janzen and Smith-Christopher, for example, are very much worthy of attention.

Garber gives a very helpful overview of the application of trauma studies to the Bible, clarifying a crucial link between psychologists such as Herman, survivor literature specialists such as Lifton and Caruth, and biblical studies (2015: 25-27). He outlines how, since the late 1990s, Bible scholars have begun to apply trauma theory to biblical texts, drawing on psychology, and postmodern and postcolonial biblical criticism (2013: 421). Garber also shows that the combination of psychology and biblical studies has precedent; Ezekiel, for example, has been psychoanalysed by commentators from as early as 1877 (2015: 25). The application of trauma theory to the biblical text can therefore be seen as a continuation of this trend. This application has largely centred on the experiences of the Judaean people and the biblical writers thought to have been active during or soon after the Babylonian Exile (2015: 36), and on evidence within certain books of the Hebrew Bible of how the Exile affected the writers (2015: 28-34).[26]

Garber also offers a helpful investigation of the word חלל, the nearest Hebrew equivalent to 'trauma'.[27] חלל can be translated as 'to profane… to dishonor' (2011: 312) as well as 'to pierce' or 'to wound', and this multi-faceted word is evidence that: 'the ancients had a different semiotic system, a different vocabulary with which to express the all too

[26] Garber's 2015 essay functions largely as a summary of the extant work on trauma in biblical studies. As such, it is a useful introduction for a newcomer to the field, but expresses little of Garber's own views. However, he appears to take for granted that exilic (and post-exilic) biblical texts were produced and transmitted by a community, and that this community was genuinely and profoundly traumatised by the Exile (2015: 28) – two important assumptions, which Garber does not justify within this short essay.
[27] Indeed חלל is rendered as 'trauma' in LXX.

universal experience of trauma' (2011: 310). Taking this further, an ancient Israelite understanding of trauma might shed light on how we understand articulations of trauma from modern disaster survivors (2011: 311), especially from near-eastern cultures.

As the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma has developed beyond simple 'neurosis' and the common assumption of the First World War era that combat veterans suffering from 'shell shock' must be lazy, lacking in moral fibre or somehow inherently weak (Smith-Christopher, 2011: 254), so psychological readings of the Bible have matured and shaken off these negative associations. For example, recent studies by Garber and Smith-Christopher have helped to progress the analysis of Ezekiel beyond simply dismissing the prophet as neurotic, sex-obsessed or even a paranoid schizophrenic, as Broome (1946) and others have done in the past (Garber, 2013: 423; Smith-Christopher, 2002: 104). These more recent psychological readings of Ezekiel take seriously the scale of the devastation which affected the prophet. They are more nuanced, more fully informed of the clinical effects of trauma and more sympathetic to Ezekiel's plight than Klostermann's (1877) or Broome's (1946). As Smith-Christopher observes, failing to give sufficient weight to the trauma Ezekiel and his contemporaries suffered ignores a vital element of their social context and may even be 'tantamount to blaming the victims' (2002: 104).

This highlights why a trauma-informed reading of the Hebrew Bible[28] is so valuable: it takes seriously the effects of historical events on its authors. It reminds us that the Hebrew Bible was produced by real people with real experiences – both joyful and devastating. Thus, not only is this approach close to the well-established historical-critical model in its emphasis on the context in which a piece of literature was written, it also enables an emotionally-

[28] Naturally, it is not appropriate to apply trauma studies to every part of the Hebrew Bible. But where it can be argued convincingly that trauma has influenced the writing of a biblical text – especially where such a text is linked to the cataclysmic events of the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile – trauma studies offer an immensely valuable window into the experiences of the text's author(s).

intelligent connection between reader and writer which other hermeneutical methods lack. Juliana Claassens foregrounds this connection between reader and writer – and between modern and ancient traumata – in her 2020 monograph, which brings into dialogue biblical narratives bearing markers of trauma and modern trauma fiction. Claassens' work is also especially valuable in exploring the intersection between trauma and feminism, queer theory and postcolonial interpretation, thus highlighting the insidious trauma caused by structural violence and the oppression of marginalised groups (2020a: 4, 13, 155).

The biblical text and symptoms of trauma

A major focus of trauma-informed biblical studies has been on identifying symptoms of trauma in biblical authors and the people represented in their texts. Ezekiel has received probably more attention in this regard than any other biblical book, with Smith-Christopher among the first to relate trauma to the book or indeed to any biblical text. Smith-Christopher notes particularly the symptoms of PTSD in combat veterans and refugees, sees the parallels between these situations and the fall of Jerusalem and exile in Babylonia, and reasons that if such stressors resulted in trauma for twentieth century survivors, the same stressors are likely to have had similar effects on ancient Israelites. I find the logic of this approach convincing, albeit with the caveat that we cannot assume an ancient society responded to catastrophe in the same way a modern western one does.

More specifically, Smith-Christopher posits that several of Ezekiel's actions show symptoms of traumatic intrusion, after Jerusalem was terrorised by the Babylonians. He contends that Ezekiel's actions recapitulate the fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile (2002: 95-96). For example, in Ezek 3.22-27, Ezekiel confines himself to his home, mimicking the siege of his city (2002: 95). In Ezek 5.1-17, he cuts off his hair, then burns,

cuts and scatters it, modelling the fate of the Judaeans burnt in their city, cut down by the sword and displaced (2002: 96). Smith-Christopher explains: 'What appears to have driven Ezekiel the man to act out the horrors of conquest… is what causes thousands upon thousands of traumatized humans to relive memories that can literally drive them to despair, alcoholism, silence, and suicide.' (2002: 88).

This interpretation is valuable, as it takes into account the environment in which Ezekiel lived and functioned. The result is no lazy psychoanalysis but an awareness of the siege, famine and extreme violence to which Ezekiel and his fellow Judaeans were subjected, and a hypothesis of how these experiences might have affected them. It also offers a plausible explanation for some of the prophet's frankly bizarre behaviours.

However, there are also limitations in Smith-Christopher's frame of reference, as regards traumatic symptoms. He derives his understanding of PTSD from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is indeed 'widely cited' (2002: 89) but not necessarily absolutely authoritative. A little more critical distance from this source or an awareness of slightly different conceptions of trauma would have been helpful.[29] Taking his lead from *DSM*, Smith-Christopher mentions intrusion (dreams or waking flashbacks), hypersensitivity to stimuli associated with the traumatic experience, self-limitation to avoid these stimuli, and feelings of detachment as classic markers of PTSD (2002: 89). However, he does not mention guilt and shame or constriction (freezing in the face of perceived danger) within his list of symptoms, which Herman, for example, does (Herman, 1997: 37-53).

The possibility of traumatic intrusion within Ezekiel therefore remains, albeit with question marks over it. There is a stronger case for the presence of guilt and shame within the

[29] For example, the *International Classification of Diseases* identifies slightly different criteria for PTSD. It does not mention feelings of detachment, instead emphasising the 'overwhelming emotions such as fear or horror' which often accompany traumatic nightmares or flashbacks (WHO, 2018: online).

book: a classic marker of trauma. The word חלל is used repeatedly throughout Ezekiel[30] and suggests a sense of guilt and shame on Judah's part, especially in the context of Ezekiel's broad theme of Judah's exile being a consequence of their rejection and profaning of YHWH (Garber, 2011: 312, 315). This argument is strengthened further by the similar evidence of guilt and shame within Jeremiah: again guilt is suggested by the repeated use of חלל, and sentiments expressed in the book echo those of survivors from Hiroshima (Garber, 2011: 314, 319-320). The combined case for the presence of survivor's guilt within Ezekiel and Jeremiah is thus stronger than if we were to treat each book in isolation.

Jeremiah also offers evidence of another marker of trauma: extreme fear. As Kathleen O'Connor emphasises, traumatic events – ancient and modern – are characterised by being 'overwhelming'; creating a devastating impact in terms of physical injury, destruction of the environment, creation of social instability, and disruption of systems of meaning by which individuals and groups understand themselves (2011: 21). This overwhelming impact results in extreme and enduring fear in survivors, and the undermining of any meaningful sense of security (2011: 21). As O'Connor implies, the fall of Jerusalem is likely to have had these effects on the Judaeans, just as modern disasters affect their survivors. Indeed, fear, terror and horror are referenced throughout Jeremiah (c.f. Jer 2.12; 4.9; 5.22; 6.25; 8.15, 21; 20.4, 10).

The overwhelming impact of the destruction of Jerusalem can also be seen in its effect on survivors' speech: a sheer inability to speak (2011: 23) and, when speech is finally possible, a limiting of oneself to 'vague generalisations', rather than specific details of one's plight (2011: 24). Because of the overwhelming scale of trauma, language is inadequate to describe the experience, and because of the conscious mind's inability to assimilate a

[30] See Ezek 7.15, 20-24; 13.19; 20.9, 13, 14, 16, 21, 22, 24, 39; 21.30, 34; 22:8, 16, 26; 23.39; 24.22-23; 28:7, 8-9, 16; 36.20-21, 23; 39.7; 44.7.

traumatising event, the survivor can offer no recollection of the event beyond simple generalisations. Again, this is visible in Jeremiah, especially in the words of the narrator himself. Jer 20.7-9 expresses the narrator's simultaneous compulsion to speak and insult and ridicule when he does so, and 39.1-10 describes the fall of the city only briefly and in cursory, general terms.

Finally, Jeremiah expresses profound anger, raging at Judah's enemies and predicting their destruction. As Claassens observes, Jer 46-51 constitutes an extended revenge fantasy, particularly against Babylon, provoked by the suffering and destruction wreaked against Jerusalem (2017a: 2). Although the lurid description of Babylon's downfall in Jer 50-51 is presented as the outcome of YHWH's actions, not the people's, this is a simple longing for revenge displaced onto a divine proxy (2017a: 2). Ruth Poser also argues for biblical narrative as revenge fantasy; in her case, in Ezekiel (2012: 485). Poser's argument is more extensive than Claassens' and I will return to it in chapter four, to support my argument that the Reed Sea episode can also be understood as a revenge fantasy.

Poser's case for Ezekiel as trauma literature is probably the most extensive work on the subject to date, and details numerous markers of trauma within the text. She notes the presence within Ezekiel of shame, guilt and self-effacement, helplessness, constriction, inertia, inarticulate sounds and dissociation (2012: 290, 298-300, 435). In addition, Poser mentions the traumatic intrusion already alluded to by Garber (2012: 290). Furthermore, she argues that the structure of the narrative itself bears evidence of trauma, with violence and destruction suddenly breaking into hopeful and salvific passages (e.g. Ezek 33.21-33). In this way, sudden shifts in narrative tone and emphasis can be understood as indicative of trauma (2012: 291-295).[31]

[31] Intriguingly, Poser also highlights the close association between individual and collective trauma within Ezekiel. The individual embodies the collective experience as the prophet himself exemplifies the horrors being

The above are just a few examples of the growing number of studies reading biblical texts in the light of trauma theory, especially highlighting suggestions of trauma, including symptoms of PTSD. Intrusion, guilt, extreme fear and inability to describe the traumatic event have all been noted in passages from the Hebrew Bible. On the basis of such studies, it is clearly legitimate to explore whether Exodus 13-15 might reveal similar evidence of the effects of PTSD and of trauma more generally.

The text as an outpouring of traumatised pain

Lamentations has received attention from several Bible scholars with an interest in trauma theory. Among these scholars, O'Connor is probably the most prominent, and Linafelt (2000) and Boase (2016) also offer useful insights. David Janzen contributes to this body of research, too, and I refer to this contribution briefly below, but his analysis of Lamentations is also bound up with collective memory studies. I therefore discuss his 2019 monograph in greater depth in chapter five.

Trauma-informed studies of Lamentations tend to assume that the book represents an outpouring of traumatised pain: a response to a genuine experience of the destruction of Jerusalem and an expression of the survivors' pain and grief (c.f. O'Connor, 2002: 3).[32] Similar propositions are made of other biblical texts (for example, Morrow argues that Second Isaiah is heavily influenced by the form and tropes of lament [2004: 82-83]), but Lamentations appears to express trauma overtly, more extensively than any other biblical book. Lamentations is commonly understood as an outpouring of grief, not just at the devastation of Jerusalem but at the experience of being abandoned by God (O'Connor, 2002:

enacted on Jerusalem, and the people's suffering is depicted in the person of an individual woman, estranged from YHWH and ravished by her enemies (2012: 293-294). These observations open up important questions as to how individual and collective traumata might be interrelated in other biblical texts, including Exod 13-15.

[32] Probably multiple survivors, rather than Jeremiah, to whom Lamentations is traditionally attributed.

84). In this line of thought, the narrator feels a compulsion to witness to Jerusalem's intense suffering on the city's behalf: the same imperative to witness which characterises modern survivor literature. As O'Connor puts it, personified Zion demands to be seen, heard and paid attention. Because God is not present to explain and comfort, the narrator must speak instead (2002: 86, 98; see also Linafelt, 2000: 20).

To use Freudian terminology, we might describe this as 'acting out'. A survivor, struggling to come to terms with a traumatising event, to process it and articulate it, will often find themselves recapitulating this event over and over again. The unassimilated event repeatedly intrudes into their consciousness through flashbacks or nightmares, the boundaries between past and present become blurred, and they are compelled to relive the event and re-express their trauma. Without specialist help to come to terms with the traumatic experience, the survivor remains trapped in this endless process of 'acting out' (see LaCapra [2001: 21-22] for further detail). This is the framework within which Janzen understands Lamentations. The repetitions and use of the acrostic form in the book are, he argues, suggestions of inescapable trauma on the part of the author(s) (Janzen, 2019: 91-93). In essence, Janzen's argument is largely the same as O'Connor's, just using distinctly Freudian terminology.

Several assumptions underpin this argument. Firstly, there is the assumption that the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent occupation by Babylon must have been prolonged and harsh enough to have left an enduring imprint of trauma on the inhabitants of the city. Related to this, O'Connor assumes that Lamentations must have been composed during the Babylonian period, when this trauma was still raw. (She seems to base this latter assumption simply on 'traditional associations' [2002: 7] and the parallels between the subject matter of the book and the likely experiences of Jerusalem's people.)[33] And thirdly, the

[33] O'Connor's approach differs from that of Garber and Smith-Christopher in that it is largely devotional. Her work on Lamentations highlights expressions of pain, fear and despair in the text, asks what experiences inform

argument assumes that the book represents a genuine and direct response to the events it purports to depict.

There are valid alternative understandings of the form and content of Lamentations. The city lament form and several characteristic motifs may have been appropriated from other ANE cultures, as O'Connor herself concedes (2002: 10), although she does not ask to what extent the content and phraseology of Lamentations may also have been appropriated. If significant elements of Lamentations are indeed adopted from other ANE city laments, then the book does not represent an outpouring of trauma and grief on Israel's behalf; it instead appropriates the language of trauma and grief for a staged and formulaic mourning.

The aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem still seems the most likely context for the composition of Lamentations, even if the book's depiction of that disaster is embellished with literary artistry. So, the book is set against the background of a devastating and overwhelming event. It is therefore plausible to argue for a genuinely traumatic experience informing the composition of Lamentations, but I am cautious about characterising the book as an 'outpouring of traumatised pain'. As O'Connor acknowledges, it is equally likely that the text might represent 'an imagined symbolic world' (2002: 4), the product of literary artistry as much as of a traumatic experience.

Lamentations, then, can be described as survivor literature in that it was composed in the aftermath of a disaster and informed by the experience, probably by authors who themselves endured that disaster.[34] It also *appears* to represent an outpouring of traumatised

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these expressions, and connects such experiences with comparable experiences in the modern world. It is presented in the form of a commentary on the text, with a focus which is primarily theological, rather than psychological. O'Connor draws on trauma theorists but only insofar as they shed light on the likely experiences of Lamentations' author(s) and therefore offer clearer and stronger connections with suffering in the modern world. Her aim seems to be to use Lamentations as a resource, offering her readers comfort, a sense of meaning, and insights into the nature of God. For this reason, she does not devote as much space as I would have liked to questions of the book's origin and to what extent its authors were genuinely traumatised.

[34] The authorship of Lamentations is, of course, a matter of debate, but that debate lies outside the purview of this thesis. O'Connor (2002: 99), Linafelt (2000: 20) and Janzen (2019: 4, 91-93) all imply that the author(s) of

pain and grief, arising from the overwhelming experience. However, it is questionable to what extent the text is a genuine and visceral expression of pain, rather than a formulaic lament.

But there may be another dimension to Lamentations' status as survivor literature. It might be understood not only as survivor literature but also as 'literature of survival', in that the author means for the literature itself to survive, to preserve the memory of what has happened, as Linafelt argues, for example (2000: 21). This proposition is very difficult to prove or disprove, but it remains a fascinating possibility. Lamentations speaks of the experience of surviving a traumatic experience, and may also seek to ensure that a record of this experience will survive. I believe this is also true of the Reed Sea episode. After applying the rubric of survivor literature to Exod 13.17 – 15.21 in chapter four, I will explore in chapter five how the passage functions as an example of collective memory, preserving a traumatic experience.

O'Connor's work on Lamentations also highlights an important differentiation which should be kept in mind when discussing a text influenced by trauma. Some survivor literature expresses profound grief and suffering arising from a traumatising event, just as Lamentations does, in O'Connor's view. However, to say that the text expresses *trauma* is a little misleading. Trauma is by its nature insidious, not fully grasped or assimilated into the survivor's consciousness, and therefore manifests itself in the survivor's words and actions, without the survivor being fully conscious of it. Thus, the survivor will often express the pain and grief arising from the event which traumatised them but, although their trauma will often be manifest in what they say and do, this trauma will not be deliberately expressed by the survivor.

Lamentations directly experienced the fall of Jerusalem. Others place the dating of the books composition to a later period: for example, Morgenstern (1956) argues for an early fifth century dating and Tréves (1963) for a setting in the mid-second century.

The text as traumatised theology

If Lamentations can be described as survivor literature, or even literature of survival, perhaps Genesis can be called 'survival literature'. This third term is clearly very similar to the other two and does risk adding an element of confusion to the discussion, but the precise connotations of 'survival literature' are distinct and important. According to O'Connor, Genesis can be said to be 'survival literature' because it speaks into Judah's concerns relating to its ongoing survival and the theological problems raised by its plight (2016: 305-307).

Following this argument, the text of Genesis seeks to make theological sense of a traumatic experience. This can be seen in the disaster narratives, famines and instances of landless, wandering people within Genesis, which echo the experiences of the exiled Judaeans (O'Connor, 2016: 307-309). These stories impose order on disaster by attributing the events they depict to God[35]; either portraying him as a punisher or as one who would be merciful but is forced to be harsh by his people's depravity (2016: 308). By implication, God must also have had a role within the people's displacement and exile: theological order is restored.[36] In the same vein, Genesis underlines the theological tropes of God promising his people offspring, land and blessings: promises which would have had a special resonance for returning exiles trying to rediscover their collective identity and sense of belonging (2016: 310-312).[37]

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[35] O'Connor does not differentiate between God as a metaphysical entity and the deity as a character in the text. Space does not allow for a full discussion of the implications of this. But suffice to say, the two cannot be conflated without establishing that the writers of Genesis definitely intended to create a theologically-normative text.

[36] Poser makes a similar observation on Ezekiel. The authors attribute ultimate responsibility for the devastation of Jerusalem to YHWH, rather than to the Babylonians. Thus, they bring theological order out of the chaos and destruction (2012: 295).

[37] This is an important argument but two issues remain: firstly, O'Connor assumes a late-Babylonian or early-Persian period for the composition of Genesis (2016: 306), citing only the popularity of this dating in evidence. Late-Babylonian-to-early-Persian covers several decades, and only by this imprecision can it be argued that the writers of Genesis were early enough to have survived the Exile, while also placing the composition of the book

In the same way, it could be argued that the Deuteronomistic History constitutes an attempt to make theological sense of the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile. Janzen advances this argument, pointing out that 2 Kings highlights the sinfulness of the people and presents this sinfulness as a provocation to God, forcing his hand in punishing them with destruction and exile (Janzen, 2019: 41-42, 51). 2 Kings thus provides a theological explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem, just as (in O'Connor's view) Genesis does.[38]

However, the Deuteronomist's viewpoint does differ from the authors of Genesis on one crucial point. While Genesis seems to reflect Judah's collective trauma, 2 Kings denies trauma or at least overlooks it, instead focusing on historiographical and theological questions, particularly to do with the rise and fall of the monarchy and the deity's role within both (2019: 41, 49). Janzen still allows for the presence of trauma within DtrH, to an extent – indeed, he envisages trauma as having a crucial role within the text (see below) – but any descriptions of potentially traumatising events are given in 'laconic' accounts such as 2 Kgs 25.1-12 (2019: 47-49).

This is an original and thought-provoking perspective, but it seems to rest on a contrast between the cursory descriptions of events in 2 Kings and the poetic hyperbole of Lamentations. And just as the demonstrative language in Lamentations does not necessarily indicate trauma, the lack of such language in 2 Kings does not necessarily indicate its absence. A cursory, stereotypical and emotionless description of a painful event might

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in Yehud, following their return (2016: 306). Secondly, O'Connor holds that Genesis was written for the whole nation of Judah, struggling to come to make sense of their displacement, fractured identity and broken theological understanding (2016: 306). This is possible, but it is also possible that Genesis was written by and for the ruling elite, with little or no interest in setting theological norms. O'Connor does not appear to have considered that alternative scenario. I believe there is a case to be made for Genesis articulating traumatised theology, but this case could be made a little more convincingly.

[38] Claassens argues the same for the sermons of Jeremiah (Jer 7, 11.1-14, 17.19-27). She concludes that Jeremiah 'seeks to frame the traumatic events of the Babylonian invasion and exile in such a way as to help his audience on the one hand face the traumatic events they had lived through, while also finding some meaningful way of moving beyond disaster.' The sermons provide an explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem, framing it as the result of the people's sin and YHWH's punishment, and theological order is restored (2017b: 33).

indicate not that a survivor is seeking to repress their trauma, but that they are still in the early stages of recovery and only beginning to come to terms with their experiences (c.f. Herman, 1997: 175). This prospect goes some way to explaining how Dtr might give no overt expression to his pain, while the trauma still intrudes into his writing, unbidden.

Traumatic intrusion into the text

DtrH may indeed be influenced by trauma, in a more subtle way than any of the other biblical expressions of trauma I have examined so far. In the same way that trauma can intrude into the consciousness of a survivor, through dreams, flashbacks or waking hallucinations, it might intrude into a text composed by a traumatised author. A traumatic intrusion into a text might even go so far as to subvert the message the author is trying to convey. According to Janzen, DtrH is subverted by exactly this kind of intrusion.

Motivated by the need to make religious and ethical sense of Judah's suffering, Dtr composed a 'master narrative' which explains destruction and exile as the consequences of disloyalty towards YHWH (Janzen, 2012: 3, 47). However, trauma intrudes into this narrative, subverting its core message. In this line of reasoning, the Judaeans' experience of violence, loss and displacement did irreparable damage to their worldview, leaving an enduring sense of chaos and threat (2012: 24-27, 33-34). Unbidden by Dtr, maybe even unconsciously, this sense of chaos 'explodes into and radically challenges Dtr's master narrative's explanation of the exilic community's horrific experience' (2012: 5). Trauma offers no coherent alternative explanation for Judah's exile, merely nihilism: 'As the trauma repeats into or beside the master narrative, it envisions suffering without explanation and punishment for no reason, and so subverts the language of God, justice, punishments, and so on that the master narrative uses to explain and ethicize the exile.' (2012: 62).

Thus, DtrH's subtext places in doubt the key elements of the master narrative's theology and ethics, without offering an alternative. For example, Deuteronomy's 'golden calf' episode (Deut 9-10) mimics Jeroboam's apostasy in 1 Kings 12, but Moses' destruction of the idol and deep repentance on Israel's behalf does not seem to have been adequate to induce YHWH to forgive his people. There remains, at least, an element of ambiguity over whether YHWH responds to repentance (2012: 77-78). YHWH, it seems, treats those loyal to him as if they were disloyal (2012: 80-81). Subtly, unconsciously on the part of the author, the theology of the just and righteous deity is brought into question.

Janzen's argument is difficult to refute, since it relies on the effect of trauma being, by definition, insidious and difficult to detect. If even Dtr himself was unaware that he was being influenced by the collective trauma of his nation, the humble Bible scholar has little chance of proving conclusively that this was not so. However, as regards Janzen's specific interpretation of Deut 9-10, a conservative scholar could quite easily make a convincing case for a more conventional reading.[39]

Although I remain sceptical about Janzen's thesis, the concept of traumatic intrusion into a text is valuable in that it brings to the fore how trauma will often find a way to manifest itself, even if the survivor attempts to deny or downplay the experience which traumatised them. The idea of intrusion also makes the differentiation clear between expressing the pain arising from a traumatising event and expressing the trauma itself. Pain, grief and suffering can be and have been expressed by numerous trauma survivors. Trauma itself is not deliberately expressed: it manifests itself in a survivor's words and behaviours, sometimes even if the survivor wants to deny they have any kind of problem.

[39] For example, McConville simply concludes that YHWH's behaviour was entirely justified. The Israelites were 'stubbornly resistant to God's way for them' and guilty of 'the worst sin imaginable' (2005: 210), and their righteous and faithful deity showed great restraint in not destroying them (2005: 210-211).

Trauma studies and related disciplines

The study of trauma within the Hebrew Bible cannot be completely disentangled from related disciplines. Especially where this study focuses on the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile, war studies, refugee studies and postcolonial theory all come into play. This is exemplified by Smith-Christopher, who shows interest in the broad spectrum of the Exile's effects on Israel and therefore subsumes trauma into a larger rubric of war and refugee studies. Thus, his chapter on Ezekiel and Lamentations refers to trauma only insofar as it contributes to an understanding of 'Ezekiel the refugee' (2002: 89-94).

His primary methodology seems to be to apply the effects of colonialism on selected twentieth century societies to the experiences of Israel under Babylon and Persia (2002: 15-21), and to examine biblical texts dating from the Exile and afterwards in the light of these experiences. Since Israel could be said to have been colonised and subjugated by these two empires, this approach seems legitimate and a 'joined up' approach, exploring the intersection between several different fields of study, promises valuable insights. But the immediate implication for my own research is that it becomes awkward to distinguish where trauma theory ends and insights from other disciplines begin. Smith-Christopher argues persuasively that 'an intensified sense of being watched' is integral to the experiences of subjugated people (2011: 264) and opens up the possibility that biblical texts referring to the Exile may exhibit this sense of being watched (2011: 264). However, in doing so, he conflates refugee studies, trauma and post-colonial theory and it becomes very difficult to say whether this sense of being watched is due to trauma, shame or conquest by an imperial power.[40]

[40] Smith-Christopher's 2011 essay develops his thoughts on trauma and the Hebrew Bible; Ezekiel in particular. In this essay, he notes that refugee studies is an 'associated discipline' to trauma studies, but proceeds to subsume the former into the latter (2011: 257). In unpacking 'intentional misrepresentation' (story-telling or outright lying) as a characteristic of refugee behaviour (2011; 257-258), he therefore implies that it is associated

This intersection between disciplines also raises a fundamental question: exactly where are the boundaries of trauma studies? Or, more to the point, to what extent should a thesis focused on trauma draw on related but distinct disciplines? My central concern within this thesis is how experiences of trauma derived from the fall of Jerusalem or the Babylonian Exile might have affected the people of Judah and influenced biblical texts produced soon afterwards. Blurring the boundaries between academic disciplines is not, in itself, a problem. It could even be useful in addressing this central concern. For example, war studies may shed light on the psychological state of the army defending Jerusalem during its siege, and of the civilians subjected to the constant threat of a violent death, not to mention the military tactics of the Babylonian army. Where relevant, I have given attention to specific sources which draw on these disciplines and seem to make useful contributions towards fulfilling my research aims.

Summary

Reading the Hebrew Bible through the lens of trauma is a burgeoning field and an important one. Interpreting exilic and post-exilic biblical texts in this way may seem novel, but it is entirely legitimate since it is rooted in a thorough understanding of the psychology of trauma, of trauma's varied effects on a piece of literature, and of the context of early sixth

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with trauma, which is not necessarily the case. Refugee studies is a separate strand of research which may be applicable to the experiences of Israelites in exile, but should not be conflated with trauma. Smith-Christopher then muddies the water further by proposing that an 'imperial gaze' is at work in selected passages in Ezekiel (2011: 263). This 'imperial gaze' is apparently congruent with the 'psychologist's gaze' which scrutinises traumatised combat veterans, and the concept is informed by the 'male gaze' in feminist analysis and by the studies of indigenous peoples which suggest a 'colonizer's gaze' (2011: 260). He then dips into the biblical trope of shame as a result of being perceived negatively, before adding a further theoretical layer by referring to the psychological consequences of being watched, referring especially to Michel Foucault (2011: 262-263). His train of thought becomes difficult to follow. And I assume that, in referencing Foucault, Smith-Christopher intended to draw out Foucault's ideas of the necessity of constantly observing a subject, so as to exert power over him/her (Foucault, 1991: 200-228). However, Smith-Christopher does not make this point explicit and as a result, his argument loses coherence.

century Judah. Using the explicit language of trauma has only been possible since the early 1980s, since PTSD and similar terminology only came into common usage at that point, but the application of trauma studies to the Hebrew Bible is also a continuation of an established thread of biblical interpretation, grounded in psychology, which has operated since the latter part of the nineteenth century (Garber, 2015: 25). Such interpretation is not only reasonable but valuable, because it takes seriously the historical context within which the biblical authors operated, the devastating impact of trauma and the relatability of the human beings who composed the biblical text. Any reader of the Hebrew Bible wishing to gain a well-rounded, emotionally-intelligent understanding of texts written in the exilic and post-exilic periods would do well to give attention to this field of study. My study of the Reed Sea episode comes in the context of this growing body of research, and is informed and partly shaped by it.

Preliminary conclusions

The available scholarship on trauma and biblical studies leads us to several preliminary conclusions:

i) that traumatic experiences can have a profound and enduring impact on survivors;

ii) that this impact is often expressed in literature produced by trauma survivors;

iii) that although the concept of 'survivor literature' is broad and diverse, there are certain characteristics which many examples of survivor literature share;

iv) that reading exilic and post-exilic biblical texts through the lens of trauma is not only legitimate but offers unique insights into those texts;

v) finally, that applying trauma theory to Exodus 13.17 – 15.21, especially using the framework of survivor literature, could add a new dimension to how that specific text is understood.

Multiple questions must be answered in making a case for the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses being influenced by trauma. If the text should be understood as survivor literature, we must explore in what respects it fits this category and which markers of survivor literature it demonstrates. It will also be enlightening to examine how the text functions as an example of collective memory and how trauma affected the formation and preservation of that memory – especially bearing in mind that a memory of a traumatic event so often defies direct description. Thus, we can form an impression of how trauma manifested in Exod 13.17 – 15.21 would have had an enduring effect on the community in which the text was produced. These issues are all discussed in later chapters.

Most pressingly, if Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is indeed influenced by trauma, the source of this trauma must be established. In the next chapter, I outline what I believe is the most plausible dating for the composition of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 and why, based on this, I believe that trauma deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile is likely to have influenced the authors of the text.

Chapter 2 – The composition of the Reed Sea episode and its implications for trauma influencing the text[41]

In order to argue convincingly for trauma informing Exod 13.17 – 15.21, it is necessary to establish a plausible origin for such trauma. I must therefore explain the context in which I envisage the text being written. Since the question of the composition of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is bound up with the composition of the entire Pentateuch, this chapter will begin with an overview over the scholarly debate on the composition of the Pentateuch as a whole. It will then focus more closely on the Reed Sea episode itself, the most likely context for its composition, and the implications of this for any traumatic influence on the text.

Scholars have advanced a number of competing theories around the Pentateuch's composition and, to suggest a heuristic dating for the Reed Sea episode in particular, it is instructive to engage with some of these theories relating to the Pentateuch. I will argue that the Yehud community in the early Persian period is the most likely setting for the completion of the Pentateuch – including extensive editing and reshaping of existing source material and some new compositional work – and that there is good reason for believing trauma experienced in the context of the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile influenced the authors, leaving a watermark on the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses.

This investigation does not preclude the application of literary-critical approaches to the text. On the contrary, chapter four – the focus of my whole thesis – represents a close reading of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, informed by a psychological understanding of trauma and of key literary features of other writing influenced by trauma. However, without a historical-critical basis to support it, a trauma-informed reading can only ever be speculative: a sceptic

[41] Some material included in this chapter has previously been published in my 2020 paper.

could dismiss such a reading as a novel and interesting theory, but no more. Presenting at least a heuristic dating and geographical setting for the composition of Exodus thus bolsters my argument for trauma influencing Exod 13.17 – 15.21. Far from detracting from a literary-critical approach, it complements it.

An outline of common theories of pentateuchal composition

The differing theories of how the Pentateuch came to assume its current form are many and various. It would be unwise and unfair to overlook the nuanced differences between competing views: discussion on the issue is often more a matter of subtle differences of opinion, rather than deeply polarised positions.

However, for the purposes of a brief overview of the debate, the most influential theories of pentateuchal composition can be summarised in four categories: the documentary hypothesis; P and non-P; the late Yahwist; and revisionism. I will contend below that the concept of P and non-P is the most compelling explanation for how the Pentateuch came to assume its current form.

i) The documentary hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis dominated pentateuchal scholarship for most of the twentieth century and remains highly influential in the twenty-first. The hypothesis can be summarised thus: the Pentateuch was composed by several contributors over a timeframe extending from the monarchical period to after the Exile. These contributors created four source documents – J, E, D and P – of which J was the earliest and P the latest. The four sources were combined and redacted at a similar time to the composition of P, and the

resultant document was the Pentateuch in a mostly complete form (see e.g. Dozeman, 2017: 62-65 for a more detailed outline of this hypothesis).

Although adherents to the documentary hypothesis agree that a significant quantity of redactional work was carried out as or soon after P was composed, they are divided on two related questions: whether there might also have been an earlier redactor, combining J and E; and whether the redactor(s) carried out extensive reshaping of the earlier sources, minor corrections of obvious errors, or something between these two. (For example, Propp argues for a Redactor^{JE} alongside a final redactor [1999: 49], while Baden insists on the simplest possible form of the documentary hypothesis, with a single redactor who made only minor additions to the text to correct errors and omissions [2012: 220-224]).

The documentary hypothesis offers some insights, since there are numerous points in the text of the Pentateuch where tensions, internal contradictions and non-sequiturs can be discerned, suggesting strongly that the Pentateuch is composite, rather than the product of a single author (as Römer [2016a: 121] and Baden [2012: 3] observe).[42] Furthermore, the Pentateuch includes diverse literary genres, shifting repeatedly between prose, poetry, genealogy and legislative texts. The documentary hypothesis offers an explanation for how the Pentateuch might have been created, in view of its apparent composite nature and variety of genres. Especially at the time when Wellhausen first advanced his form of the theory, this was ground-breaking and insightful; a challenging and illuminating corrective to the widespread assumption that the whole Pentateuch was written by Moses.

However, Wellhausen's theory has been questioned and challenged in recent years. Its critics observe that the notional E source is difficult to differentiate from J and does not appear to represent a coherent document in its own right (Carr, 2005: 110-113). Furthermore,

[42] See 'Issues with the idea of a lone author or compiler' below.

the four sources are often differentiated on linguistic grounds – that is, on the presence in the text of words and phrases supposedly characteristic of the individual sources – which can be misleading if emphasised to the exclusion of other textual dating methods (Schmid, 2019: 104-106). Finally, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, adherents to the documentary hypothesis often disagree among themselves on key aspects of the theory, and on which verses and verse fragments should be attributed to which source (Whybray, 1987: 36). These problems weaken the theory's plausibility.

ii) P and non-P

Since the late twentieth century, the voices dissenting from the documentary hypothesis have grown louder and more numerous. Many prominent scholars – particularly European scholars – have pointed out weaknesses in the hypothesis and advanced an alternative theory of pentateuchal composition, which builds on the strengths of the documentary hypothesis but differs from it in several key aspects. (Blum, Carr, Schmid, Römer and Gertz have made important contributions to this alternative theory.)

These scholars do not agree on every question of the Pentateuch's provenance[43], but they do agree on several important points, so can be grouped together for the purposes of this brief summary. They contend that the Pentateuch includes material from two overarching sources: P (congruent with the P source envisaged under the documentary hypothesis) and non-P (material largely pre-dating P and combined with P during or shortly following P's composition).[44] P is likely to have been composed during the Exile, they argue, with editorial

[43] I outline some of these differences of opinion below. See especially the section on 'Combining P, non-P and new compositions'.
[44] Blum prefers the labels 'P-komposition' and 'D-komposition' (1990: 5) but his argument is in step with Schmid, Römer and the others. The Pentateuch may also include a self-contained H source (the 'Holiness Code') but, if so, it this source is limited to legal material and is of little relevance to the Pentateuch's narrative (see e.g. Schwartz, 2009: 4-7).

work on the combined P and non-P continuing into the Persian period (Schmid, 2019: 102, 107-108; Carr, 2011a: 215-217). Thus, the Pentateuch was shaped into its now-recognised form through an extended process of redaction, editing and possibly even the addition of newly composed narrative elements (Carr, 2011a: 224; Römer, 2016: 365).

This theory acknowledges the compelling evidence for the Pentateuch being composite, written over a period of several centuries and including two main narrative threads. For example, as Blum notes, Exod 14 shows two competing explanations for the miracle at the Reed Sea: the waters are driven back by the east wind, but also split by YHWH (1990: 256). These two explanations can be best accounted for by the inclusion of two pre-existing narratives within the final text. The theory also offers an explanation for the abrupt shifts between narrative sequences (e.g. between Joseph and Moses [Gertz, 2006: 77-82; Römer, 2016b: 365-367]). And it challenges the weaker points of the documentary hypothesis; the specious differentiation between J and E, for example (see Gertz, 2014: 95; Carr, 2005: 110-113).

Below, I will align myself with Schmid, Blum, Carr, Gertz and especially Römer, and contend that the most persuasive theory of pentateuchal composition includes an exilic P source, non-P material deriving mostly from the pre-exilic period but partly from after P was complete, and extensive editorial work in Persian-period Yehud.

iii) The late Yahwist

Other scholars depart from the documentary hypothesis in different directions. van Seters' theory of a 'late Yahwist' is singular enough to merit attention in its own right. For van Seters, the Yahwist is not merely the author of one of four source documents for the Pentateuch, but a virtuoso editor, gathering myths, legends, genealogies and other source

material and redacting it all into the Pentateuch as we know it (van Seters, 1983: 31). The Yahwist is thus, 'a historian of quite remarkable scope.' (1983: 229).[45]

Interestingly, van Seters himself never uses the word 'editor' to describe the Yahwist. Editors, he explains, are a hallmark of the documentary hypothesis; redactors who compiled existing material, using a copy-and-paste technique and minimal written additions to correct errors and smooth over breaks in the text. van Seters suggests that the Yahwist is far more than an editor of this kind: there is a creative and 'compositional' aspect to his work (1983: 51). The Yahwist is therefore better described as an 'antiquarian' in the same mould as Herodotus; not only combining disparate sources but developing these sources and even inventing material of his own (2013: 12, 62, 167).

van Seters' hypothesis is important, particularly as it brings to the fore questions of why the Pentateuch was written. He challenges the common assumption that it was intended to be primarily religiously-normative, and instead argues that it is a national history, created by the Yahwist to help his own people understand their origins and identity (2013: 13). This is a crucial discussion, which I explore at more length below (see the section, 'Why was the Pentateuch written?').

There are also weaknesses in van Seters' argument. According to van Seters, the Yahwist would have operated during the Exile, after the Deuteronomistic History was complete, effectively extending Dtr backwards (1983: 361). Since he dates the earliest work on Dtr to the sixth century (1983: 8) and also concludes that the Pentateuch must have been complete before Second Isaiah (van Seters, 2015: 6), this leaves a very narrow timeframe for the Yahwist to create a work as long and complex as the Pentateuch. This narrow timeframe

[45] van Seters allows for the existence of a Priestly writer too, but limits his contribution to supplementing the Yahwist's work: '"revision" of the earlier history' (1983: 48; 1999: 211). Whybray (1987) advances a similar argument to van Seters but seems to have based his own conclusions on van Seters' work, so focusing on van Seters here seems wise.

also highlights a further problem: a reliance on special pleading, in presenting the Yahwist as an extraordinary, perhaps unparalleled, literary genius (van Seters 1983: 229).

iv) Revisionism

A group of revisionist scholars (most notably Davies, Thompson and Lemche) take this argument much further and conclude that the Pentateuch was almost entirely composed during the Persian or even Hellenistic period, with scant material written earlier. Davies sums up the conclusion neatly, claiming that the Pentateuch (and indeed the whole Hebrew Bible), 'was at least largely compiled into its present form, and at most almost entirely written… during the rule of the Persian and then the Hellenistic monarchies.' (1992: 24).

Davies highlights the lack of evidence for an exilic dating, and particularly the lack of evidence for Judaean exiles having the time and the facilities in Babylon to compose lengthy literary texts (1992: 57). Similarly, Thompson holds that, although the Pentateuch may have been underpinned by existing traditions, there is no way of discerning what these traditions were, where they came from and how the authors of the Pentateuch might have adapted and reworked them (1992: 368-369). In view of this, Thompson argues, we cannot safely date any element of the Pentateuch to before the Exile.

A Persian or Hellenistic date is also supported by evidence within the text. Biblical accounts of arrival in the land, establishment of the law, a strong, prosperous, influential Israel and a glorious Temple all reflect the concerns of the immigrant elite, settling in Yehud and seeking to establish themselves (Davies, 1992: 118). Lemche also argues that the Pentateuch bears evidence of Greek thought and imagery (2013c: 140) and that a pre-exilic date of composition is therefore implausible.

This line of argument challenges the common assumption among more conservative scholars that the Pentateuch is historically reliable, and demands that any claims to biblical historicity must be supported by extrabiblical evidence. Where more conservative scholars tend to assume the text is historically factual and alter that perspective where extrabiblical evidence calls it into question, the revisionists begin with the available archaeological evidence and extrabiblical texts and assume any biblical narrative not supported by this other evidence cannot be historical. For example, Davies highlights a lack of extrabiblical evidence for the united kingdom of Israel and Judah and, based on this lack of evidence, concludes that 'this biblical Israel is an idea, a concept, a construct, and not an historical society' (1992: 74).

Although I disagree with many of the revisionists' conclusions, I affirm the value in their insistence on robust evidence. And while I am not persuaded that the themes of arrival in the land, restoration of Israel and collective prosperity must mean the whole Pentateuch was composed following the Exile, I agree that this is a compelling argument for the Persian period being the setting for at least significant reshaping of an existing text.

However, there are several problems with this position. Firstly, linguistic analysis of the Pentateuch, with its high concentration of Classical Biblical Hebrew, presents weighty evidence for a significant portion of the text being written before the Persian period. The revisionist scholars tend to lean heavily on 'artificial archaisation': the idea that the Pentateuch's authors deliberately adopted an archaic form of Hebrew, so as to make the text appear older than it truly was (see e.g. Davies [1998: 34]). This argument fails to convince, in the face of the much simpler possibility that the text is exactly as old as it appears to be. Secondly, the available extrabiblical data for the Persian period is not sufficient to allow us to be confident in dating extensive compositional work to this point in time. Thirdly, the claims of distinctively Greek tropes in the Pentateuch rest on shaky examples: Lemche suggests that

the Greek concept of four elements is discernible in Genesis 1, for example (2013c: 140), which seems rather fanciful.

When and where was the Pentateuch written?

i) The case for a sixth-fifth century dating

As several important recent studies on the composition of the Pentateuch conclude, much of the Priestly material is likely to have been composed during the Exile, and elements of the non-P material should be dated earlier (see e.g. Blum, 2009: 31-32; Römer, 2009: 157-158; Schmid, 2019: 107-108). However, these compositions would have been far from a recognisably complete Pentateuch, as we now have it. The extant text of the Pentateuch underwent significant redaction, revision and reshaping in the Persian period and, during this process, the scribes responsible for this editorial work had ample opportunity to modify the Pentateuch so as to reflect the experiences and socio-political concerns of their community. (e.g. Blum, 1990: 333-360; Carr, 2011a: 205-207; Römer, 2014: 123).[46]

i.i Socio-political conditions

While there are difficulties in reliably dating the composition of the Pentateuch to the Exile or to the Persian period, based on extrabiblical texts or archaeology, there are several other criteria which clarify matters. Completion of the Pentateuch in the fifth century is supported by the socio-political conditions within Yehud, following the return from Exile. There is no consensus on exactly when the Temple was completed, but few scholars would

[46] Even Baden, who follows the documentary hypothesis in a form close to that advanced by Wellhausen, envisages the compilation of the Pentateuch in the Persian period, allowing for the text and its ideology being reframed by its redactor (Baden, 2019: 28; 2009: 14-16). See below for a lengthier discussion of the content and extent of the source material the Pentateuch's redactors would have worked from.

date it later than the end of the sixth century.[47] With the Temple and the cult restored, a system of government re-established and immigrants from Babylonia swelling the population in Yehud in the subsequent years, conditions arose in which the creation of a national history was not only possible but necessary. In this environment, the Yehud community sought to establish itself, understand itself and its deity, and define itself, over and against other residents of the land (Thompson, 1999: 31; Davies, 1992: 116).[48] The Pentateuch was produced to articulate what it meant to be 'Israel'.

In a similar vein, K. L. Noll sees the Pentateuch as a written articulation of Judah's collective identity. He argues that the crisis of the Exile was a prompt for the Judaeans to collect, compile and synthesise written traditions, to avoid those records being lost forever. For Noll, the deportation to Babylonia was a motivation for the scribes to raid the Temple archives and rescue pre-existing scrolls (2013: 395; see also Grabbe, 2001b: 152-153; Levin, 2016: 579). He suggests perceptively that the Exile's threat to Judah's collective identity would have inspired the subsequent creation of a written document to reinforce this identity.

The facilities necessary for the Pentateuch's composition are unlikely to have been available for long before the Exile. Based on archaeological findings and on Assyrian and Babylonian records, Jerusalem seems to have been only a small town until at least the reign of Omri (Römer, 2007a: 46; Thompson, 1992: 111; Noll, 2013: 240-241). A small town of this kind would have lacked the Temple facilities[49], the entrenched ruling elite and the scribal

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[47] The rebuilding of the Temple has traditionally been credited to Cyrus in 539 B.C.E. Middlemas suggests that 515 is a more likely date (2009: 176) and Grabbe proposes a date early in the fifth century for the resettlement of Yehud (2009a: 116, 120-121). Even assuming Grabbe is correct, it is plausible that the Pentateuch could have been edited and expanded in the early-to-mid fifth century.

[48] Carol Meyers makes a similar point, emphasising that Exodus in particular would have helped form a sense of collective identity within the community which produced it. However, she differs from Thompson and Davies in terms of the book's dating, envisaging the origins of the Exodus narrative (and the need for identity formation) in pre-monarchic Israel, not post-exilic Yehud (Meyers, 2005: 4-5, 11).

[49] Significant literary compositions would have required a large group of scribes and thus an extensive and well-developed Temple to allow these scribes space to work. The scribes would also have required a ready supply of pens, ink and leather or papyrus, which would have demanded sufficient raw materials and space to produce

school to make large-scale works of literature possible, so extensive compositional work on the Pentateuch seems unlikely in that context.

The exiles may have had the facilities and the opportunities for writing while in Babylon, but this has not been proven. There is vigorous debate on the Judaeans' experiences of exile – how much freedom they enjoyed while in Babylonia, how harsh their captors were and how spartan their living conditions would have been – largely because extrabiblical evidence dating from the Exile is in short supply, and there is even less biblical material which gives any impression of the Judaeans' experiences in Babylonia. This being the case, we must be cautious about attributing large-scale works of literature to the exilic period (as Davies notes [1992: 24, 105-106]).

i.ii Linguistic dating

It is widely accepted that a large portion of the Pentateuch – a hypothesised P source – was written during the Exile. This belief is founded on a combination of linguistic features of the text and the authors' apparent ideology and thematic interests (Schmid, 2019: 102-105), along with cross references from other biblical texts widely accepted as postexilic.

As Carr observes, P's composition in Classical Biblical Hebrew – which fell out of use (at least in literature) by the mid-Persian period – along with a noticeable lack of literary features distinctive to Late Biblical Hebrew, makes it unlikely that P should be dated after the Exile (Carr, 2016: 89). Schmid wisely advises caution in using linguistic grounds to date P, noting how difficult it is to be precise in this exercise, especially when it is carried out in isolation from other methods (2019: 106, 110). He observes that the break between CBH and

these scribal supplies (see Keith, 2019a: 712-713). The papyrus used for some of the scrolls later produced at Qumran may even have been imported from Egypt (Tov, 2004: 14-15), and imports of this kind seem unlikely at a time when Jerusalem was a comparatively small town.

LBH is not a clean one: a few features of P can be understood as later – as 'transitional' between CBH and LBH (2019: 111).[50] Schmid seems to interpret this as allowing an early postexilic dating for P. Alternatively, it may be evidence for P being retouched during the postexilic period. Either way, linguistic analysis of the Pentateuch does not preclude significant additions and amendments in the Persian period.

i.iii Thematic content

Few scholars insist on linguistic dating to the exclusion of other methods. As Römer observes, 'allegorical dating', a focus on the content of pentateuchal texts and their echoes of events likely to be contemporary to their authors, is a common strategy in dating the texts in question (2016b: 363-364). Römer goes on to argue, compellingly, that these literary themes make most sense in the context of a post-exilic work of literature. For example, he suggests that Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22 reflects the vulnerability of the Yehud community and their fear that there might be no future for Israel; it thus suggests a Persian-period composition (2016b: 363). Similarly, Schmid argues that the Pentateuch's monotheism and presentation of heaven and earth as stable entities 'reflect[s] the stable world order of the Persian period' (2019: 103). And pentateuchal accounts of a strong and numerous Israel, captivity and oppression, and a journey to a homeland promised by the deity would have reflected the experiences and hopes of the immigrant community, settling in Yehud and seeking to establish themselves (Whybray, 1987: 107; Levin, 2007: 223).

However, there is also a case to be made for themes in the Pentateuch reflecting the concerns of the Judaeans in exile, and for therefore dating the composition of those accounts to the exilic period. For example, the ancestral sequence – especially YHWH's command to

[50] For example, Schmid observes that P varies in its use of first person singular pronouns (2019: 111).

Abram to leave his homeland – reflects the experience of being displaced, suggesting that at least the core of the sequence was composed during the Exile (Carr, 2011a: 226-229).[51] Similarly, Blum points out that P takes for granted centralised worship, so probably reflects memories of the Jerusalem Temple and a desire to restore it (2009: 31-32).

These two arguments are not mutually exclusive. It is entirely plausible that P was composed during the Exile and therefore reflected the concerns of the exiled Judaeans, and that these concerns are still discernible in the reworked and finalised Pentateuch. Equally, the finalised Pentateuch appears to address concerns unique to the Yehud community, suggesting that significant editorial and compositional work was carried out in the Persian period. Complicated questions remain as to how lengthy and coherent P (and pre-exilic non-P) would have been, the extent of the editorial and reshaping process performed upon this material, and how much pentateuchal material was newly composed in the Persian period. I explore these questions below under 'What source material did the scribes have?'.

i.iv Connections with other biblical texts

Furthermore, an exilic dating for P is supported by connections between the Pentateuch and other biblical texts. For example, Ezra-Nehemiah, the majority of which is usually dated to the Persian period[52], references and assumes the content of the Pentateuch (Carr, 2016: 97). In view of this, a substantial portion of the Pentateuch – at least a coherent P source – must have been complete before the return from exile.

ii) Issues with an earlier dating

[51] See also Strine's perspectives on Jacob (2018b) and Joseph (2019) as involuntary migrants.
[52] Detailed discussion of the dating for Ezra-Nehemiah is not within the purview of this thesis.

Among pentateuchal scholars, there is widespread agreement that at least parts of the Pentateuch were composed before the Babylonian Exile. Under the documentary hypothesis, two of the four supposed source documents for the Pentateuch are pre-exilic. Opinions differ on exactly when the J (Jahwist or Yahwist) and E (Elohist) sources are supposed to have been written but, amongst adherents to the theory, there is agreement that both were written well before the Exile, with J complete by the end of the ninth century and E a little later (Wellhausen, 2013: 4-12, 361; see also Dozeman, 2017: 62-65). The recent trend in pentateuchal studies diverges from the four-source documentary hypothesis, preferring instead the terminology of Priestly and non-Priestly material. But scholars within this camp still agree that P was largely composed during the Exile and at least some of non-P before the fall of Jerusalem.[53]

This reliance on a body of work having been done before the Exile raises three significant issues. Firstly, archaeological evidence suggests that Judah was not populous or sophisticated enough to be described as a 'developed monarchic state' until at least the eighth century B.C.E. (Römer, 2007a: 46) and, as noted above, Jerusalem is likely to have been just a small town until a similar time. This being the case, it is doubtful that, before the eighth century, Jerusalem would have afforded conditions in which an extensive work of literature could have been written.

Such conditions may have existed in the two centuries which followed, however. Archaeological evidence suggests that, during the eighth and seventh centuries, Jerusalem grew from a small town into a major city (Jamieson-Drake, 1991: 72-76). In view of this rapid growth, robust administrative systems would have been required, which would have

[53] Schmid (1999: 95-106), Carr (2011a: 215-216) and Gertz (2000: 231-232) all think along these lines, for example. Blum largely agrees with these others, but refers to a 'D-komposition' rather than 'non-P' and concludes that it would have been roughly contemporaneous with P (1990: 5).

necessitated a school of scribes and created facilities for these scribes to operate (1991: 79-80).

Some composition of non-Priestly material seems to have taken place during this period. Literary analysis of the Pentateuch reveals disparities between a coherent Priestly source and other (non-P) material, and shows that P assumes non-P, assimilates it and responds to it at several points (Carr, 2011a: 292-293; Gertz, 2006: 76). If P should be dated to the Exile, then some non-P material must surely be pre-exilic.

External political pressures in the seventh and eighth centuries make the composition of lengthy biblical texts implausible, though. The scribal school would have had to survive Jerusalem's subjugation to Assyria from the mid-eighth century, with the accompanying Assyrian influence on Jerusalem's administration and the subsequent deportation of much of its elite (Davies, 1998: 61-63). These circumstances make extensive literary compositions unlikely.

Indeed, non-P does not seem to represent an extended narrative. The separation of likely Priestly material from the rest of the Pentateuch leaves non-P appearing fragmentary and with internal inconsistencies, especially in the case of the Reed Sea narrative itself (Gertz, 2014: 103; Levin, 2016: 581). This suggests that, when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C.E., non-P existed as a collection of disparate stories and traditions rather than as any kind of coherent master narrative (Kratz, 2005: 98-100, 246; 2018: 69).

A second issue with the idea of pre-exilic compositions is that any such material would have had to be carried into exile by the displaced Temple scribes. Noll, for example, argues that the crisis of the Exile would have prompted the scribes to take all the scrolls they could carry, in order to ensure they were preserved (2013: 395-396). There is good reason to believe that the scribes, being skilled, experienced and knowledgeable, would have been

deported as part of the Judaean elite and pressed into the service of their Babylonian overlords. However, there is no conclusive evidence, one way or another, on whether they would have taken archival scrolls with them (Davies, 1998: 63-64). Indeed, one might question how likely the scribes would have been to burden themselves with heavy scrolls – and whether their captors would have permitted them to – for the long journey to Babylonia. The apparently fragmentary nature of non-P makes this objection less significant. A collection of disjointed traditions would have been much easier to transport than any notional extended narratives on lengthy scrolls.

Finally, it cannot be assumed that any biblical text was written before the earliest extant copy. As Noll observes, the earliest known biblical texts (inscribed on two silver amulets found at Ketef Hinnom) date from around 600 B.C.E. (Noll, 2013: 394). While this does not preclude the composition of biblical traditions even many years before then, we have no written text which confirms this. We should therefore be cautious in attributing large swathes of the Pentateuch to before the sixth century.

To summarise, there are several factors which make extended literary compositions seem unlikely, before the Exile. However, it appears that the pre-exilic elements of non-P would not have constituted an extended composition of this kind.

iii) Issues with a later dating

The dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls raises difficulties in dating any completed biblical texts before the third century B.C.E. It could be argued that, since the Dead Sea Scrolls represent the earliest verified written source, we cannot assume that any significant portions of the Pentateuch were composed before the earliest extant scrolls. Thompson, for example, argues for this point (1999: 274-285). However, the Dead Sea Scrolls – a wide-ranging collection of copied biblical texts, largely approximating their final forms – are a different

proposition from the Ketef Hinnom amulets. While the amulets may represent an early tradition which informed later intensive compositional work, the scrolls are extensive enough to be the outcome of this kind of work. The scrolls should be understood as the end point for biblical composition, with much earlier authorial work not only possible but probable (Noll, 2013: 56-58; see also Römer, 2016b: 358).

Another important issue relating to a supposed later date for the Pentateuch centres on apparent similarities between Greek sources and biblical narratives. Scholars who favour a Hellenistic date for the Pentateuch tend to lean heavily on these similarities. For example, Wesselius highlights similarities between the Joseph and Cyrus narratives and between the Moses and Xerxes sequences (2002: 6-47). Based partly on Genesis 1 supposedly reflecting the Greek idea of four elements, Lemche reasons that Genesis must have been written in the sixth century at the very earliest and, since it is doubtful that Greek writers were widely read in the Persian Empire, Genesis 1 and other biblical texts bearing Greek influences must have been composed later than the Persian period (2013c: 140, 150). Thus, largely through an emphasis on purported Greek influences, we are left with a Hellenistic date for the bulk of the composition of the Pentateuch and indeed of the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

Similarly, van Seters claims extensive parallels between the Pentateuch and Herodotus' *Histories* (although van Seters favours a sixth century dating for the Pentateuch). He suggests that both the Yahwist and the Deuteronomistic Historian would have read and consciously imitated early Greek historiography; especially that of Herodotus (1983: 17). This prospect has an initial ring of plausibility to it. There are several similarities between Herodotus and the Pentateuch. Both contain genealogies (1983: 28-29), etiological myths (1983: 25), deluge narratives (1983: 26) and the use of parataxis to connect apparently unrelated literary units (1983: 37-38).

There are weaknesses in this argument, though. van Seters himself acknowledges that direct contact between Greeks and Hebrews is 'doubtful' before the fourth century B.C.E. (1983: 53-54), making Greek influences on the Pentateuch less likely, if it was indeed written before then. An indirect influence, perhaps through a cultural link in Phoenicia or Mesopotamia, would remain a possibility, but it cannot be proven that Judah and Greece were linked and shared cultural artefacts by this means (Blenkinsopp, 1992: 40-42).

Furthermore, as Blenkinsopp observes, there are as many significant differences as similarities between the Pentateuch and Herodotus. For example, Herodotus' *Histories* are directly attributed to a specific author, and are more secular in tone than the Pentateuch (Blenkinsopp, 1992: 39). And the Pentateuch is more ambitious in scope than *Histories*, referring not just to a national history but to universal history – the creation of the world (1992: 39). Thus, significant issues remain with the theory of the Pentateuch borrowing from Greek sources. A Hellenistic dating for the Pentateuch therefore has little to commend it.

Summary

In short the overview above has revealed the dating of the Pentateuch as a contested issue. While there is no consensus, the arguments for dating P to the Exile with some non-Priestly material to before the Exile, followed by the completion of the Pentateuch to the Persian period, offer a strong account of the evidence. While no dating schema for the composition of the Pentateuch is without its problems, completion in Persian-period Yehud seems to me to be the most convincing prospect. It is the most likely context to have offered the socio-political apparatus, the facilities for creating literary works and the psychological motivation necessary for the creation of a work as extensive and wide-ranging as the

Pentateuch. Although I acknowledge there are unanswered (and currently unanswerable)[54] questions to do with a Persian-period dating, the questions raised by this dating schema are less significant than the issues with alternative theories. The theories of how and when the Pentateuch came to assume its current form are many and various. But despite this huge variation of ideas, pentateuchal scholars are largely agreed that the Persian period was a pivotal stage in its composition, seeing at very least a significant process of editing (Römer, 2009: 157; Blum, 2009: 31-21; Carr, 2011a: 205-207).

Who wrote the Pentateuch?

i) The case for scribal authorship

A work of literature as lengthy and complex as the Pentateuch is most likely to have been created by a school of scribes. As Davies puts it: 'literature in the ancient world… is a scribal activity and thus confined to less than five percent of any ancient agrarian society' (1992: 19). Scribes were necessary in order for the basic administrative functions of any significant political centre – including the drafting of contracts, land deeds and wedding agreements – to be fulfilled (see Keith, 2019b: 832). Scribes would thus have acted as composers and archivists, preserving royal records, legal documents and other material deemed significant (Römer, 2007a: 47). Just such a school of scribes is likely to have been active in Persian-period Jerusalem. Since scribes are also likely to have been part of the elite deported to Babylonia, texts composed by the exiled Judaeans would probably have been products of scribal pens, too.

The term 'scribes' might imply that the role involved merely writing down, word for word, exactly what their patron required them to record. But scribes would have had a much

[54] The issue of the lack of extrabiblical evidence dating from the Persian period is unlikely to be resolved by anything other than a surprising and very exciting archaeological find.

wider remit than this. There would have been scope for creativity within their writing, including the use of satire and irony, and opportunities to write to their own interests, including attempting to influence their nation's political workings. They may even have considered themselves intellectually superior to the king (Römer, 2007a: 47-48; Person, 2002: 65). To claim that the Pentateuch was written by scribes is not to claim it was written by administrators. These men were intelligent, creative and perceptive.[55]

Moreover, the scribes are likely to have had access to archives of existing sources to inform their work, and which they could have adapted to meet their own agendas (Davies, 1998: 18, 34; Noll, 2013: 70), as well as creating material of their own. Davies argues with conviction that this applies to the scribes who composed the Pentateuch (and indeed the rest of the Hebrew Bible): they would have drawn on archives of existing sources, as well as their own literary flair. Davies apparently bases this view on general observations on the role and function of scribes throughout the ANE (1992: 106).

For Davies, the Pentateuch was woven together from a combination of pre-existing archival texts and the scribes' own compositions. In this respect, Davies is not far from the conclusions of Schmid (2012: 199-200), Carr (2011a: 216-217, 222-223) and especially Römer (2016: 365; 2007: 27): they agree that the Pentateuch would have included pre-existing written traditions and some newly-composed elements. But as we have seen, Schmid, Carr and Römer are more specific than Davies on the form and content of these traditions.

[55] Throughout this thesis, I prefer the terminology of 'scribe' to 'redactor'. There is little difference in function between the two roles: both can be understood as combining and editing pre-existing texts, and creating even extensive pieces to weave into the completed whole. However, the term 'redactor', because of its association with the documentary hypothesis, is often assumed to mean an individual who did little more than piece together extant traditions. (For example, Baden attributes as little compositional work on the Pentateuch as possible to a redactor, largely limiting this role to the corrections of errors and omissions [2012: 215-220].) There is a creative aspect to the role of 'scribe' which 'redactor' does not quite convey.

ii) Issues with the idea of a lone author or compiler

There are compelling reasons to doubt that the Pentateuch was the product of a single author or antiquarian. Firstly, the Pentateuch contains numerous contradictions, inconsistencies and repetitions, not to mention giving different names to the deity at different points (see e.g. Noth, 1972: 20-21; Römer, 2016a: 121; Baden, 2012: 3). It would be surprising if so many incongruities escaped the notice of an individual author and compiler. These aspects of the text do not categorically eliminate the possibility of a single author[56], but they are much easier to explain if we see the Pentateuch as the result of a lengthy process of composition, including disparate source material and a group of scribes editing and reshaping it.

It has also been argued that the style and vocabulary of the Pentateuch varies from one literary unit to another. Perhaps most notably, Wellhausen, the father of the documentary hypothesis, relies largely on stylistic and linguistic grounds for ascribing portions of the pentateuchal text to different sources (2013: 9).[57] I am cautious about following this argument too hastily, since even adherents to the documentary hypothesis have questioned using it as a basis for source criticism.[58] But there are enough differences in style and vocabulary to suggest a significant level of unevenness between literary units, which the purported author

[56] There are alternative explanations for repetition within the text, such as the possibility that resumptive repetition and repetition of similar material with key differences could be deliberate rhetorical devices (van Seters, 2013: 59). However, van Seters seems to have little support on this point from other scholars, and is opposed by adherents to the documentary hypothesis and alternative theories alike. (See Baden [2012: 3], Noll [2013: 397] and Thompson [1999: 23].)

[57] J, for example, is apparently in step with the language, style and themes of other literature thought to have been composed during a purported united monarchy period, so Wellhausen reasons that J would have been written during the same era and is the earliest of the four pentateuchal sources (Wellhausen, 2013: 9). P is distinct from J in terms of language and style (2013: 9) and also in its thematic focus on the Temple cult and the Mosaic law (2013: 361).

[58] Baden, for example, rejects stylistic and terminological grounds for differentiating between pentateuchal sources. Instead, he favours literary analysis of the pentateuchal text ‘on the basis of narrative flow’ (2012: 28).

left unamended. This unevenness leads us to the conclusion that the Pentateuch is composite, rather than composed by a single author (see e.g. Blum, 1990: 256; Baden, 2012: 3, 12).

The Pentateuch's composite nature is also strongly suggested by its length and complexity. For a single author to have produced a work on this scale demands a 'controlling genius' (Whybray, 1987: 235), 'a historian of quite remarkable scope' (van Seters, 1983: 229). The concept of a single author for the Pentateuch thus rests on a case of special pleading which stretches the believability of the theory. Composition by a group of intelligent, educated but not necessarily remarkable scribes does not require us to assume such extraordinary circumstances.

iii) Issues with the documentary hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis cannot be dismissed lightly after being endorsed by so many eminent scholars, but work by adherents to the hypothesis reveals a good deal of confusion over its details. Wellhausen himself is quite candid about some key unanswered questions relating to his theory. For example, while positing that P was the last of the four sources to be written, he acknowledges problems in dating it and mentions disputes amongst his colleagues as to which sources built on which (2013: 9-10). Among more recent scholars, there are noticeable divergences in opinion on, for example, the number of redactors and the extent of their work[59], the validity of using stylistic and linguistic grounds as a basis for source criticism[60], and which sections of the Pentateuch should be attributed to which

[59] For Noth, the redactor's role is even more significant than in Wellhausen's understanding. While Wellhausen envisages extensive additions to the text on the redactor's part, Noth suggests that the redactor had his own distinct interests and structured the Pentateuch to fit those interests, arranging excerpts from J and E so as to fit his preferred structure (1972: 12-15). Conversely, Baden minimises the redactor's role. He holds that the redactor's contributions to the Pentateuch were limited to simple corrections of errors and omissions from the source documents; that he created little or no material of his own and did not even correct contradictions between the sources (2012: 220-224).

[60] Noth sees the tendency to differentiate on linguistic grounds between the source material within the text – as Wellhausen himself does – as overly simplistic. Ascribing particular phrases to individual sources is misguided,

purported sources (Whybray, 1987: 36). What is more, recent scrutiny of texts often attributed to E by adherents to the hypothesis reveals this attribution to be questionable. Indeed, doubts have been raised as to whether E can be safely differentiated from J at all, and attempts to trace a continuous E source often result in an 'E' text riddled with contradictions. (For example, see Carr [2005: 107-114] for a critique of one such endeavour.) The credibility of the hypothesis is thus undermined by disputes over some of its key features.

Summary

The creation of large-scale works of literature was an inherently scribal activity in the ANE. Scribes would have enjoyed unique opportunities and facilities to compose a work of the scale of the Pentateuch, not to mention the skills and education to do so. The Priestly source can most probably be attributed to scribes deported to Babylonia from Jerusalem. And in serving the political establishment in postexilic Jerusalem, the scribes in the Yehud community may even have been required to shape and augment the work which came to be known as the Pentateuch.

The idea of a single author for the Pentateuch (as advanced by van Seters, 1983) seems implausible. It relies on the author being nothing short of a literary genius, in order to weave together numerous sources and material of his own conception: not impossible but a very unlikely scenario. Furthermore, this theory doesn't account convincingly for the contradictions, repetitions and stylistic unevenness in the text. The documentary hypothesis is helpful insofar as it points out the Pentateuch's composite nature, but there are a number of weaknesses to the theory which make me reluctant to endorse it beyond that point.

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as there is a 'lack of truly characteristic terms and idioms' within the sources (1972: 21). Similarly, Baden rejects stylistic and terminological grounds for differentiating between pentateuchal sources. Instead, he favours literary analysis of the pentateuchal text 'on the basis of narrative flow' (2012: 28).

What source material did the scribes have?

i) The case for pre-existing traditions

The proposition that the Pentateuch as a whole (and Exod 13-15 in particular) draws on pre-existing traditions is hardly controversial. Despite Exodus commentators' sometimes sharp disagreements on which verses (or verse fragments) should be attributed to which purported sources, they show near consensus that the Pentateuch is composed from several pre-existing traditions. For example, as regards Exod 13-14 specifically, Propp, Childs and Hyatt envisage contributions from J, E and P, with (in Propp's case) some additions by a redactor (Propp, 1999: 461, 476; Childs, 1976: 220; Hyatt, 1980: 147.) Dozeman deviates from the documentary hypothesis, dividing the section between P and non-P (2009: 300-305), but he still expresses the view that the text is composite, albeit drawing on different source documents.[61]

The case for pre-existing traditions behind the Pentateuch is supported by the idea of scribal authorship, and also by repetitions and inconsistencies within the text, and similarities with other ANE literature. If the Pentateuch was indeed composed by a school of scribes, it is likely that they drew on a collection of pre-existing traditions for their work. We cannot necessarily assume that the circumstances in which scribes operated were the same from one ANE society to another, but ANE scribes most commonly contributed to and drew on wide-ranging archives (as Römer observes [2007a: 47-48]). Literary archives have been discovered at other ANE temple sites (in Ugarit, for example), and it is probable that scribes in fifth

[61] Alexander abstains from offering an opinion on which traditions were combined into the Pentateuch (preferring to focus on the final form of the text). But it is clear that he envisages numerous literary units being brought together by a single redactor-editor (2017: 14-15).

century Yehud would have worked in similar circumstances (Davies, 1992: 110; Person, 2002: 70).

The contradictions, repetitions and incongruities within the Pentateuch point to its composite nature. This much is agreed by proponents of the documentary hypothesis and alternative theories alike. (See Noth, 1972: 21; Gertz, 2006: 77-87; Thompson 1999: 10; Lemche, 1988: 41.) What is more, there are several points at which the text presents contradictory accounts of the same event, directly alongside each other. For example, Genesis 1-2 includes two differing accounts of creation, and the juxtaposition of the two implies they are intended to be taken together: the Pentateuch's authors have consciously allowed the contradictions between the two accounts (e.g. the order in which plants, animals and humans are created) to stand (Noll, 2013: 93-94). We can only speculate as to the scribes' reasons for foregrounding these contradictions, but their presence in the text suggests that the Pentateuch is indeed an assembly of pre-existing traditions, rather than the result of a creation *ex nihilo*.

Relatedly, the Pentateuch's internal chronology also suggests that it is assembled from disparate source material. The timeline is confused; often out of step with extrabiblical sources, or even with two biblical accounts presenting different timescales for the same figure or event (Noll, 2013: 95-97; Thompson, 1999: 73-75).[62] This might suggest carelessness on the scribes' part, if the confusion was not so clear and obvious. As it is, a safer inference is that the scribes were simply less interested in strictly accurate chronology than in the content of the stories they were preserving.

If the content of the pentateuchal text leads us to believe there were pre-existing sources behind its composition, these suppositions are reinforced by the Pentateuch's similarities to other ANE literature. For example, the hymns, miracles and creation myths in

[62] For example, 1 Kings 16 presents contradictory information on the length of Omri's reign over Israel (Noll, 2013: 96).

the Hebrew Bible have parallels in texts from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Canaan, as Noll notes (2013: 83). In the same vein, van Seters notices clear similarities between the Moses sequence in Exodus and Assyrian and Akkadian texts (2013: 61-62, 75), and Balaam, the main protagonist of Numbers 22-24, also appears in a Moabite inscription, in which he serves a different deity and has nothing to do with Moses. Thompson suggests that the two texts drew on a common tradition, or at least a common literary 'type': the prophet figure common to several ANE cultures (1999: 11).[63] Thus, either the scribes who composed P or those who reworked the Pentateuch in the Persian period appear to have drawn from traditions and tropes common to ANE cultures or to have edited source documents which themselves did so.

Finally, the existence of source material, as yet undiscovered by archaeologists, is alluded to within the text of the Hebrew Bible. For example, 2 Kings 20.20 refers to the 'Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah'. If the Deuteronomistic Historian drew on sources like this, it is reasonable to hypothesise that the Pentateuch's creators might have drawn on similar pre-existing material.[64]

It is probable that the scribes who formed the Pentateuch not only edited the already-combined Priestly and pre-Priestly sources, but also augmented this with some other traditions and refreshed and repurposed all of this material, so as to speak into the scribes' contemporary concerns. Scribes in the wider ANE context would often change the details of

[63] The same might apply to the Deuteronomistic History, as well as to the Pentateuch. For example, the Moabite Mesha stele shows similarities in subject matter and tone to the Omri narrative in 2 Kings 3. Thompson notes that 2 Kings 3 closely imitates the Mesha inscription. He posits a 'monumental' style of writing which dates back to an inscription commemorating the victories of Idrimi, king of Alalakh, in the thirteenth century. He next argues that the authors of both the Mesha stele and 2 Kings 3 make use of this literary trope, adopting its stock phrases and applying them to heroes of their own communities (1999: 11-13).

[64] Bible scholars express a range of views on these biblical allusions to pre-existing source material. Thompson seems convinced that they refer to genuine sources (1999: 86). Na'aman also argues for several source documents being available to the scribes, but is cautious enough to note that the nature and content of these sources will always be hypothetical, in the absence of the sources themselves (1997: 77). On the other end of the spectrum, van Seters see these allusions as nothing more than a literary device, meant to add credibility to the text (1983: 299-302), and Garbini is sceptical about the extent of any single source document (2003: 74-75).

the material they had available, as is evidenced by the recopying of the Gilgamesh epic and Assyrian inscriptions (Römer, 2007a: 48; Noll, 2013: 92). Nor was a scribe's role limited to reproducing existing texts: many scribes composed literary texts of their own (Person, 2002: 65). It is therefore equally possible that the Pentateuch's scribes would have added literary units of their own creation, alongside the edited and refreshed source material. This suggestion has support from revisionists, as well as from more conservative biblical scholars, who argue for a redactor adding passages to the Pentateuch and combining source documents so as to fit his own interests (Davies, 1992: 24; see also Blum, 2006: 134-135; Gertz, 2006: 87; Noth, 1972: 12-15).[65]

Overarching themes within the Pentateuch suggest that its source material was revised and embellished in a manner typical of ANE scribal practices. The story of arrival in a promised land after escaping an oppressive overlord, suspicion of groups outside the immediate community, and fear of invasion and subjugation by foreign powers all reflect the recent experiences and live concerns of the Yehud community in the Persian period (Davies, 1992: 74, 118). This appears to be applicable to the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses specifically, which express a longing for liberation and, finally, victory over Israel's oppressors. These themes would fit with post-exilic concerns and sentiments, and support a Persian dating for the story's completion. However, as Noll notes, the railing against Egypt, who dominated Canaan in the Late Bronze Age, suggests that the story has a basis in a tradition dating from this period, with its miraculous elements, tangents and non-sequiturs indicating much later editing and embellishments (2013: 101-103).

[65] Similarly, van Seters envisages an antiquarian Yahwist not only combining disparate sources (both from Israelite tradition and the wider ANE context) but changing and developing these sources and inventing material of his own to fit the major themes he wanted to emphasise. For example, he suggests that the twelve tribes, Israel's settling in Egypt and its subsequent oppression derive purely from the Yahwist's mind, with no basis in historical fact or earlier traditions (2013: 12-13, 58-62; 1983: 50).

Admittedly, the hypothesis of pre-existing traditions for the Pentateuch is not without its problems, not least the fact that the proposed written traditions have yet to be discovered. Similarly, my argument thus far has focused on written traditions underpinning the Pentateuch. This does not preclude the possibility that oral traditions were also appropriated and included within the text but, of course, the existence of any oral traditions is even harder to prove than written ones: by their nature, ancient oral traditions resist preservation in material form.

Exactly how the scribes would have accessed pre-existing written sources is still a matter of speculation. Noll might be correct to assert that the deported scribes would have carried the contents of the Temple archives to Babylon (2013: 395-396) and then, presumably, back to Jerusalem in the fifth century, but there is no clear evidence for this. Alternatively, the archives might have remained at the Temple throughout the exilic period, watched over by a few scribes who remained in Jerusalem (as Davies contends [1998: 63-64]), but this possibility relies on a very tolerant attitude towards Judah and its administration, on the part of the Babylonians, not to mention being out of step with the many scholars who agree that P was largely written and combined with non-P material during the Exile. However, notwithstanding these issues, the case for pre-existing source material for the Pentateuch has more to commend it than alternative arguments. Despite the unanswered questions, a belief in pre-existing traditions remains compelling.

ii) Combining P, non-P and new compositions

The extent of the debate around pentateuchal source criticism highlights the inherent difficulty in reconstructing component traditions from the finished text. Because of this difficulty, some scholars (especially revisionists) despair of the whole enterprise. Thompson,

for example, dismisses as impossible the effort to identify existing traditions and the extent of any alterations to these traditions as they were subsumed into the final text (1992: 368-369). While I sympathise with Thompson's frustration, I cannot agree that this exercise is futile. There is compelling evidence for the Pentateuch including a lengthy and coherent P source, as well as material from a second source, which can be labelled non-P.[66] There is also reason to believe that the scribes who performed the final editing and reworking of the Pentateuch added narrative elements of their own composition.

Literary and linguistic analysis of the Pentateuch provides helpful clues as to its composition and development. P seems distinct from other pentateuchal material in presenting a coherent overall narrative, and in some uses of specific words, phrases and concepts (Schwartz, 2009: 1; Kratz, 2020: 231).[67] The most obvious example of this is P's concern with monotheism and use of language and terminology distinct to cultic worship (Römer, 2014: 132-134).

Similarly, the structure of certain narratives suggests an original core (probably from P) with additions from another source. It seems that the authors of P assumed non-P and integrated it into their own source (Gertz, 2006: 76). For example, Blum notes that the third, fourth and ninth of the ten plagues in Exod 7-11 are less detailed and complex than the other seven and, on those grounds, likely to derive from a different source document (1990: 243-245). And the resumptive repetition in Gen 15.12 and 15.17 suggests that the verses in between are a later insertion, intended to foreshadow the Exodus and smooth over an abrupt break between sources (Carr, 2016: 92-93). There are therefore very persuasive grounds for differentiating between P and non-P in the finalised text of the Pentateuch.

[66] Schmid (2019), Römer (2016), Carr (2011a), Gertz (2006) and others all use the terminology of 'non-P'.
[67] Division of the Pentateuch into sources on linguistic grounds is not without problems but, in conjunction with other literary approaches, it can still be valuable (Schmid, 2019: 104-106).

Further sections of pentateuchal narrative may derive neither from P nor from pre-exilic non-P, but from the scribes who reworked the combined P and non-P in the Persian period. This possibility is supported by the themes within the Pentateuch of Israel inheriting a land promised by their deity, prospering and conquering their enemies; themes which seem particularly relevant to postexilic Yehud. For example, YHWH's promises of a homeland to the patriarchs echo the hopes of the nascent Yehud community and seem to be a departure from the verses around them (Schmid, 2016: 599). Those verses could justifiably be credited to a scribe in Yehud, then. Secondly, the complexity of the finalised Pentateuch – its contradictions, deviations and non-sequiturs – suggests a lengthy process of composition, including additions in Persian-period Yehud (Römer, 2014: 123).

The majority of Pentateuchal scholars support the prospect of the text being edited and reworked in the Persian period (e.g. Baden, 2019, 28; Blum, 2009: 31-32; Römer, 2009: 157).[68] And this 'editing' process in fact appears to have been extensive enough to involve significant reshaping of the pre-existing text – including the composition of some new sections of narrative – in order to reinterpret its subject matter in a way which addressed the themes and concerns most relevant to the Yehud community (as Carr suggests [2011: 223]). Unfortunately, any conclusion beyond this must be advanced more cautiously. The exact process of redaction is a matter of some debate.[69] However, there seems to be a general agreement that P would have represented a coherent document which, when combined with earlier non-Priestly material, constituted the majority of the finalised Pentateuch. There is

[68] Naturally, the most prominent revisionists go beyond this position and argue for the whole Pentateuch being composed during the Persian period, or even later (e.g. Davies, 1992: 24; Lemche, 2013c: 140, 150).
[69] Gertz, for example, holds that P was a coherent text but was expanded as well as retouched as it was combined with non-P. These expansions were necessary, he argues, in order to smooth over discrepancies between P and non-P accounts (2014: 102-103, 111-112). Blum envisages a single stage of redaction, performed by the Priestly writer in post-exilic Yehud, including his own work and non-Priestly material (1990: 5, 333-360; 2009: 31-32). Similarly, Kratz argues for P being written and redacted in several stages, thus partly accounting for the inconsistencies and repetitions within the Pentateuch (2020: 210-212).

similarly a widespread agreement that the Persian period was pivotal to the Pentateuch's composition.

The nature of non-P raises even more questions. There is debate on how much of the non-P material was composed earlier than P, whether non-P constituted a coherent source or a collection of disparate traditions, and to what extent non-P was revised by the Priestly writers. The primary bone of contention on non-P is around coherence. Blum implies that the D-komposition was a coherent narrative but less extensive than P (1990: 5, 259). Gertz argues that non-P would have comprised three overarching narrative sequences – the primordial history, the patriarchs sequence and the exodus narrative – but these narratives were distinct and disconnected; only brought together when the Priestly writer redacted them and combined them with his own work (2006: 74).[70] Kratz takes a similar position, but suggests that the constituent narratives within non-P were more numerous than Gertz suggests (2005: 98-100). And Schmid, mindful of the difficulties in reconstructing non-P from the final text of the Pentateuch, abstains from attributing specific narratives to specific pre-Priestly sources (2014: 46).

Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties in drawing any definitive conclusions on the nature and content of non-P, there seems a general agreement that non-P would have been a less extensive source than P. Schmid (1999: 144-149), Carr (2015: 462-463) and Gertz (2014: 102-104) all argue for this, on the grounds that several pivotal sections of pentateuchal narrative appear to be missing from non-P, and that the Priestly writers seem to have fitted non-P material around their own source rather than vice versa.

Moreover, Gertz has argued convincingly for non-P as a collection of three disconnected narratives. As Gertz observes, Exod 1.8 marks an abrupt shift from the end of

[70] Schmid also notices clear divisions along these lines, within the Pentateuch, but attributes the structure to P rather than non-P (2014: 36, 41-43; 2012: 188-189).

Genesis, rendering Joseph all but irrelevant to what follows (2006: 82). Indeed, in terms of narrative flow, there still seems a clear break between Genesis and Exodus, which makes the bridging text from Gen 50.22 to Exod 1.8 stand out as a later insertion. Also, where the Pentateuch shows evidence of internal cross-referencing (where Gen 12 foreshadows the plagues of Egypt, for example), this can be explained convincingly as a linking text added by a redactor (2006: 75).

Thus, although we cannot be entirely confident of how complete and how finished the combined P and non-P would have been, we can draw these conclusions: i) that P represented a coherent narrative in its own right; ii) that pre-exilic non-P compositions were combined with P and redacted, during or soon after P's composition; iii) that the combined P and non-P was redacted again by scribes operating in Persian-period Yehud, who also added some new compositions of their own, as well as reworking and retouching the text to reflect the concerns and experiences of their community. I would also suggest that non-P constituted three distinct and independent narrative sequences, which were only brought together for the first time as they were combined with P. However, the available evidence only allows me to suggest this tentatively.

iii) The Song of Moses

The authorship of the Song of Moses is the subject of enduring debate. As a piece of poetry surrounded by narrative, it stands out as a likely insertion into the text around it. But scholars – including commentators on Exodus – have advanced a wide range of opinions on the song's origins and dating. Some conclude that the song is ancient: 'some of the oldest poetry in the Hebrew Bible' (Fretheim, 1991: 161; see also Alexander, 2017: 293). Others assert that it was not composed until after the Exile (e.g. Dozeman, 2009: 336, 342-343). Still

others steer a middle course, surmising that the song was written at a similar time to a pre-exilic form of the Reed Sea narrative (e.g. Childs, 1976: 245). The song is therefore worthy of examination in its own right within a wider survey of theories of pentateuchal composition.[71]

The debate around the authorship of the Song of Moses seems to focus on two particular lines of enquiry: its content and the form of Hebrew its author(s) used. As to its content, the song's theme and imagery echo the creation myth in Genesis (c.f. Exod 15.4-5, 8; Gen 1.2, 6-10; see Fretheim, 1991: 153; Bruckner, 2008: 128-129). However, if one of these texts was influenced by the other, it is impossible to tell which borrowed from which, or the length of time which elapsed between the two compositions. So this resemblance is of limited use in dating either of them. Similarly, Alter holds that the song's portrayal of YHWH as a fierce warrior is influenced by Ugaritic and Canaanite poetry and that it should therefore be seen as pre-monarchical (2004: 398). This is not a persuasive argument, though. The text could still resemble Ugaritic poetry, even if it was written much later. And the song could equally be understood as using tropes from Babylonian myth (Bruckner, 2008: 138), which would require a much later date of composition. More significant is the song's apparent allusion to the conquest of Canaan and the establishment of Jerusalem (15.15-17; see Davies, 2020: 304-305). These references lead us to conclude that the song was composed (or at least expanded from a minimal core tradition) in the monarchical period at the earliest.

Linguistically, few dispute that the Song of Moses was written in Classical Biblical Hebrew with scant evidence of features from a later form of the language (Davies, 2020: 311). This suggests that at least an original core of the song would have been pre-exilic.[72] The

[71] Other commentators conclude that the song was 'not earlier than the time of Solomon' (Hyatt, 1980: 163) or argue that the already extant song was redacted into the combined JE, without venturing a date or an author for the song itself (Propp, 1999: 482-483).
[72] As Carr explains, Classical Biblical Hebrew would have fallen out of use altogether by the mid-Persian period and was declining in use for some time before then (2016: 89).

scribes who compiled and augmented the Priestly and pre-Priestly material may well have had the skill to amend the Song of Moses while keeping to the classical form of the language. (As Römer argues, scribes in most ANE cultures would have been adept enough for this kind of task [2016: 363].) But the revisionists who insist that the entire song was post-exilic tend to rely very heavily on artificial archaisation (e.g. Davies, 1992: 103-105) and this line of argument seems implausible. The argument for the song being composed from scratch, following the return from exile, can therefore probably be dismissed.

Based on the available thematic and linguistic evidence, the most likely scenario seems to be that the kernel of the song is pre-exilic – perhaps even a pre-monarchical oral tradition – and that it was reworked during the Exile, by the same scribes who composed P and combined it with non-P. We can at least be confident that a recognisable form of the song would have existed before the scribes in Yehud themselves reworked the Pentateuch. The lack of distinctively 'late' features in the song make it difficult to argue for Exod 15 being extensively remodelled in the Persian period but, as Clines notes, even minor amendments to a text can dramatically alter its message and tone (1997: 25). Thus, the song can still reflect the hopes, values and concerns of the Yehud community, even if we dismiss the possibility of the scribes making wholesale changes to it.

iv) Issues with the rubric of fiction

A proposed Persian or Hellenistic dating for the Pentateuch is often associated with a minimising of the historical basis for the Pentateuch, or even with an argument that it is outright fiction. Several scholars, labelled 'minimalist' or, slightly more kindly, 'revisionist' by their opponents, reject the documentary hypothesis at the same time as rejecting the assumption of a historical basis to the Pentateuch.

For example, Noll argues that the Pentateuch was not completed until the Hellenistic period, and calls it a collection of 'folklore' (2013: 54-55, 90-92). The Bible's contradictions, logical impossibilities and multiple versions of the same story with different protagonists are all folkloric elements – evidence that the authors had no intention of recording a purely 'historical' account of the past (2013: 96-100). Biblical narratives might not have been designed to directly mimic Greek *historia*, but the Pentateuch – and the Hebrew Bible as a whole – adopts a Greek attitude to history and fact, Noll suggests. As in Greco-Roman histories, the Hebrew Bible contains grandly embellished accounts of the past, decked in myth and miracles, and with no in-depth investigation of the kind employed by modern historians (2013: 67-69, 80). The result is a 'history' which almost certainly includes elements at odds with actual events and personalities. And yet, this was not and should not be understood as deceptive on the part of the writer: 'the ancient historian was not telling lies, he was presenting the past in a more "truthful" way than how it actually happened.' (Noll, 2013: 78). (The differentiation between modern and ancient understandings of history is important, and I will return to it below.)[73]

The suggestion that the Pentateuch could be understood as fiction highlights a fundamental difference in approach between proponents of the documentary hypothesis and scholars who favour alternative theories. The documentary hypothesis is an inherently conservative position; an attempt to provide a credible framework for the historical reliability of the Pentateuch. In contrast, 'minimalist' scholars tend to start from a point of scepticism and accept the biblical version of events only when it is supported by extrabiblical evidence.

[73] Lemche endorses a similar dating schema to Noll and characterises the Hebrew Bible as mythology – or at least, as an extended narrative connecting two foundational myths: the Exile and the Exodus (1998: 88, 93-94). According to Lemche, both of these myths were intended to help solidify the shared identity of the Yehud community. Although I believe Lemche's comments about myths and collective identity have value, I cannot dismiss the idea that at least some of the pentateuchal material is based on historical events.

The debate has become highly polarised. On the one hand, I think it highly implausible that the Reed Sea episode, for example, represents a literal historical account. For 600,000 Israelites, along with their wives, children and livestock (Exod 12.37), to cross anything which could be described as a 'sea' in a single night stretches the bounds of credibility. And Davies is right to draw our attention to disparities between Israel as it is presented in the Hebrew Bible and the support for this portrayal in archaeological and other extrabiblical evidence (1992: 69-73). I also believe that the Reed Sea episode's function as a collective memory throws into question what, if any, historical basis the episode might have. (This point is explored at length in chapter five.) The reader of the Hebrew Bible should not assume that they are reading a strictly factual account of events in Israel's past and of the deity's actions.

At the same time, though, I find the term 'fiction' jarring when used to describe a biblical text; perhaps partly because of my background in evangelicalism. It is not necessary to abandon a historical basis to the Pentateuch, even if any such basis is obscured by embellishment and hyperbole, and even if the composition of the Pentateuch is dated to the Persian period or even later. Indeed, Noll himself does not entirely dismiss this possibility, even as he argues that the biblical text contains elements at odds with historical events (2013: 77-79).

A further significant problem with the prospect of Bible-as-fiction relates to the enduring influence of certain key literary events. Anyone wishing to present a convincing case for that prospect would have to explain why the Exodus, for example, recurs so often and so vividly throughout the Hebrew Bible. As Dozeman observes, beyond its depiction in the book of Exodus itself, Israel's deliverance from Egypt is mentioned in other narratives (e.g. Deut 7.8, Josh 2.10), the Holiness Code (Lev 25.42), the prophetic books (e.g. Hos 11.1) and

the Psalms (e.g. Ps 114) (Dozeman, 2017: 102-103). If there is no historical basis whatsoever for the Exodus, if it is a complete literary fabrication, how are we to account for the event taking root so deeply in the nation's imagination and sense of collective identity? The revisionist scholars have not satisfactorily answered this question.

Summary

Along with the majority of scholars, I hold that the Pentateuch is very likely to include pre-existing traditions. More specifically, I believe these traditions consist of P and non-P, combined by scribes during the Exile and further reworked and augmented by other scribes in post-exilic Yehud. The role and practices of scribes in the wider ANE context make it likely that Judaean and Yehudite scribes would have worked in a similar way, compiling and adapting source material. Indeed, similarities between biblical narratives and other ANE literature suggest not just similar scribal practices but possible common traditions between Yehud and its neighbours. Repetitions and contradictions within the text of the Pentateuch make its composite nature quite clear, and its thematic content suggests at least some source material from as early as the Late Bronze Age.

Why was the Pentateuch written?

i) The Pentateuch as national history

A particularly valuable element of revisionist pentateuchal scholarship is that it throws into relief the fundamental question of why the Pentateuch was written. Adherents to the documentary hypothesis tend to assume that at least one of the putative four sources (P) was intended to be an authoritative document for cultic worship, just as the Pentateuch is interpreted by confessing readers today (see e.g. Noth, 1972: 197; Nicholson, 2002: 18).

Revisionists have foregrounded the Pentateuch's political function, characterising it (and the Hebrew Bible as a whole) as primarily a national history. As Davies puts it, 'it is not necessary to assume that the biblical literature was… regulative or authoritative for the belief and conduct of a religious community or tradition… the final shaping of the Bible… was an integral part of the constitution… in Hellenistic Judah.' (1992: 20, 161).

The involvement of scribes in composing the Pentateuch makes a political, nationalistic focus more likely. Yehud's scribes, in the pay and under the influence of political leaders, would have had political concerns uppermost in their minds (see Thompson, 1992: 416). It does not follow that the Pentateuch would have been devoid of any religious function, but this religious function would have been coloured by politics: 'religion for the scribe will have been, professionally, an instrument of political ideology' (Davies, 1998: 18).

Related to this, the Pentateuch was completed at a time when political concerns would have been particularly important to the authors' community. In fifth century Yehud, the fledgling community was in need of a national history: a clear expression of its shared past (whether real or constructed) to strengthen its collective identity. The pressing need, therefore, was predominantly political, although religious identity may have played a role within Yehud's nationalism. The Pentateuch helped to meet this need for collective identity. It represented 'a massive exercise in self-definition' (Davies, 1992: 116).

Not only this, but it is possible that the Persian authorities endorsed the creation of such a national history. As Carr points out, Persia tended to gain support from the outlying areas of its empire by endorsing local governments (2011: 205), and even 'occasionally sponsored the collection and publication of local traditions' (2011: 217). So it is not inconceivable that the Pentateuch might have been composed with Persian endorsement and that its content might have been influenced by the Persian authorities. For example, the Reed

Sea episode might reflect Persian animosity towards Egypt, as well as Israel's own experiences and enmities (Schmid 2019: 112). This prospect is very difficult to prove, but the possibility remains that the Pentateuch might have been written as a political document, not only as a national history for Israel but also to bolster diplomatic relations between Yehud and Persia.

Moreover, the Pentateuch is not just a national history but a universal history (Blenkinsopp, 1992: 39). It is cosmic in its scale, presenting the origins of the entire created order and within that, Israel as pre-eminent, chosen by their god from among all the nations in the world he created. The content of the Pentateuch as a whole – stories of patriarchs chosen by the deity, liberation from slavery, military victories over neighbouring peoples and, above all, entering a promised land with a mandate to possess and rule over it – reinforces Yehud's apparent status as a strong and divinely-favoured nation (Lemche, 1998: 88-94).[74]

Notwithstanding this, the Pentateuch's political function does not preclude a simultaneous religious one. The figure of the deity looms large over the Pentateuch, cultic regulations feature very prominently within it, and its promises of divine blessing and favour are predicated on the nation's fidelity to their god. Israel's national history is very much intertwined with its worship of YHWH.

[74] Lemche holds that the majority of the biblical text hinges on two foundational myths: the Exile and the Exodus. The Exile was, he claims, crafted into a myth, to function as 'a program for the return to the country of God, where a new and ideal nation of God should be established' (1998: 88). Similarly, the Exodus is 'the origin myth of a religious history of the chosen people' (1998: 93). Both myths were intended to help solidify this people's sense of identity. Provocatively, Lemche reduces the function of the rest of the biblical narrative to simply connecting those two myths (1998: 94). I agree that the Exodus can be described as a myth and that there are grounds for characterising the Exile as such (although there is intense debate about the extent and impact of the Exile). However, I am surprised that Lemche sees such a large volume of biblical narrative as largely redundant in itself, existing only to connect the Exodus and the Exile. This seems a somewhat eccentric position. Ironically, in reducing the Exodus to an origin myth, with little or no foundation in historical events, Lemche makes this episode more, not less, meaningful. If the Exodus truly is one of two literary pillars, supporting the collective identity of the (re-)established people of Yehud, it carries a colossal weight. Every detail of the narrative becomes laden with significance, shaping the nation's understanding of itself and of its deity.

ii) History or historiography?

At the heart of the debate over the Pentateuch's historicity lie differences of understanding on what constitutes 'history'. A modern definition of history centres around objectively factual people, places and events. But several leading scholars contend that the authors of the Pentateuch might have intended it as history of a different kind, more similar to Greco-Roman historiography. Under this latter approach to history, strictly factual depictions of events are less important than the *meaning* of those events, and how that meaning helps to shape a group's collective identity.

Although a direct Greek influence on the Pentateuch seems doubtful, there are similarities between the Pentateuch and Herodotus' *Historia*, as van Seters observes. Both works include genealogies, etiological narratives and parataxis (van Seters, 1983: 25-38). Based on these similarities, van Seters argues that the Pentateuch combines history (as a modern reader would understand it) with legend. According to van Seters, just as Greek historiographers did not insist on a strict adherence to facts, and included elements of their own creation, the authors[75] of the Pentateuch adopted a similar attitude and thus created a work of historiography (van Seters, 1983: 23; 1992: 30-33). The Reed Sea episode exemplifies this: the crossing of the sea is supposedly based on the very similar description of the crossing of the Jordan, composed earlier as part of DtrH, with the Song of Moses influenced by already-extant Psalms (van Seters, 1994: 144, 148).[76] van Seters stops short of calling the Reed Sea narrative entirely fictitious, but claims it includes extensive creative work on the part of the Yahwist (1994: 145).

[75] van Seters, of course, envisages one pre-eminent author: the Yahwist.
[76] This argument depends on a particular dating schema for the Psalms, which lies outside the purview of this thesis.

This idea is supported by Noll, who in fact goes further than van Seters, describing biblical history as ‘folklore’, with merely ‘a few facts’ behind the fiction (2013: 95), and by Whybray (1987: 152). Noll explains that, in Greco-Roman histories, ‘evidence’ meant whatever seemed reasonable and believable. When the ludicrous and incredible (and divine) was stripped away from myths and folktales, what remained was what was believed to have happened, even when one historian had simply copied another’s manuscript and tweaked key details, as was common (2013: 69-70). No further investigation, in the mode of modern history, was deemed necessary. Despite this lack of factual basis, as far as the authors were concerned, they were providing a ‘true’ account of events, people and the deity. Even if the authors knew that the events they were describing had never happened, the ideas and values communicated by the story, and the collective identity it reinforced within its authors’ community, remained emphatically true. Biblical history is therefore ‘true fiction’ (2013: 94-100, 103).

However, although the Pentateuch does bear some similarities to Greek history, there are significant differences between the two. With anonymous writers, no explicit insistence on the truth of what is being presented, no first person narration and a lack of common, Hellenistic, rhetorical techniques, biblical narrative is without several key features of Hellenistic history (Schniedewind, 2005: 6-9; Thompson, 1992: 374-377). Indeed, the Pentateuch could be said to be as similar to other ANE literature as it is to Greek history (Bolin, 2016: 67-69). (I discuss this further in section *iii)* below.)

Although the differences between the Pentateuch and Greek history are too significant to allow us to group them into the same category, there are enough similarities to make it doubtful that the authors of the Pentateuch intended it as a literal historical account. The authors may still have believed the Pentateuch to be ‘true’, though, in terms of the values their

work depicts and its reinforcement of their community's shared identity. We cannot assume that the Pentateuch is strictly historical, in terms of a modern understanding of history, but it still appears to combine fact and myth, in a manner comparable to Greco-Roman history.

iii) Issues with assuming the Pentateuch is religiously-normative

Although the idea of Mosaic authorship has been abandoned almost universally amongst historical-critical scholars[77], the documentary hypothesis began as a development of this traditional theory; an attempt to provide a credible framework for the historical reliability of the Pentateuch. It is, at its root, an inherently conservative viewpoint.

A cornerstone of the hypothesis is that at least one of the four sources was created by priests (see e.g. Nicholson, 2002: 18). The hypothesis is thus underpinned by an assumption that the Pentateuch's authors were seeking to create a religiously normative piece of literature; a work which represented Israel's lived experiences of the deity (as Noth suggests, for example [1972: 197]), or even objective truths about the nature of God. Emblematic of this, Childs holds that Exodus constitutes a 'sacred inheritance'; that as part of the canon of scripture, it has a meaning which is authoritative for the Church and applicable to the modern world (1976: xiii).

This line of thought is brought into question by several features of the Hebrew Bible which suggest its intended function was as a deposit of folklore. Firstly, there are striking similarities between biblical stories and other ANE narratives. For example, Noll points out that miracles, hymns and creation myths appear in Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Canaanite literature, as well as the Bible. More specifically, the Joshua sequence includes several tropes

[77] A few commentators on the Pentateuch still insist on Mosaic authorship. For example, Stuart does so in his commentary on Exodus (2006: 28-32).

typical of Assyrian hero narratives: divine support and endorsement of the hero, crossing a river and the humbling of enemy kings (2013: 83, 89-90).

Secondly, the Pentateuch in particular contains multiple versions of the same narrative in different contexts and with different protagonists: a typically folkloric feature (Whybray, 1987: 188). The repeated wife-as-sister story in Gen 12.10-20, Gen 20.1-18 and Gen 26.1-16 is a clear example of this feature.

And thirdly, there is scant extrabiblical evidence to support biblical narratives such as the supposed 'golden age' of Solomon, and even the very existence of key biblical figures like Josiah (Lemche, 2013: 145). This lack of evidence undermines the conservative view of a basis in historical events and figures.

While the historicity of much of the Pentateuch is indeed doubtful, it may still have had a religious function. The elements in the text of the Pentateuch which could be described as 'folkloric' are reconcilable with religious normativity, if we can accept that its authors allowed for more imagination in its composition, and were less concerned with factual historicity, than many of today's readers.

The arguments marshalled against the Pentateuch's religious function are not entirely convincing. For example, Bolin notes that there is no clear evidence that the Jews in Yehud attempted to disseminate biblical texts to Jews beyond their borders (e.g. in Elephantine), which (he argues) suggests that these texts were not, at that stage, considered important enough to justify the effort of exporting them (1996: 12-13). This conclusion does not necessarily follow, however. With the Yehud community seeking to establish itself and rebuild Jerusalem, it would be perfectly understandable if it simply prioritised issues internal to the community over and above dissemination of texts to Jews in other nations.

It has also been argued that the numerous textual variations within the Dead Sea Scrolls would have been unthinkable if the texts had been considered religiously normative, even within the Hellenistic period. This would suggest that the Pentateuch was not thought of as religiously authoritative until well into the Roman era (Noll, 2013: 397-402). But variation is not at odds with religious normativity. On the contrary, as Najman astutely observes, it is often the very texts which are seen as most important and most sacred which inspire the greatest number of translations, paraphrases and new texts which convey a similar message to the original, in different terms: 'Insofar as scripture is *authoritative*, it is also *generative*.' (Najman, 2012: 516, emphasis original).

Summary

Although the Pentateuch can be understood as Israel's national history as conceived by the Yehud community, it does not necessarily follow that its contents are strictly factual. Indeed, it is more historiography than a presentation of factual events and people in the mode of modern history. It can still be described as 'true', however. Even if any facts in the narrative are obscured by the authors' imaginative embellishments, the authors aimed to communicate truth in terms of the ideas and values their work expresses. Thus, it remains possible that the authors of the Pentateuch meant for their creation to be religiously normative, at the same time as being historiographical or even folkloric. The Pentateuch enabled the Yehud community to articulate its shared past (whether real or imagined) and shaped its collective identity – its ethnic, social and religious identity – from the Persian period onwards.

Persian-period authorship and its implications for trauma informing the text

The context in which Exodus was written clearly has a bearing on what traumatic events might have informed the Reed Sea episode. The identity of the authors, the time and place in which they operated, the source material they used and the overarching aim of their work all affect the source of any trauma on the part of the authors and how that trauma might have found expression in the text they produced.

In my view, the most likely scenario is that Exodus was written and compiled by scribes during the Exile (that is, P was written and pre-Priestly material was added to it), and reworked by other scribes in early fifth century Yehud. Assuming this was the case, it has several implications for trauma's influence on the text:

i) The fall of Jerusalem as a source of trauma

With this dating schema, the fall of Jerusalem and the forced displacement to Babylonia of some of its inhabitants stand out as the most likely causes of trauma in the recent past. Through the siege of Jerusalem and its aftermath, Jerusalemites are likely to have experienced violence, prolonged threats to life, witnessing the deaths of loved ones, shortages of food and water, and probably sexual assault: all well-attested as potential causes of PTSD (see e.g. Middlemas, 2009: 175). Similarly, the experience of sudden, forced removal from one's home has been documented as inherently traumatic (as Kamya notes [2007: 257], for example). The displacement to Babylonia could therefore have been traumatic, in itself.

It is possible that the experience of life in exile might also have been inherently traumatic, although this is a moot point: scholars are divided on whether the Judaeans' living conditions in Babylonia truly were as torrid as has been assumed. Albertz suggests that the Exile would have represented 'a severe bloodletting for Judah', including military service and

forced labour (2003: 86-90), but Bright concludes that the exiles were not particularly harshly treated (2000: 346) and Coogan argues that descendants of the exiles were able to rise to influential positions within Babylonian society (1974: 10). This issue is discussed at more length in chapter three, along with a fuller exploration of the fall of Jerusalem as a source of trauma.

Immediately, however, there is a problem with arguing for events from the early sixth century influencing scribes in the fifth century. Even if we were to assume that the scribes in Yehud were operating at the very beginning of the fifth century, it seems unlikely that any of them would have directly experienced those earlier events, unless they were infants at the time and extraordinarily long-lived. The authors of P may well have survived the sack of Jerusalem but the Yehudite scribes were, in all probability, second generation exiles, whose only experiences of the fall of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylonia would have come from hearing accounts of those events from older members of their community. Nevertheless, the possibility of a traumatic influence arising from the early sixth century still stands. As has been documented extensively in recent psychological studies, trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next, creating significant psychological problems – even PTSD – in the children of trauma survivors (see e.g. Kellerman, 2001: 257). I would contend that the authors of P were traumatised by their experiences of the destruction of the city and of forced deportation, and that the transgenerational transmission of trauma is applicable to the scribes operating in post-exilic Yehud. I make a case for this transgenerational transmission in chapter three.

The prospect of a traumatic influence on the Reed Sea episode is not wholly reliant on the dating I propose for its composition. Even if a much earlier dating were to be conclusively proven, the possibility remains of trauma deriving from earlier events, such as the conquest of

the northern kingdom by Assyria. By extension, any written or oral traditions deriving from around that period could have borne markers of trauma, which might later have been transposed into the text of the Pentateuch. This can therefore be no more than a tentative suggestion. But a dating scheme for the Pentateuch other than the sixth-fifth century context I propose would not necessarily preclude a traumatic influence on the text.

Alternatively, if it were established that the story was written in Judah, following the fall of Jerusalem, it is entirely plausible that its authors might have been traumatised by Babylonian oppression and brutality and by internal displacement within Judah, and that such trauma might have manifested itself in the text they produced (see e.g. Crouch, 2021: 128-133). So a geographical setting other than the combination of Babylonia and Yehud would likewise still allow for a traumatic influence.

However, the possibility of trauma manifested in the text deriving from any historical Reed Sea crossing seems remote, for three reasons.[78] Firstly, the fall of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon were much more recent, much fresher in the minds of the authors of Exodus, and much more raw for the exiled Judaeans as a community. These events are thus more likely to have traumatised the authors than a putative event hundreds of years before. Secondly, the process by which Exodus (and the Pentateuch) was created involved intense compositional and editorial work in the sixth and fifth centuries. Even if the Song of Moses (Exod 15) was based on a pre-exilic kernel of a song, it appears to have been reworked significantly during and following the Exile. Any trauma manifested in pre-existing traditions (including any pre-exilic kernel to the song) would therefore have been obscured by the additions and amendments of the later authors. Thirdly, it seems doubtful that the Reed Sea episode as described in Exod 13-15 represents a literal historical account. As argued above,

[78] Birnbaum (2008) has argued for exactly this position, but there are significant problems with his thesis. I discuss his paper at more length in chapter four.

the scale of the action described seems exaggerated and the Song of Moses is shot-through with mythological language and tropes. This is not to detract from the extent to which the Reed Sea episode took root in the Hebrew Bible and in Israel's collective consciousness. But any trauma manifested within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is far more likely to derive from the events of the late sixth century.

To point out that the events of the late sixth century position the Israelites as victims, while the Reed Sea story positions them as victors, would be an understandable objection to this argument. Indeed, this is a crucial point for my thesis: that Exod 13-15 constitutes an attempt by its authors to come to terms with the trauma in their recent past, to rid themselves of the sense of victimhood arising from the destruction of their city and their forced displacement to Babylonia, to instead envisage their enemies terrorised and traumatised,[79] and to forge a collective identity as victorious, free and under the protection of an awe-inspiring deity.

ii) Wide scope for the expression of trauma

The Reed Sea episode appears to derive, at least in part, from a pre-existing tradition but it is difficult to tell what form this tradition would have taken or how extensive it would have been. In any case, the scribes who composed P and those who completed the final text of Exodus would have had scope to embellish any pre-existing source and shape it to their own ends, including adding material of their own creation. This allows room in Exod 13.17 – 15.21 for any trauma the authors or their community had experienced to manifest itself. A cursory reading of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 suggests it is not a direct depiction of the traumatising event; there is no mention of Babylon or of the destruction of Jerusalem. However, it may

[79] See particularly the exploration of the Reed Sea story as revenge fantasy in chapter 4.

provide an oblique depiction of this trauma by telling an unrelated story. Thus, the Reed Sea episode might still be described as a piece of survivor literature.

Alternatively, even if the authors of Exodus had no intention of expressing pain and grief arising from a trauma they or their community had experienced, trauma could still intrude into the text, unbidden, in the way described by Janzen (2012: 3-5). The context of the Pentateuch's composition leaves open this possibility as well as the prospect of a deliberate depiction of a traumatising event. A closer analysis of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 in chapter four will provide evidence as to which of these possibilities is most likely.

iii) Trauma informing Yehud's collective identity

The Pentateuch's folkloric characteristics do not make it inconceivable that the Reed Sea episode might have some basis in a real event, but the authors would have embellished this event with imagination and artistic flair. Paradoxically, the Pentateuch's function as national history makes this element of imagination more likely, not less so. In shaping a national history, the authors would have sought to emphasise their community's important values, over and above any literal account of events.[80] And completing such a text in the nascent Yehud community would have helped to articulate a shared history and thus shape that community's collective identity, at a stage when such an identity may have been in question.

The Reed Sea episode contributed to the articulation of Yehud's shared experiences and values. Insofar as these experiences and values would have been overshadowed by shared trauma in the community's recent past, that trauma may have manifested within the text of

[80] This ties in with concepts of collective memory expounded by leading thinkers such as Halbwachs and Assmann, which are explored in chapter five.

Exod 13.17 – 15.21. By extension, trauma may have influenced the collective identity to which the text contributed.

Conclusion

There remains widespread disagreement on who composed the Pentateuch, when and where, and what source material the authors used. However, there are several points which command, if not consensus, then significant support among pentateuchal scholars. There seems to be a general agreement that at least some source material for the Pentateuch (usually referred to as P) was written during the Exile and some before then, even allowing for disagreement on the extent of this material. The Song of Moses (Exod 15.1-18) in particular is likely to have existed in some form, before the Exile. Similarly, the majority of scholars concur that the Pentateuch was edited and refined in the Persian period although, once again, they differ on how significant this editorial work would have been. The only scholars who disagree fundamentally with all of these conclusions are revisionists who date the composition of the Pentateuch later and tend to rely on spurious arguments about the text being deliberately composed in an artificially archaic form of Hebrew.

Other points in this discussion are more debatable, but a range of evidence allows us to draw reasonable conclusions. Literary-critical examination of Exod 13.17 – 14.31 suggests strongly that the text is composite and includes material from at least two different sources; linguistic analysis reveals that a significant quantity of source material is likely to have been written in the exilic period, at the latest; and attention to the socio-political environment of Persian-period Yehud and comparative analogies in the narratives of the wider Pentateuch leads to the conclusion that Yehud was indeed the context for large-scale reshaping and reimagining of the extant text, including the composition of some new elements. Research

into the role of scribes in the ANE supports the conclusion that such scribes would have been capable of this kind of creative work.

This context for the composition of the Pentateuch leaves the possibility of trauma influencing the text very much open. As regards the Reed Sea episode in particular, the events of the early sixth century might still cast a shadow over the text, despite not being directly described within it. In the next chapter, I investigate how trauma deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile might have influenced the authors of Exod 13.17 – 15.21. I examine the phenomenon of the transgenerational transmission of trauma and how the scribes who reshaped the Reed Sea story in the fifth century might have been traumatised by the fall of Jerusalem, even if they did not directly experience the event. And I discuss to what extent the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile might be described as truly traumatic.

Chapter 3 – The Reed Sea episode and transgenerational trauma

Since the Reed Sea episode underwent reshaping in Persian-period Yehud, the scribes responsible for this work are unlikely to have been directly traumatised by the fall of Jerusalem or by forced displacement to Babylonia. With the siege of Jerusalem ending in the city's destruction by the Babylonian army in 586 B.C.E., and a significant number of its inhabitants being taken into exile immediately afterwards, it seems unfeasible to suggest that even the hardiest Jerusalemites would have survived to see the completion and final redaction of the Pentateuch in the early-to-mid-fifth century. More convincing is the possibility that the Reed Sea episode (and indeed the Pentateuch as a whole) was composed by the children or even grandchildren of exiles.

In this chapter, I outline how the Persian-period reshaping of the Reed Sea episode could still have been significantly influenced by trauma arising from the fall of Jerusalem or the Babylonian Exile. I describe the phenomenon of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, explaining the origins of this concept, how such trauma can be passed on from a survivor to their children, and how this has been seen to affect the children of modern trauma survivors, especially Holocaust survivors. I next investigate Volkan's ground-breaking hypothesis of chosen trauma: how a traumatic event can have an enduring influence on a whole society for generations after the fact. Finally, I suggest how these aspects of trauma might have affected the scribes who reshaped the Reed Sea episode. But firstly, I will establish what grounds we have for believing the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile to be traumatising events.

How traumatic was the fall of Jerusalem?

Needless to say, for any trauma to be present in Exod 13.17 – 15.21, it must have been produced in the wake of a traumatic event, and the deportations and final fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. fit this criteria.[81] There is little disagreement on this issue among Bible scholars and archaeologists. Noll calls the sack of Jerusalem 'a bloody and excruciatingly painful end' (2013: 359). Schniedewind agrees, alluding to 'the fury of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, Judah and the entire Levant.' (2005: 141). Likewise, Bustenay Oded holds that, 'The Babylonians caused havoc and devastation' (2003: 67). The only debate seems to be regarding the degree of violence enacted against the Jerusalemites by Babylon, with even scholars who downplay this violence still allowing for potentially traumatising destruction and upheaval.[82]

Of course, Jerusalem finally fell in 586 B.C.E. only after a series of other incursions from Babylon in previous years. Any trauma arising from the 586 destruction of the city might equally be the result of the cumulative effects of violence and threats of violence to the inhabitants of the city, over the years leading up to it.

There are three particular sources of evidence which lead us to believe the fall of Jerusalem was traumatic:

i) The nature of siege warfare

Before Jerusalem was finally overrun, its inhabitants were subjected to a lengthy siege, lasting for eighteen months, according to the biblical accounts (2 Kgs 25.1-6; Jer 39.1-

[81] Naturally, it is also possible that earlier deportations, particularly those of 597 B.C.E., might also have been traumatic (as argued by Crouch [2021: 66]). However, the available evidence offers a compelling case for the siege and fall of Jerusalem being especially traumatic, and I see no particular reason to suppose that the authors of P were deported in 597 rather than 586.

[82] Barstad, for example, argues that it is unlikely that the Babylonian army would have destroyed the whole of Jerusalem, but still envisages areas of the city in ruins (2003: 8). See point *iii)* below.

2). Siege warfare, by its nature, will exhaust a city's population, mentally, emotionally and physically. This typically includes cutting off food supplies, so as to starve the enemy into submission, which is likely to have been the case for Jerusalem, isolated from the rest of the country by the surrounding Babylonian army (Middlemas, 2009: 175; Seevers, 2013: 256-258).

The psychological strain of a siege can be intense, with the city's inhabitants under a constant and protracted threat of violence and death, and often witnessing the deaths of loved ones. And once a city falls to a besieging army, it is usually then subjected to destruction and looting, with widespread violence and sexual assault against its inhabitants. Again, this is likely to have applied to Jerusalem. For example, Middlemas envisages 'a lengthy siege and military engagement that led to injury, death, starvation, sickness and sexual abuse.' (Middlemas, 2009: 175; see also Vikman, 2005: 21-23, 29; Poser, 2012: 178-203).[83]

Frustratingly, while Assyrian reliefs and written chronicles provide graphic details of the extent of their brutality in siege warfare, Babylonian military records are perfunctory at best. The Assyrian reliefs and chronicles provide a united account of barbarism: impaling and flaying alive male enemies, mutilating survivors and burning children to death (Bertman, 2003: 267-268; Eph'al, 2009: 49-53; Grayson, 1976: 123-124). Beyond these grotesque punishments, reliefs and the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III both suggest that the Assyrians would often weaken the resolve of a besieged city by torturing and executing the inhabitants' relatives, within full view of the city walls (Eph'al, 2009: 52). In contrast to this litany of

[83] It is interesting that Middlemas identifies sexual abuse as a feature of Babylon's conquest of Jerusalem. The particular effects of the fall of Jerusalem on its female inhabitants are rarely discussed, so it is refreshing to see Middlemas bringing these issues to the fore. However, I am not sure on what grounds she makes this claim. Middlemas seems to assume that widespread rape is near-ubiquitous at the conclusion of a siege – which may very well be the case – but she has not shown conclusive evidence for this. Poser supports Middlemas' conclusions, pointing out the tendency (especially within Assyrian sources) to emphasise the feminising of defeated enemies as a mark of mastery over them, and the frequent use of rape imagery within ANE documents to represent the violation and despoiling of a defeated city (2012: 186-189). See also Lemos (2011: 389-391).

horrifying violence, a typical entry from Babylonian military records states laconically that Nebuchadnezzar 'put his [enemy's] army to the sword' and furnishes the reader with no further details (Seevers, 2013: 269-270).

However, in spite of the little extrabiblical evidence which directly describes Babylonian military practices[84], the nature of siege warfare as a whole makes it likely that the Jerusalemites would have been under protracted threat of death from the Babylonian army, and eventually subjected to significant levels of violence at their hands, even if the besieging forces were less brutal than their Assyrian counterparts.

ii) Archaeological evidence

The work of archaeologists supports the view of the Babylonians terrorising Jerusalem. Stager (1996) examines the devastation of Ashkelon, a Philistine seaport, taking it as representative of Babylonian ferocity. In particular, archaeological examination of Ashkelon shows evidence of large-scale fire, collapsed roofs and destruction of property such as 'ceramic jars' (Stager, 1996: 56). This evidence is enough to convince Stager of brutality on the Babylonians' part, of the total destruction of Ashkelon itself (1996: 63), and of a 'scorched earth policy [which] created a veritable wasteland west of the Jordan River' (1996: 64). Similarly, based on archaeological excavations of several sites attacked by Babylon, Stern envisages the wholesale destruction of Jerusalem (2004: 274-276).

We should be cautious in assuming that the Babylonians' destruction of Ashkelon in 604 B.C.E. must have been repeated in Jerusalem nearly twenty years later, but it does not seem unreasonable to imagine that Nebuchadnezzar would have been equally brutal with both

[84] Of course, the Babylonians themselves experienced Assyrian brutality at first hand (Eph'al, 2009: 118-135). It would not be surprising if this experience had an influence on their subsequent military tactics. This can only be a matter of speculation, though.

cities. And Stager cites both the *Babylonian Chronicle* and the Hebrew Bible (Jer 47.4-5) in support of his position (1996: 56) – if both sources tally with the archaeological evidence as far as the destruction of Ashkelon is concerned, this adds to the credibility of the descriptions of the fall of Jerusalem within these sources.

The idea of wanton Babylonian violence is contested, however. Several archaeologists, working from the same or very similar data sets to Stager and Stern, reach differing conclusions. For example, Barstad concludes that the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem would not have been as overwhelmingly violent as is often thought. He reaches this conclusion on the grounds that several other major Judaean cities were left untouched, and that there were enough survivors from Jerusalem to form several new settlements in the surrounding country (2003: 6-8). Furthermore, the complete destruction of Jerusalem would have been a huge task for Nebuchadnezzar, and not necessary to achieve victory. A more likely scenario, Barstad claims, is that the Babylonians would have burned the city gates, made breaches in the walls, and otherwise left the fabric of the city largely intact (2003: 8). Blenkinsopp reaches the same conclusion, arguing that 'the destruction [of Jerusalem] was neither indiscriminate nor total' (2002a: 187).

Many of the bones of contention between these two schools of thought centre on the finer points of archaeological practice and the interpretation of findings. It is difficult for any Bible scholar who is not also an expert archaeologist to comment on these disagreements. However, even Barstad and Blenkinsopp, despite their more cautious conclusions, assume a certain level of violence in the overthrow of Jerusalem: enough violence to be described as 'destruction' and to prompt many of the survivors to flee the city (Barstad, 2003: 8; Blenkinsopp, 2002a: 187). The available archaeological evidence thus supports the

proposition that the Babylonians enacted enough violence against Jerusalem to have traumatised its survivors.

iii) Biblical sources

The inherent problem in discussing the fall of Jerusalem is the paucity of the extrabiblical evidence available.[85] The work of Stager, Stern and other archaeologists is valuable but in short supply and scholars must therefore fall back on biblical accounts of Jerusalem's siege and destruction (Oded, 2003: 58): accounts which should not necessarily be taken at face value.[86]

The passages of the Hebrew Bible which describe these events depict a harrowing experience and support the proposition of overwhelming violence. 2 Kings does not dwell on the death toll inflicted by the Babylonians, focusing more on the number of people displaced than the number killed (2 Kgs 24.14-16), but it makes it clear that prominent military and political leaders were put to death (25.18-21) and suggests that the city was plundered (25.13-17). 2 Chronicles is more graphic, describing Jerusalem's young men being slaughtered, its walls destroyed and the Temple and palaces burned to the ground (2 Chron 36.17-19). Lamentations goes further, envisaging the Babylonians as agents of YHWH's wrath and proclaiming: 'The Lord has destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob… he has killed all in whom we took pride… He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds' (Lam 2.2-5).

[85] Even Boyd Seevers, whose work focuses on military tactics and weaponry in the Ancient Near East, bemoans the 'little available information' on Babylonian military practices (Seevers, 2013: 268). While concluding that the available evidence points to similarities between Babylonian and Assyrian warfare, he admits that, 'The near absence of pictorial representations and of detail in texts makes any meaningful discussion of Babylonian weaponry most difficult.' (2013: 268-269).
[86] See e.g. Carroll (1998: 70) on unanswered questions over the Hebrew Bible's reliability.

Beyond the violence itself, biblical sources suggest that a famine resulted from the Babylonian conquest. 2 Kings 25.3 reports a severe famine and Lamentations 1.11 suggests food scarcity severe enough for survivors of the siege to 'trade their treasures for food'. Lamentations 2.20 even includes a gruesome reference to mothers resorting to eating their own children. A note of caution is advisable here, though: Lamentations contains several motifs common to the ANE lament form, including cannibalism and bodies littering the streets (Eph'al, 2009: 61-62, 130-131). We cannot assume it offers anything approaching a literal account of the siege of Jerusalem.

The biblical account of the destruction of Jerusalem is not entirely uniform. Ezekiel 33.24 mentions people living in ruins, suggesting it was possible for survivors to return to the city. Still, the great majority of biblical references to the event present the fall of Jerusalem as violent and terrifying for its inhabitants, and leading to conditions which made continued inhabitation of the city extremely difficult. Even if the majority of the city was left standing, if it was overrun by Judah's enemies, who caused sufficient upheaval to prompt the surviving citizens to flee and form new settlements elsewhere, this sequence of events can surely be described as deeply disturbing for the survivors.

iv) Summary

The fall of Jerusalem was, in all probability, harrowing, even if we assume the biblical laments exaggerate the extent of its destruction and violence. Given the usual nature of siege warfare, starvation, deaths of loved ones and the persistent threat of their own death would probably have been a reality for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And archaeological findings from other sites raided by Babylon suggest that these sites were ransacked and razed to the ground – making it likely that Jerusalem suffered a similar fate. If there is documented

Babylonian brutality against other Judaean cities, how much more so would this have been the case against Judah's capital.

Even scholars who, like Barstad, are cautious of assuming the total destruction of Jerusalem, still envisage an overthrow of the city which would have been violent and terrifying to its inhabitants. The city may not have been entirely destroyed, but the violence enacted against it and its people would have been sufficient to devastate the city, traumatise the inhabitants and decimate the population, as the people who escaped exile did so by fleeing either to Egypt or to more rural areas of Judah.[87] It is probable, then, that the fall of Jerusalem would indeed have been traumatic to anyone who experienced it.

How traumatic was the Exile?

If the question of the level of trauma caused by Jerusalem's destruction in 586 is problematic, matters are even less clear-cut when it comes to the extent of the trauma caused by the subsequent Exile. Quite simply, it's impossible to be sure of what life in exile would have been like for the deported Judaeans. However, we can form some provisional conclusions. The available evidence suggests that some of the Judaean exiles may have experienced living conditions within Babylonia which were more comfortable than is often thought. But we certainly cannot assume that all exiles would have lived comfortably, and recent scholarship on the subject of migration highlights that the forced displacement to Babylonia is likely to have been traumatic, in itself.

i) The nature of forced displacement

[87] For example, Barstad points to a large number of small settlements within Judah, established by survivors from the fall of Jerusalem (2003:8).

Forced displacement is an inherently disturbing and traumatic experience. The experience entails loss of home, land, possessions and income, and increased risk of sickness and death (Ames, 2011: 175-178).[88] Once resettled, immigrants remain extremely vulnerable. Lacking financial resources, cultural understanding and recourse to familiar societal networks, they are vulnerable to extreme poverty, famine, disease and exploitation. Furthermore, none of these stressors takes place in isolation: a displaced person is likely to experience several cumulative traumas, deriving both from the experience of forced migration and from the circumstances which made migration necessary (Schweitzer *et al*, 2006: 185).

Partly as a result of these immediate effects, displacement often overthrows the sense of identity for both individuals and entire communities (see e.g. Conroy, 2016: 1). Malkki's observations on Hutu refugees from Burundi, resettled in Tanzania, offer an especially illuminating example of how immigrants' identities must be renegotiated in their new circumstances. Hutus resettled in urban areas quickly assimilate into their host community, so as to ensure their survival and some modicum of prosperity but, to do so, they must be flexible in their identity: they avoid defining themselves in terms of their geographical origin and location, and especially avoid identifying as refugees. Their former Hutu identity is effaced (Malkki, 1995: 157, 199-201). This reflects a common issue for refugees: an inability to integrate with their host society often presents them with significant problems – both practical and psychological (Hynie, 2018: 300) – but assimilating involves a 'fragmentation of the self'; a crisis of identity with associated guilt, shame and anger (Conroy, 2016: 3).

In contrast, Hutu refugees settled within a camp – a homogenous community – respond to their diminished status and resources by increasing their dependence on one another, emphasising their commonality and therefore prizing their identity as Hutu.

[88] Ames goes on to point out where these effects can be observed in the books of Ruth and Jeremiah (2011: 178-185).

However, even as they increasingly assert their identity, they perceive it as being under intense threat, from native Tanzanians and from the 'moral pollution' of town-dwelling Hutus who assimilate with the local population (1995: 156, 202, 216).

Again, this response is indicative of common behaviour and attitudes among refugees. Maintaining cultural and familial ties can be a source of comfort for refugees, and this often prompts them to emphasise their culture and to gravitate towards others from the same cultural background (Abe, Zane and Chun, 1994: 132; Conroy, 2016: 26). However, when this cultural community becomes insular, it can amplify any perceived rejection and hostility from its host society and even provoke a sense of outright paranoia among community members (Bilgali, 2018: 94).

Regardless of the living conditions in Babylonia experienced by the Judaean exiles, it seems highly likely that the very process of being forcibly removed from their homes, displaced to a foreign context and resettled – with all of the upheaval and vulnerability this process entailed – would in itself have traumatised them. Furthermore, resettlement is likely to have given rise to a profound disturbance to the exiles' sense of identity (see e.g. Conroy, 2016: 1; Crouch, 2021: 5).

ii) Extrabiblical evidence

There is, if anything, even less extrabiblical evidence offering insights into the Exile than into late seventh/early sixth century Judah.[89] For example, there has been much discussion of the Murashu archives, which suggest that individuals of Judaean descent achieved relative prosperity in Mesopotamia, occupying 'relatively important positions' and becoming 'fully integrated into the economic life of their society' (Coogan, 1974: 10, 12),

[89] e.g. Albertz (2003: 87) recognises this lack of evidence.

while still preserving at least something of their Judaean identity (1974: 7). Noll refers obliquely to ‘Mesopotamian sources’ (2013: 362) without specifying what sources he has in mind, although it seems most likely that he is referring to the Murashu archives, and Blenkinsopp and Schniedewind also mention them (see below).

Unfortunately, this evidence is far from conclusive. The documents in question are little more than ‘filing labels’ for banking records (Coogan, 1974: 7) – hardly extensive information on the plight of the exiles. And even if the information they contain had been more fulsome, the archives date from the Persian period, not the neo-Babylonian, so it certainly cannot be assumed that the apparently prosperous state of the exiles held true under Babylon as much as under Persia. As Schniedewind notes, these archives are of little direct relevance to the exilic period (2005: 147). Blenkinsopp also acknowledges that the Murashu archives actually tell us very little about the reality of exile (2002b: 417).

A more informative collection of documents has come to light since the early 1990s. The Al-Yahudu documents give more direct insights into the situation of Judaean deportees to Babylon, comprising around 200 administrative records which detail legal proceedings, marriage contracts and financial transactions (Alstola, 2020: 30). These sources relate to a period of time ranging from the late exilic period into the post-exilic period, so illuminate the lives and experiences of deportees from Judah and their immediate descendants (Wunsch, 2013: 249-250).

Several features of the Al-Yahudu documents are noteworthy. Firstly, they suggest that a significant number of the Judaean deportees were resident in a rural area of Babylonia, in a community consisting only of Judaeans: hence, the name of the settlement (Alstola, 2020: 2, 13). This would have allowed this community of exiles to maintain a strong sense of community and of ethnic and religious identity.

Secondly, in tension with this enduring sense of identity, it seems that at least some of the Judaean exiles integrated quite contentedly into Babylonian society. For example, one particular marriage agreement invokes Babylonian deities (suggesting these deities were not abhorrent to the Judaeans) and details a woman with a Judaean name (Kassaya) marrying into a Babylonian family (Alstola, 2020: 95-97).[90] It may be that second or third generation exiles found assimilation into Babylonian society easier and more desirable than their ancestors.[91]

Thirdly, the documents show that Judaeans were given land as part of a 'land for service' arrangement. That is, they were allocated land and permitted to cultivate it, in return for military service, forced labour and taxes (Wunsch, 2013: 253). While forced labour could be described as 'slavery' of sorts, it is distinct from chattel slavery. The Judaeans are referred to as 'šušānus' rather than as slaves, implying a status distinct from either slavery or fully free individuals (Alstola, 2020: 160). The Judaeans' ownership of land suggests greater freedom than that envisaged by scholars who see the exiles as confined to internment camps. Indeed, it appears that many ordinary Babylonians lived in very similar circumstances to the Judaeans (Magdalene and Wunsch, 2011: 127).[92]

And fourthly, the documents show some Judaeans buying and selling, making use of the Babylonian legal system to bring their own suits (Magdalene and Wunsch, 2011: 124) and, at least in the case of Jehoiachin and several high-ranking officials, benefiting from generous rations (Alstola, 2020: 62-69). Although we cannot assume that all (or even most) of

[90] This is not surprising, given the common differences in attitudes between involuntary migrants settled in rural and urban areas. Settlers in rural areas tend to emphasis consistency in cultural praxis and religious observance; those in urban communities tend to be more pragmatic in integrating into their host society (see e.g. Crouch, 2021: 59-60, 91; Malkki, 1995: 154-157).

[91] Psychological studies of immigrant communities support the suggestion that second generation immigrants integrate more readily than their parents into their host culture, and indeed identify with this host culture to a large extent (see e.g. Wiese, 2010: 144-145).

[92] The land for service arrangement may have been in the interests of the Babylonian authorities, in that they would have increased the available work force, agricultural output and tax revenue, as well as preventing future unrest by allowing the monitoring of the Judaeans' activities (Alstola, 2020: 15; Ahn, 2010: 48).

the Judaean exiles would have prospered in these ways, the Al-Yahudu documents show that it was possible for the exiles to make money, to trade, to rise to positions of authority and to integrate with Babylonian society. The documents even show individuals with Judaean names buying and selling slaves (Magdalene and Wunsch, 2011: 119-121). Thus, it appears that some of the Judaean exiles, while still captive, enjoyed a significant degree of self-determination.

The Al-Yahudu documents therefore challenge the assumption that the Exile involved torrid living conditions and torment at the hands of the Babylonians. However, these documents speak only of a limited number of the deportees; they are silent on the experiences of the majority (Crouch, 2021: 72-73). It would therefore be unwise to treat the exiles (and descendants of exiles) referenced in the Al-Yahudu documents as representative of all exiles. Significant numbers of deportees from Judah were indeed housed in rural communities, but others (especially Jehoiachin and his retinue) were settled in urban areas. While Kassaya's marriage agreement suggests a willingness among the exiles to integrate into Babylonian society, other similar agreements suggest a far more insular attitude (2021: 103). The documents highlight examples of prosperity among the exiles, but there is no compelling reason to see such prosperity as the norm. The Al-Yahudu documents cast doubt on the extent of any trauma caused by living conditions in Babylonia, but the possibility of such trauma cannot be dismissed.

iii) Biblical sources

An alternative approach to investigating possible trauma caused by the Exile would be to begin with biblical sources which refer to the Exile, and then to fill any gaps in understanding by reference to extrabiblical material. The eminent and famously-conservative

Bible scholar John Bright favours this method (2000: 343). But even the biblical text offers scant material to inform our conclusions, and the passages which do address the Babylonian Exile do not offer a unified testimony on it being a harrowing experience. For example, Daniel, Tobit and Judith portray Judaeans apparently living contentedly in exile (Carroll, 1998: 69), and while Psalm 137 reveals the exiles' grief at the loss of Jerusalem and removal from their homeland, it does not explicitly mention harsh treatment of the exiles at the hands of their 'captors' (1998: 69). Bright concludes that while the exiles, 'were filled with bitter hatred for those who had brought them thither, and homesick longing for faraway Zion', they were able to settle in Babylonia, build houses and earn money (2000: 346-351).

Reliance on biblical accounts of the Exile is problematic, especially where these accounts present contradictory information. For example, 2 Kings 24:12-17 and Jeremiah 52:28-30 differ significantly on the numbers of Judaeans deported (2 Kings gives the total number of exiles as 10,000 or possibly more, depending on how these verses are interpreted; Jeremiah gives a figure of 4,600). Bright himself concedes that, even if one assumes the reliability of biblical material, 'dismaying lacunae and baffling problems remain.' (2000: 343).

It is possible that the Bible's silence on life in Babylon is itself evidence of trauma. Carr follows this line of thought, insisting that the Judaeans' experience of the Exile was intensely traumatic. While the fall of Jerusalem was cataclysmic, it is still described in biblical narrative, but the Exile itself is a black hole in the text: it must therefore (Carr argues) have been traumatic to the point of defying description: 'actual life in the Babylonian exile was truly traumatic "speechless terror."' (2014: 74-75). As a result, although this experience was shattering to the exiles, they would not speak of it (2014: 75) and when it found expression in biblical literature composed following the return to Yehud, this trauma was a

tacit influence; never directly addressed.[93] This is an intriguing theory, and in step with observations from Caruth (1996: 29), Des Pres (1973: 675, 678-681) and van der Kolk and van der Hart (1995: 172) on how trauma survivors are often simply incapable of describing their experiences. Unfortunately, Carr relies on an argument from silence, which is inherently problematic.

The Hebrew Bible does offer some clues as to how their displacement from Judah might have affected the exiles. Jeremiah and Ruth both suggest 'violence that displaces, a diminishing of resources needed for survival, and the heightened morbidity and mortality that plague exile' (Ames, 2011: 183), Ezekiel's prediction that a third of the exiles will perish by disease and starvation similarly reflects the precarity of their position (Lim, 2016: 13), and Ezekiel's preoccupation with questions of history and of ethnic and cultic purity suggest a crisis of identity of the kind common to displaced people groups (Crouch, 2021: 39; Strine, 2013: 1-2, 188-191). However, as with extrabiblical sources, the Hebrew Bible gives us no conclusive evidence that the living conditions within Babylonia themselves constituted a traumatic experience for the Judaeans.

iv) Assyrian analogy

Given the dearth of evidence from the period, a common approach is to look to the Assyrians for an analogy of how captives were treated in the ANE. Albertz, for example, relies on this approach, positing that 25 percent of the population of Judah would have been deported, just as the same percentage of the population of Samaria was deported earlier (2003:

[93] Similarly, Janzen suggests that the Deuteronomist, while incapable of explicitly articulating the trauma he had experienced, would unconsciously have expressed this trauma in composing the Deuteronomistic History (2012: 4-5).

88-90).[94] If this were true, and there were indeed another 20,000 Judaeans killed in war, executed by the Babylonians or fleeing to Egypt, then the Exile might indeed have represented 'a severe bloodletting for Judah' (2003: 90). Not only that but, once exiled to Babylonia, the men of Judah would have been subjected to 'military service and forced labor' (2003: 86). However, Albertz relies on significant assumptions to reach this position, not least that Babylon would have treated their defeated enemies just as Assyria did.[95]

Oded provides a detailed and nuanced investigation of how the Assyrians treated their conquered foes. Deportation of defeated peoples would have been a common practice for the Assyrians (Oded, 1979: 18) but, while deportees would initially have been treated harshly, permitted to carry only a bare minimum of property and provisions for the journey (1979: 35), they would, Oded claims, have found a fairly comfortable life in exile (1979: 87). Deportees would have been put to work to benefit the Assyrian empire – they may have been conscripted into the army or employed as craftsmen or labourers (1979: 48-49, 54), for example – but it was 'very rare' that they would have been treated as slaves (1979: 115).

This would suggest that the Judaean exiles are likely to have been comparatively well treated in Babylonia, too (indeed, the available evidence from the Al-Yahudu documents

[94] Albertz suggests 20,000 deported to Babylon, based on a 25% deportation of Israel to Assyria (2003: 90). This would therefore suggest a population of around 80,000 in Jerusalem, to begin with. Albertz offers no clear basis for assuming this population figure, or for a further 20,000 being killed or fleeing. Here, I am outlining Albertz's views rather than assuming these figures must be accurate. Clearly, this is the matter of vigorous debate and all scholars who express a firm view are relying on assumption to some extent.

[95] There is wide-ranging disagreement among scholars on the extent of the exile, in terms of the number of people deported. There seems to be a general scepticism now of the 'empty land' theory, with Carroll, Thompson and others dismissing the idea of total deportation to Babylon as a 'biblical trope' (Carroll, 1998: 64) or 'literary motif' (Thompson, 1998: 106), and even writers as conservative as Bright distancing himself from it (2000: 343-344). But this seems to be the limit of the agreement on this issue and I am not aware of anyone who has presented a number of exiles along with a watertight case for that number. Again because of the lack of available evidence, anyone venturing an opinion on the matter is forced to rely on assumption or guess work to some degree. For example, Blenkinsopp suggests only 'tentatively' that ten percent of the population of Judah was deported (Blenkinsopp, 2002b: 419). Römer gives a figure of between five and ten percent of the population, apparently on the grounds that 'most specialists' accept this figure (2007a: 108). Stern, one of Römer's archaeological specialists, envisages a 'sharply reduced' population but abstains from offering a figure (2004: 274), and Stager, another archaeologist, does likewise (1996: 63-64).

suggests this may have been the case [Wunsch, 2013: 252]), but it goes without saying that what may have been true of Assyria was not necessarily equally true of Babylon. In fact, there are weaknesses even in Oded's observations on Assyria although, to his credit, Oded acknowledges these weaknesses: the Assyrian royal inscriptions to which Oded refers are prone to hyperbole and often use set expressions, making it difficult to tell which deportation an inscription is referring to; administrative texts are often lacking in detail; and while Assyrian reliefs are fascinating artefacts, they require careful interpretation and may also be prone to hyperbole (1979: 6-11). Thus, the available sources on Assyrian deportations cannot be accepted uncritically, even as evidence of how Assyria treated their exiles, let alone of how Babylon treated theirs.

v) Summary

It cannot be said with certainty whether the Exile was especially harrowing for the Judaeans or not. There is little archaeological evidence from the neo-Babylonian period and even the Hebrew Bible is almost entirely silent on the realities of day-to-day life for the exiles. The little evidence which is available suggests that conditions within Babylonia might actually have been fairly comfortable, at least for some of the exiles, and that it would have been possible for some Judaeans to prosper. It could be argued that the Bible's silence itself suggests overwhelming trauma, which made it impossible for the biblical writers to convey the gravity of their experiences, but constructing an argument from silence is a precarious business. We cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that life in Babylonia was indeed horrendous for the displaced Judaeans, but there is not yet convincing evidence for that. This thesis cannot rely on the existence of trauma prompted by the Judaeans' treatment while in exile.

However, although life in Babylonia may not have been traumatic for the Judaean exiles, their sudden, forced removal from their homes to a foreign country is likely to have been. Displacement can, in itself, be deeply traumatising. As Malkki's study of Hutu refugees and Kamya's of modern African immigrants to America both demonstrate, displacement from one's home setting, transition to a new location and resettling in this new 'home' all place a psychological strain on the immigrant and a disruption to their identity – to the point of trauma – regardless of how comfortable or otherwise this new location might be (Malkki, 1995: 154-157; Kamya, 2007: 257). The same may well have been true of the Judaean exiles. Even if we assume comfortable conditions within Babylonia, captivity and removal from their homes would, in themselves, have been devastating for them (as Noll observes [2013: 360-362]).

Emblematic of these traumas, Psalm 137 expresses the grief of the exiled Judaeans 'when we remembered Zion' (v1) rather than when they reflected on any present suffering. Verse 3 makes passing references to 'captors… tormentors' (which may well be poetic hyperbole), but the emphasis of the whole Psalm is on lament and longing for ruined Jerusalem. The psalmist asks in verse 4 not, 'How could we sing the Lord's song while being tormented by our enemies?' but 'How could we sing the Lord's song *in a foreign land*?' (emphasis added). As Noll astutely notes, this Psalm expresses the pain of the exiles' loss of their home and loved ones, and their 'alienation' in an unfamiliar new location (Noll, 2013: 360). Regardless of the comfort or otherwise of living conditions in Babylon, the destruction of Jerusalem and their forced deportation were enough to leave the exiles with a profound sense of grief and – yes – trauma.

Following on from a siege, with its accompanying starvation, violence and death, a good number of the already-traumatised survivors were, with little warning, forcibly removed

from their homes to an alien nation and culture, and are likely to have experienced disease, food scarcity and the loss of vital support networks in the process. These twin traumas of violence and destruction at their enemies' hands and sudden displacement to another country were enough to leave an indelible mark on the psyche of the survivors.

What is transgenerational transmission?

If the exiled Judaeans were traumatised then, by extension, their descendants might have inherited this trauma. If so, the community which later 'returned' to settle in Yehud, including the scribes who reshaped the Reed Sea episode and the wider Pentateuch, would have been traumatised by the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonia, despite not directly experiencing either.

There is a growing body of psychological research which presents compelling evidence for trauma being passed on from one generation to the next. For the purposes of this chapter, I have focused on the work of three prominent and oft-cited psychologists, to give a summary of this research. Rachel Yehuda has published more than 250 papers, chapters and monographs on trauma and the neurobiology of PTSD; Anna Baranowsky is a clinical psychologist specialising in the treatment of PTSD, and is the founder and CEO of the Traumatology Institute; and Natan Kellermann, another clinical psychologist, is a specialist in the treatment and support of Holocaust survivors and their families.

The key features of the transgenerational transmission of trauma – and the reasons for accepting this idea – can be summarised as follows:

i) The Holocaust and Babylonian brutality

The impact of traumatic memories, not just on the survivor but on the survivor's children, has been well documented, particularly in studies of the children of Holocaust survivors. Individuals who did not themselves experience persecution, violence and threats of death at the hands of the Nazis, have nevertheless shown symptoms of depression, chronic anxiety and even PTSD (Yehuda *et al*, 1998: 841), with their parents' traumas as the likely root. The Holocaust has been given perhaps more attention in this respect than any other traumatising event, presumably because there are so many survivors and children of survivors to inform such studies, and because sufficient time has elapsed since the traumatising events for the survivors to have children and for the children to grow to adulthood – and even to have children of their own. This body of research is therefore particularly illuminating on the nature and characteristics of transgenerational trauma and on its relevance to children of survivors from the fall of Jerusalem. However, there are several studies available which explore the effects of trauma on the children of survivors from other events, especially experiences of combat. These experiences include the First World War (Ancelin Schützenberger, 2007), the Second World War (combat itself [Ancelin Schützenberger, 2007] and prisoner of war camps [Laub, 2012]), the Vietnam War (Harkness, 1993) and the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Pearrow and Cosgrove, 2009).

In a study of possible transgenerational trauma affecting the descendants of Judaean exiles, the Holocaust offers a harrowing but illuminating analogy. Survivors of the Holocaust and of the fall of Jerusalem experienced starvation, the loss of loved ones, violence (including sexual violence), a continual danger of death, the destruction of their homes and, finally, displacement.[96] Naturally, one must be cautious in assuming that these events would have resulted in the same level of trauma in the Ancient Near East as in twentieth-century Europe,

[96] I outline how the Holocaust might function as an analogy for the Babylonian conquest of Judah at more length in chapter four.

but the violence and destruction enacted by the Babylonians against the inhabitants of Jerusalem must surely have affected the survivors profoundly: it is reasonable to assume that they would indeed have been traumatised by it (see e.g. Morrow, 2004: 80).

Attention to how the children of Holocaust survivors have been affected by their parents' experiences of similar violence, displacement and threats of death thus offers insights into the shadow cast onto the children of exiled Judaeans. However, I will also refer to studies focusing on the children of survivors from other traumatising events, as and when their insights are relevant to my argument.

ii) Traumatised parent, traumatised child

There is a case to be made for collective trauma being passed on from one generation to the next within a wider community. (Volkan has done especially interesting and ground-breaking research on this subject, of which more below.) But the clearest causal link between trauma in two generations is between individual parents and children. This link was first proposed in the 1960s, with regard to the children of Holocaust survivors specifically. A 1966 study by Rakoff, Sigal and Epstein noted that a disproportionate number of children of survivors were being treated at the psychiatric department of a Montreal hospital, and Winnik's 1968 study observed the prevalence of terrifying nightmares in children of survivors, influenced by their parents' memories of the Holocaust (Baranowsky *et al*, 1998: 250-251).

Since the sixties, more than 400 papers have been published on the transgenerational transmission of Holocaust-related PTSD (Kellermann, 2001: 257). There is therefore a substantial body of case studies and analysis which underpins the theory, and there seems to be broad agreement among researchers that trauma can be and is passed on from survivors to

their children. Baranowsky *et al* are more cautious in their conclusions than most researchers but even they venture that, 'There is evidence in the literature' to suggest 'a secondary PTSD syndrome… is being transmitted from one generation to the next' (1998: 247).

Although this conclusion seems safe, two caveats should be kept in mind. Firstly, the link between a parent's trauma and a child's potential trauma is 'seldom clear and linear' (Kellerman, 2001: 258). By no means all children of individuals suffering from PTSD will themselves develop PTSD, and among individuals who are affected by PTSD (both parents and children), the exact symptoms vary widely (Yehuda *et al*, 1998: 841-842). It is unclear, then, why some children of PTSD sufferers will develop PTSD themselves and others will not, and why PTSD manifests itself in particular ways in particular individuals. More fundamentally, a traumatised parent will not always pass on their trauma to their children.

Secondly, despite the extensive research already carried out into transgenerational trauma, there are still gaps in this research. Baranowsky *et al* are astute in pointing out that, at least at the time they published their findings, 'rigorous empirical studies' in the field were in short supply (1998: 247).

Both of these caveats can be answered. The link between a parent's PTSD and that of their child might not be clear and linear, but there is still sufficient data to support a causal link. As Yehuda *et al* conclude, the children of parents suffering from PTSD are 'significantly more likely' to develop PTSD in response to their own traumatic experiences (1998: 842-843)[97], with a particularly strong correlation between 'the intensity of intrusive thoughts about the Holocaust in both survivors and their adult offspring' (1998: 842).

If there is insufficient evidence to enable Baranowsky and her colleagues to offer more robust support to the theory of secondary PTSD in survivors' children, this may be due, at

[97] See also Silva *et al* (2000).

least in part, to the dating of the studies they reference. The great majority of their literature review focuses on sources published in 1990 at the latest, with only a handful of more recent sources. Whatever their reasons for excluding more up-to-date research, Baranowsky *et al* may have denied themselves access to important recent insights. In contrast, Kellermann references sources dating up to and including 2001, effectively drawing on ten years' worth of research overlooked by Baranowsky.[98] Kellermann seems more convinced than Baranowsky of the reality of the transgenerational transmission of Holocaust-based PTSD, and his conviction appears to be enabled by his use of more recent research.

For all their caution, Baranowsky *et al* also offer two compelling reasons for accepting the hypothesis of Holocaust trauma being transmitted across generations. Firstly, they hold that it is not necessary for PTSD symptoms to be identical in parents and children, or for children's PTSD to be 'utterly debilitating', for the label of PTSD to be appropriate to the psychological condition of those children (1998: 249).

Secondly, Baranowsky *et al* refer to studies of psychotherapists being indirectly traumatised by their patients' accounts of their experiences, and of museum staff showing signs of trauma after handling artefacts from the Holocaust (1998: 249). Reflecting on those studies, they conclude: 'If trauma is so volatile as to leave its mark on a therapist who meets a client for a limited period of time, or museum staff who come in contact with historical material alone, we must ask what happens to the offspring of trauma victims who interact with these individuals on a daily basis.' (1998: 249).[99]

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[98] In his 2001 article, Kellermann cites six books and journal articles relating to the psychological problems of the children of Holocaust survivors, all dating between 1990 and 1996 inclusive (2001: 266-267). These sources would have been available to Baranowsky and her colleagues, too. Kellermann mentions a further five similar sources, dating from 1997 and 1998, which might also have been available to Baranowsky, depending on the vagaries of her publisher's deadlines.

[99] It could be argued that, while museum staff handling artefacts come into contact with material deriving directly from a traumatising incident, the children of traumatised parents instead contend with an absence – a 'great secret' which is never articulated – so the two experiences are not exactly comparable. But I believe the interaction with trauma of a survivor's child is more multifaceted than this, including generalised fear and

Thus, although it is not simple and clear-cut, there are sufficient grounds to accept a causal link between trauma in a parent and trauma in their child.

iii) Models of transmission

There are various means by which a trauma might be passed on from parent to child. Following Kellermann's framework, these means can be summarised into four general vectors: psychodynamics, a general sense of fear and anxiety, a dysfunctional family environment and biological transmission (2001: 260-266).[100] None of these means of transmission seems more significant than the others, and more than one may be operational in any given family's context.

a) Psychodynamics

A survivor might pass on their trauma to their child without either the survivor or the child being conscious of it. As Kellermann explains, if a parent has not entirely worked through their traumatic experience, this trauma can spill over into their familial relationships and be absorbed unconsciously by their children (Kellermann, 2001: 260).

Alternatively, a child's trauma can be born out of a desire to connect with their traumatised parent. Aware that their parents themselves experienced a life-changing event, children of survivors sometimes attempt to form a connection with their parents by imagining scenes from the Holocaust (for example) and internalising the horror and suffering relating to these scenes (Baranowsky *et al*, 1998: 248). Albeck describes this process as 'empathetic

anxiety, a dysfunctional family environment and even a biological vector for passing on trauma, all of which contribute to the child's susceptibility to PTSD. So, a child of a survivor is, in fact, exposed to trauma to a far greater extent than a museum curator. Of course, this is exactly Baranowsky's point!

[100] Yehuda develops the possibility of a biological vector for transmitting trauma much further than Kellermann does. But it is interesting to note that Kellermann describes biological vulnerability to PTSD as 'a necessary but not a sufficient condition' for the transmission of trauma (2001: 266).

traumatization' (1994: 106). This tendency has also been observed in the children of veterans from the Vietnam War (Harkness, 1993: 637) and combat in Iraq and Afghanistan (Pearrow and Cosgrove, 2009: 79).

Ilany Kogan, a specialist in trauma, violence and genocide, also notices that the children of survivors often carry images and thoughts of their parents' traumatic experiences, which will often drive the children to 'enact' their parents' trauma (2012: 6-7). Usually, this enaction will involve internalising a parent's sense of self in order to try to help that parent to heal, but it might also mean that a parent (consciously or otherwise) imposes a particular task on the child, motivated by their earlier traumatic experience (2012: 7). For example, Kogan gives a case study of Daphna, who was outspoken in campaigning within Israel for Palestinian rights, despite this being a risky enterprise, thus re-enacting the danger of the Holocaust and fulfilling a desire to be a 'saviour' for a group functioning as a proxy for the Jews (2012: 7-16).

Thus, a survivor's trauma can be passed on to their child unconsciously, whether through the uncontrolled effects of the survivor's unresolved experience, or by the imaginative connection of the child. It is very difficult to differentiate between those processes, and both result in the transmission of trauma between parent and child, unconsciously.

b) Fear and anxiety

Alongside or instead of this unconscious transmission, parents often pass on trauma to their children through their explicit fear and anxiety. Because they themselves are keenly aware of the possibilities of extreme suffering, threats of death and persecution, and because they desire to keep their children safe from these dangers, many survivor parents become

fretful and over-protective. This is relevant to both Holocaust survivors (Baranowsky *et al*, 1998: 248) and combat veterans (Pearrow and Cosgrove, 2009: 77). More broadly, fear and anxiety can be transmitted through the cultural taboos and prohibitions which arise in a traumatised community (Kellermann, 2001: 261). Both of these scenarios apply to Holocaust survivors and, I believe, to survivors of the fall of Jerusalem.

Drawing on his unique dual expertise in psychoanalysis and history, Loewenberg maps precisely how transgenerational trauma deriving from the Holocaust affects the children and even grandchildren of survivors.[101] Aside from a chronic sense of depression, traumatic fear manifests in these children in 'risk aversion', a general sense of distrust, especially of those in authority, and a paranoid sense of persecution (2012: 57-58). In Kellermann's findings, this fear can even cause a fixation with death (2001: 259). The traumatised fear expressed by the survivors can thus result in a pervading sense of fear in their children.

c) A dysfunctional family environment

The family environment itself can be said to disturb the children of survivors. Just as the wives of combat veterans suffering from PTSD report higher than average instances of low self-esteem and lack of a sense of identity, their children exhibit 'impaired self-esteem, poor reality testing, hyperactivity, and aggressive behavior' (Harkness, 1993: 637-638). It appears that these women and children suffer detrimental effects on their mental health – and

[101] Loewenberg produces work thoroughly grounded in the historical events around the Holocaust, while also paying close attention to the psychological symptoms of trauma in the subjects of clinical studies. He describes similar characteristics of how Holocaust-related trauma can affect the children (and grandchildren) of survivors, drawing his conclusions from clinical observations of his own patients. He also makes an oblique reference to 'Many of us… treating… the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors' (2012: 57), implying that his conclusions are informed by clinical observations from his colleagues, although he does not specify which colleagues he has conferred with, or how many.

even trauma – simply as a result of living with a PTSD sufferer (see also Pearrow and Cosgrove, 2009: 78).

Survivors' families (again, drawing on studies of Holocaust survivors in particular) tend to be close-knit and insular, with children at risk of being smothered by their parents' past and the horrors related to it (Kellermann, 2001: 262). The affected families can show several common characteristics, including 'risk aversion', 'distrust and anxiety', a desire to heal and rescue, lack of affection between family members and a sense of a great 'Secret' (Loewenberg, 2012: 57-58).[102]

There is no doubt that these characteristics are dysfunctional, but it is less clear whether they can be described as distinctive to trauma. In Loewenberg's thesis, these phenomena derive from 'the burden of guilt and shame' carried by the parents, following their experiences of the Holocaust (2012: 56). For an individual subjected to entirely undeserved torment to take away a deep sense of guilt from their experience is grossly unfair, but has been well documented. For example, see Herman (1997: 53) and Des Pres (1973: 678). But, although the majority of the characteristics Loewenberg identifies are in step with those mentioned by other psychologists – Herman in particular (1997: 42-53) – in relation to individuals directly traumatised by an event, there are some in Loewenberg's list which could be ascribed to other sources. For example, 'ambivalence towards parents and grandparents' and 'Ambivalence regarding Jewish identity' (2012: 58) do not seem distinctive characteristics of trauma.

Also, although Loewenberg is largely clear in his argument that parents traumatised by the Holocaust can pass on their trauma to their children, he occasionally muddies the waters, I

[102] Although, as Baranowsky *et al* observe, the parents' trauma is as likely to be expressed in 'obsessive re-telling' as it is in 'all-consuming silence' (1998: 247).

assume unintentionally. For example, he includes a quote from Henry Krystal; himself a key thinker in the traumatic effects of the Holocaust:

> The survivors form abnormal families and communities. The families tend to be sadomasochistic and affect-lame. The communities are laden with the burden of guilt and shame, and preoccupied with the past. The imprinting of inferior status can be perpetuated by a number of generations… (2012: 56)

Krystal's words convey the weight of trauma on families affected by the Holocaust, but there is ambiguity here: is the child of survivors traumatised by his/her parents passing on their own trauma, or by simply growing up in such a dysfunctional home environment? In assimilating Krystal's words into his chapter, Loewenberg does not clarify his meaning – indeed he raises as many questions as he answers.

It therefore remains unclear whether a dysfunctional family environment results in a parent's trauma being directly passed on to a child, whether simply growing up in this environment of abuse and neglect traumatises the child or at least makes them more susceptible to PTSD in later life (as Yehuda *et al* argue [2001: 734]), or a combination of both outcomes. This is a significant question for clinical psychologists but, as regards this thesis, the answer is less important. It can be said with some confidence that a trauma survivor will often create a dysfunctional family environment which, by whatever means, causes trauma in their children, alongside other psychological disturbances.

d) A biological vector

The above three vectors for trauma transmission relate to personal relationships between survivors and their children. There is also a possibility that trauma can be passed from parent to child biologically. A biological transmission would go some way to explaining the outcomes of psychological studies which suggest that trauma can affect an individual several generations after the traumatising event. For example, Ancelin Schützenberger

presents a case study of one woman suffering psychosomatic illness linked to her grandfather's experiences of combat in the First World War (2007: 167-170).

Yehuda and her colleagues have researched the possibility of biological transmission of trauma extensively. Initially, they ascribed the high instance of PTSD in survivors' children to a 'genetically linked risk factor for PTSD' (1998: 843). That is, some people are simply biologically predisposed towards PTSD. In his 2001 paper, Kellermann agrees with this position, suggesting 'a genetic and/or a biochemical predisposition' to trauma as to any other illness (2001: 263).

In subsequent publications co-authored with Linda Bierer and others, Yehuda adapts her position. In her 2000 paper, she observes low cortisol levels in a group of children of Holocaust survivors, concluding that parental PTSD results in low cortisol levels in children, and thus that low cortisol levels 'may constitute a vulnerability marker', making those children more susceptible to suffering PTSD themselves (Yehuda, Bierer *et al*, 2000: 1252).

Later, Yehuda takes this line of thinking a step further, suggesting that low cortisol level are not merely a marker of vulnerability to PTSD but an outcome of trauma and a biological vector by which trauma is passed from mother to child, in utero (Yehuda and Bierer, 2008: 124-126). This conclusion derives from a study of the respective cortisol levels of pregnant women exposed to the World Trade Centre attack on 9/11, and of their infant children. From mooting a possible genetic risk factor in 1998, Yehuda identifies low cortisol levels as a possible vulnerability marker in 2000, before finally suggesting that those low cortisol levels can be transmitted from mother to child, thus increasing the child's vulnerability to trauma.

Neither is this provocative idea limited to an isolated study. Another biological study concludes that physical effects of trauma might be transmitted on a cellular level, in a father's

sperm (Gapp *et al*, 2014). Kellermann suggests something very similar in a 2013 essay, referencing Yehuda's work as he suggests that trauma specific to the Holocaust might be passed on from parent to child epigenetically; that is, in genetic material other than the DNA sequence (2013: 33-39).

Yehuda and Bierer's study (2008) is limited to a very small sample and Gapp's to a group of mice, not human subjects, and Kellermann couches his hypothesis in very tentative language (2013: 34). A number of geneticists are more cautious about accepting the theory of an epigenetic basis for inherited traits; among them Daxinger and Whitelaw (2010) and Grossniklaus *et al* (2013). Still, Yehuda's work in particular seems to be generally well accepted and widely cited by her peers (c.f. Silva *et al*, 2000; Kennedy *et al*, 2007). The conclusions from Yehuda's, Gapp's and Kellermann's work, while not yet indisputable, are compelling enough to justify further research.

Respondents to Yehuda's 1998 article have also commented on the ambiguity of whether traumatic transmission is primarily biological or psychological, and asked for clarification (c.f. Napoli, 1999: 1838-1839), which does not appear to have been forthcoming yet. In replying to Napoli's queries, Yehuda suggests it would be desirable to study a cohort of survivors' children who had been adopted by parents not affected by the same traumatic experience, thus making it easier to make an informed judgment on whether any subsequent PTSD on the children's part would be due to nature or nurture (1999: 1839). Such research would indeed offer useful insights.

For now, although there remains some ambiguity over the precise mechanism of biological trauma transmission and over the extent of its influence in comparison to psychological vectors, the conclusions offered by Yehuda in particular are highly valuable.

These conclusions underline the enduring physical effects of trauma and how readily such trauma can be passed on from generation to generation.

iv) Summary

The body of available research presents a convincing case for the children of survivors inheriting their parents' trauma. The waters of transgenerational trauma remain muddy, though. There is sufficient correlation between expressions of trauma, epigenetic abnormalities and dysfunctional relationships in survivors and symptoms of PTSD in their children to support the theory that trauma can be passed from generation to generation psychologically and even biologically. However, the children of trauma survivors may be affected just as much by abuse at their traumatised parents' hands as by any inherited sense of trauma itself.

It is also possible that the grandchildren of survivors might also be affected in this way (Loewenberg, 2012: 57). There is not yet sufficient evidence to offer a watertight conclusion on this point, but more such evidence may become available as the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors grow up and more research is carried out into their mental state.[103]

In summary, I would propose a new term – 'survivor's child syndrome' – to encapsulate the increased susceptibility to PTSD and other psychological problems among the children of trauma survivors. A survivor's child grows up steeped in trauma and its effects. As their parent continues to grapple with the trauma deriving from their own experiences, the

[103] This raises the (as yet unanswered) question of how many generations might experience their ancestors' trauma. Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger argues that the influence of trauma extends far beyond the second or even third generation following survivors. She cites an obscure study by J.R. Hildgard, which suggests that transgenerational transmissions can be passed on over as many as fourteen generations: the descendants of survivors of the English Civil War might therefore be living with inherited trauma from the seventeenth century (Ancelin Schutzenberger, 2007: 156)! Not only is this extremely hard to demonstrate conclusively, but I'm wary of relying on a researcher who Ancelin Schutzenberger herself describes as 'not widely known' (2007: 156).

parent cannot help creating a home environment which is dysfunctional or even outright abusive. Whether from this dysfunctional environment, from a sense of trauma transmitted from parent to child (psychologically or biologically) or from a combination of these, the child is left more vulnerable to PTSD and other psychological problems as they grow up. It seems impossible to separate those contributory factors and identify a single, overriding cause of the survivor's child's trauma, but perhaps that is not necessary. For the purposes of this thesis, it is enough to observe the compelling evidence for the existence of survivor's child syndrome. From here, we can ask to what extent this syndrome may be applicable to the authors of the Reed Sea episode.

Societies and chosen trauma

There is, then, a substantial body of work which provides evidence for trauma being passed on from directly-affected individuals to their children, and it remains a possibility that grandchildren could be affected in the same way. Nor is the transgenerational transmission of trauma confined to individuals: it can and does occur within entire societies. Vamik Volkan picks up the thread here with the notion of 'chosen trauma'. A society or 'large group' of any kind need not have directly experienced a traumatic event from their group's past in order to have been influenced – even traumatised – by this event. Such insights into a society's response to their ancestors' shared trauma are valuable in understanding how the children of Judaean exiles might have been affected by the previous generation's experiences of the destruction of their city and forced displacement.

Volkan has made significant contributions to the study of large-group psychology and chosen trauma, often reiterating his ideas in order to expand on them or explore one particular aspect of such study. His ideas are ground-breaking, influential and rooted in twenty years of

psychological research, especially studies of groups in conflict. Volkan's writings on group psychology are informed by his own extensive field research, but also have a solid basis in other scholarship, especially in Freud and Anzieu's work. For example, his observations of a group influencing an individual's behaviour and expecting a sense of allegiance and identity above and beyond the individual's sense of self (2001: 81, 83) derive from Freud[104], and his comments on a group's trauma being reactivated by a dominating leader (2001: 84, 93) echo Anzieu.[105] However, Volkan's combination of trauma with large-group psychology takes his work beyond Freud and Anzieu and creates something truly original. His findings therefore deserve special attention.

To precis Volkan's findings, I have focused on his 2001 essay which encapsulates most of his important ideas, but I also refer in passing to some of his other work, as and when it clarifies elements of the 2001 essay.

i) Catastrophe and traumatised collective identity

Belonging to a large group of some kind – usually a nation, tribe or ethnic group – is common to all human beings, regardless of their location in time or geography (Volkan, 2014: 17). And an individual's sense of belonging to a large group forms an integral part of their 'core identity' – the elements most fundamental to the individual's self-image and self-

[104] In fact, Freud states the case more strongly. For Freud, the group influences the individual to the point of overriding the individual's free choice, with the intensity of collective emotion overwhelming the individual's critical faculties (1922: 6, 28). Similarly, Freud's argument that group dynamics are underpinned by a grasping for identity – by an oedipal desire for the mother and a simultaneous animosity and identifying with the father (1922: 60-71) – clearly inform Volkan's thesis that a large group will choose a leader they see as a father figure, idealising this leader even as they subconsciously resent him (2001: 81-82).

[105] According to Anzieu, the members of a group feel threatened and insecure in their identity without a 'dominating figure through the love of whom each member feels protected and united with the others' (1984: 121). A group depends on its leader and indeed cannot function without him, in the mode of a parent/child relationship (1984: 111). Of course, the danger inherent in this dependence on the leader is that a leader could easily abuse his position and manipulate his followers (1984: 132).

understanding (Volkan, 2001: 81).[106] Therefore, a catastrophe for the group is also a catastrophe for the individual. This is especially true where an enemy is responsible for the catastrophe in question, because a sense of 'sameness' draws a large group together, and any characteristics outside this sense of sameness tend to be projected onto a common enemy (Volkan, 2014: 25-26). A defeat at the hands of the common enemy is a defeat of the characteristics a group holds most dear by those they most emphatically reject.

'After experiencing a collective catastrophe inflicted by an enemy group, affected individuals are left with self-images similarly… *traumatised* by the massive event.' (Volkan, 2014: 23 [emphasis added]). The catastrophic event may itself traumatise the affected individuals, in the sense that its suddenness and violence are impossible for the individuals to immediately grasp and comprehend fully, leaving them in a state widely recognised as 'traumatised' by psychologists. But beyond this, the individuals' sense of self, and therefore the large group's collective sense of self, is also fundamentally disrupted. For this reason, Volkan describes the large group's sense of self as 'traumatised'.[107]

As a result of a disruption to its self-image, the large group may experience a range of consequences, including a sense of victimhood, humiliation and helplessness, survivor's guilt, a simultaneous demonising and envy of their oppressors, and a profound sense of mourning (2014: 23). A note of caution is wise here, though. Several of the consequences Volkan identifies are very common markers of trauma but he has not conclusively demonstrated that this trauma is due to a disruption in the large group's collective sense of self. Considering that

[106] Here, Volkan draws on Erikson's ideas of identity, combining them with Freud's thoughts on 'group psychology' and then considering how a crisis in the core identity of many individuals might have an impact on the large group as a whole (2001: 80-82).

[107] Volkan's use of this term is misleading and a little confusing, as it does not relate to 'trauma' as a set of diagnosable psychological symptoms. In this regard, he is in step with the concept of 'collective trauma' as distinct from 'psychological trauma', as argued by LaCapra (2001) and Alexander (2004a, 2004b). I explore this concept in chapter five, as it is tied very closely to collective memory.

events leading to a disruption of this kind tend to be sudden, violent and overwhelming, any 'trauma' experienced by the group cannot be separated from traumatic experiences arising from the event itself and cannot be attributed solely to an upheaval in the group's self-image.

ii) Passing on an unresolved sense of loss

Following an event devastating enough to traumatise an entire large group, this trauma is often passed on to the next generation. This involves not merely parents passing on their individual traumata to their children, but also the society as a whole perpetuating the unresolved loss and damage to its collective sense of identity. The generation directly affected by an experience of collective defeat, loss or humiliation will pass on 'the mental representation of the tragedies that have befallen the group' to the generation that follows (Volkan, 2001: 87). Significantly, Volkan also argues that, if the members of this following generation are also unable to fully come to terms with their group's losses, they will, in turn, pass on the trauma to the next generation and so on. Thus, a 'chosen trauma' is created (2001: 87-88).

Volkan illustrates his theory by referring to Serbia's defeat at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and its influence on the nation's collective consciousness for centuries afterwards.[108] At this battle, Serbia was routed by Turkey and its prince, Lazar, captured and executed. This defeat was devastating and highly traumatic to Serbia (2001: 90-91), to the extent that the nation was unable to fully come to terms with this collective trauma at the time. The Battle of Kosovo and the death of Lazar were therefore preserved in Serbia's collective memory and passed on to the next generation and the next.

[108] Volkan refers to the same case study in his 1996, 1998, 2003 and 2014 publications, as well as the 2001 article I am examining here.

The proposition that a group's unresolved sense of loss can be passed on indefinitely is highly significant. If this is indeed the case, it offers an answer to the above question of how many generations might be traumatised by their ancestors' experiences: the trauma will continue for as many generations as the group's sense of loss remains unresolved.

iii) A myth and a marker of identity

As it is passed on from generation to generation, a chosen trauma becomes a marker of identity for the affected large group (Volkan, 2001: 88). To belong to this group is to accept the burden of trauma from the event which devastated the group in the past and continues to overshadow it in the present. Volkan observes that the term 'chosen trauma' might seem unfair, giving the impression that individuals somehow choose to be traumatised and humiliated. However, the trauma is 'chosen' insofar as it represents 'a large group's unconscious "choice" to add a past generation's mental representation of an event to its own identity.' (2001: 88). (There remains the question of whether anything chosen unconsciously can ever be truly 'chosen', but that argument is probably just a matter of semantics.)

The Battle of Kosovo began to assume this function for Serbia. Throughout Serbia's subsequent history, tales of the battle were passed on, taking on the status of myth. It was commemorated through songs, icons and folk tales, with Lazar remembered as 'Christ-like… martyr, victim and tragic hero', reinforcing Serbia's sense of victimhood (2001: 91). The factual details of the battle were gradually forgotten, trumped by what was necessary for Serbia to remember, in order to reaffirm its collective identity. As Serbia became more bellicose and focused on national self-determination in the nineteenth century, their memory of the Battle of Kosovo evolved in order to reinforce those emerging aspects of the national

character. Previously remembered as a martyr, Lazar was gradually transformed into a 'hero' and 'avenger' in Serbia's collective memory (2001: 91).

Volkan's thoughts converge with Jan Assmann's[109], as he describes the chosen trauma in terms strikingly similar to Assmann's concept of cultural memory:

> *The historical truth about the event is no longer important for the large group*, but what is important is that through sharing the chosen trauma, members of the group are linked together. In other words, the chosen trauma becomes woven into the canvas of the ethnic or large-group tent. (2001: 88 [emphasis added]).

The literal historical events behind the trauma become obscured and the episode is remembered in such a way as to reinforce the large group's shared identity.[110] Recalling their mythologised past, including traumatising events, helps to bind a large group together, and to belong to the group is to take on this past.

iv) Reactivating the trauma

In times of threat, change or upheaval to a large group, its leader can revive and 'reactivate' a chosen trauma, so as to reinforce the large group's collective identity (Volkan, 2001: 88). Since large groups tend to choose leaders who reaffirm their shared identity, and to idealise such leaders once they have been chosen[111], the leader of a large group is in a position to exert a high degree of influence over the group. Appealing to the group's shared identity and reactivating a chosen trauma are therefore easily performed (2001: 82-84).

Serbia offers a powerful example of this phenomenon. During the late 1980s, Kosovan Serbs felt oppressed by the Muslim majority in the region; hence they perceived a threat to

[109] Although, somewhat surprisingly, Volkan does not appear to have been influenced by Assmann at all. Assmann is never referenced in Volkan's published works and he is entirely absent from the bibliographies.
[110] I will bracket off the concept of collective memory for now, to return to it in chapter five. It offers some fascinating perspectives on how trauma can affect a society but an extended discussion of the concept at this point would be likely to confuse the issue of chosen trauma.
[111] Volkan draws on Freud on this point, suggesting that a group turns its oedipal resentment and aggression towards a leader into loyalty, in the same way a son does towards his father (2001: 81-82).

their security and collective identity (2001: 92). In 1987, the Serbs were presented with an opportunity to express their grievances to their leader: Slobodan Milosevic, the then President of Yugoslavia. Milosevic was moved by their plight and became dedicated to the cause of Serb nationalism, following the meeting. In 1989, marking the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Lazar's body was brought back to Kosovo and Milosevic ensured it was taken on a tour of towns and villages, where it was greeted by crowds of mourners. He thus made a powerful appeal to Serbia's shared identity, reactivating the collective trauma of 600 years previously: 'Serbs began to feel that the defeat in Kosovo had occurred only yesterday, an outcome made far easier by the fact that the chosen trauma had been kept alive throughout the centuries.' (2001: 93). A time collapse was initiated.

When a chosen trauma is 'fully' reactivated within extremely stressful circumstances, the result is a 'time collapse', whereby the leader encourages connections between a past trauma and a present threat. In this way, the fears, expectations and anger related to the chosen trauma are brought into present, and the historical and contemporary adversaries are confused. Lingering desire for revenge and for regaining what the large group lost in the past becomes directed at the contemporary enemy (2001: 89).

Vowing not to allow Serbia to be defeated again as it was in 1389, Milosevic continued to stir up nationalist sentiments, including erecting a monument to commemorate the Battle of Kosovo, inscribed with Lazar's call to fight the Turks. Serbian rhetoric increasingly threatened the return of the Ottoman Turks, who became conflated in the national consciousness with Bosnian Muslims (2001: 93-94). By means of this time collapse, initiated by their leader, the chosen trauma from Serbia's past was brought vividly into its present, and the nation's fear, anger and desire for revenge was brought to bear on its contemporary

enemy. The subsequent ethnic cleansing and systematic rape of Bosnian Muslim women were typically sadistic outcomes of a traumatic time collapse (2001: 89).

v) Summary

The concept of chosen trauma is valuable because it highlights the enduring impact of a disaster on a society, even hundreds of years later. As the Serbian case study illustrates, an upheaval from the distant past can still feel (or be made to feel) extremely raw in the present. This seems in step with the above studies on transgenerational trauma passed on from a survivor parent to their child. What is more, taken together, these two phenomena give us good reason to take seriously the prospect of trauma from the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonia influencing the Yehud community, even a hundred years after the fact.

The stumbling block in Volkan's argument is his use of the word 'trauma'. In his understanding, 'trauma' seems to mean a collective sense of loss or a disturbance to a group's collective identity, rather than psychological trauma (as Herman articulates it). He is not alone in this regard. LaCapra (2001) and Alexander (2004a, 2004b) advance similar arguments, differentiating between 'psychological trauma' (the complex of clinical and psychological effects already explored at length within this thesis) and 'cultural trauma' (the effects of a disaster on a group's collective identity). I find this dichotomy confusing and misguided. The so-called 'cultural trauma' is in fact almost indistinguishable from 'collective memory', as outlined by Assmann and Halbwachs. I discuss this question in more depth in chapter five, as part of my exploration of collective memory and its relevance to trauma within the Reed Sea episode.

Nevertheless, this does not preclude a large group being influenced by an element of transgenerational collective trauma, in the conventional psychological sense. Volkan's use of the word 'trauma' might be confusing, but his arguments could still hold true for psychological trauma.

Transgenerational transmission in biblical studies

My thesis comes in the context of several existing studies of transgenerational trauma within biblical texts. Several of the prophetic books have already been associated with transgenerational trauma, and even the Deuteronomistic History as a whole may bear a traumatised watermark, deriving from the experiences of the Deuteronomist's parents and community.

Bible scholars have identified several particular characteristics of texts composed by the generations following the Judaean exiles: [112]

i) Sense of victimhood

Noting that a survivor may create 'secondary victimization and stigmatization' by passing on stories of trauma to his/her children (2004: 82), Morrow extrapolates that Judaean exiles would have passed on a sense of victimisation to their children, and that victimhood, rejection by their deity, and trauma would have become part of the shared identity of second-generation exiles (2004: 82). Regardless of how harrowing the exile and the fall of Jerusalem

[112] In my view, the final redaction and reshaping of the Pentateuch is most likely to have been composed by children of survivors from the fall of Jerusalem, but it is possible that grandchildren of survivors may have been involved. Notwithstanding this further removal from the generation directly affected by the traumatising event, the available clinical research leaves open the possibility that the grandchildren of survivors may be affected by transgenerational trauma, just as the children are.

were in reality, 'the narrative constructed around' the experience would have cemented this aspect of Judaean collective identity (2004: 82).

Morrow reaches this conclusion by means of comparative analogy; drawing on the results of psychological studies of modern day refugees. In particular, Morrow refers repeatedly to Guus van der Veer's studies, based on treatment of refugees in the Netherlands in the 1990s. Having established this model of psychological trauma among refugees, Morrow then transposes that model onto Judaean exiles in Babylonia, using Second Isaiah as a source of evidence as to the exiles' state of mind. Comparative analogy is a long-respected method of analysis within the social sciences, but van der Veer's refugees originate primarily from southeast Asia and Morrow offers no clear discussion of the culture and context from which those refugees came. This makes it harder to say to what extent the refugees' context is congruent with that of the Judaeans in exile. It weakens Morrow's argument.

Nevertheless, based on evidence from within the text of Isaiah, it seems reasonable to argue that the author's audience, largely second-generation exiles[113], appear to have exhibited: 'depression… low self-esteem… difficulties in task completion… and passivity' (2004: 82-83). The laments and 'proclamations of salvation' in Isa 41.8-20, 42.14-17, 43.1-7, 16-21ff emphasise the people's helplessness, victimhood and lack of agency (2004: 82-83).

Morrow is perhaps the earliest example of a Bible scholar dealing with transgenerational transmission. His essay would have been stronger if he had drawn clearer parallels between the comparative contexts of van der Veer's modern day refugees and the exiled Judaeans but, even so, he does enough to affirm that not only is transgenerational

[113] Morrow assumes a date of c540 B.C.E. for the composition of Second Isaiah. He also assumes that life expectancy for the exiles would have been around 40 years. Based on these twin assumptions, he concludes that few of the living exiles would themselves have been deported from Judah (2004: 82). It is difficult to refute this argument without detailed anthropological study of life expectancy in the ANE, which is beyond the purview of this thesis.

transmission a genuine phenomenon, it is applicable to the Hebrew Bible. In so doing, he helps lay the foundation for the other Bible scholars who have explored the subject since.

ii) Guilt and shame

An element of survivor's guilt can be seen in various biblical texts, especially the major prophets. In Isaiah, the people's depression and sense of victimhood is presented as a result of their guilt and shame. They are responsible for their own plight because of their sinfulness (Isa 42.24-25, 43.27-28, 44.22, 47.6ff) and shame has become bound up with their very identity (53.1-3) (Morrow, 2004: 84). The narratives of trauma, defeat and rejection passed on by the previous generation condemned the second-generation exiles to 'carry their parents' shame as those judged and rejected by YHWH.' (2004: 85). This self-blame and suffering is embodied in the suffering servant, as well as in the figures of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as Carr suggests (2014: 80-89).

What is more, a deep sense of guilt is also in evidence in the book of Exodus. Within Exodus, Israel is depicted as complaining, defeatist and recalcitrant: chosen by YHWH but without any quality that makes the people inherently better than any other nation. Indeed, Exodus 'seems to stress the unusually rebellious and obstinate character of Israel', and this character eventually drives YHWH to 'murderous rage' (Carr, 2014: 124-125). Israel is thus portrayed as being responsible for YHWH's anger and punishment (c.f. Exod 32.25-35).

iii) Expression in unrelated stories

Transgenerational trauma from the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile may have found expression within the Hebrew Bible, in oblique references or even in the guise of unrelated stories. Caruth proposes that a traumatic experience might be so overwhelming as to

be impossible to directly articulate, even in writing, and that the best a survivor might achieve is to tell a story about the experience without describing the event itself (1996: 27-29). For example, this trend can be seen in literary responses to the Hiroshima bomb, which are frequently imaginative rather than descriptive of literal events (Lifton, 1991: 408, 450). In the same way, it is possible that some biblical narratives, including the Reed Sea episode, might be a recapitulation of a traumatic event, expressed within an apparently unrelated story. And this may apply to the descendants of trauma survivors, as well as to survivors themselves, as Smith-Christopher mentions (2014: 237).

Several biblical narratives can be understood in this light. Daniel, Esther and Judith may well be fictional figures but their stories express significant experiences – particularly traumatising events – from the recent history of the authors' community, as well as from the authors' own lifetimes (Smith-Christopher, 2014: 237-238). Similarly, the book of Micah shows a sudden shift in theme and tone between chapters 3 and 4, which can be ascribed to an extended period of time elapsing between the two chapters being written. The very same trauma which informs the violence and upheaval of chapters 1-3 is still present in chapters 4-5, but the nature of the authors' inherited trauma did not permit them to describe the traumatising event directly: trauma lurks in the background of the text, shaping its theme and tone without the root of the trauma being apparent (2014: 237). Indeed, this might be an outworking of chosen trauma, in the mode outlined by Volkan, as much as of trauma passed on individually from parent to child (2014: 234).

Transgenerational trauma is difficult to detect in a piece of literature, exactly because the traumatising event is so often expressed indirectly (Smith-Christopher, 2014: 238). This makes its presence frustratingly difficult to prove. Certainly, Smith-Christopher has not conclusively proven that transgenerational trauma influenced the composition of Micah, nor

of Daniel, Esther or Judith, and it appears that conclusive proof is not his goal. His approach seems to be more investigative than conclusive. Beginning from a point of dissatisfaction with the often detached attitude of Bible scholars, Smith-Christopher seeks to redress the balance by taking seriously the likely psychological impact of violent and unsettling events in the recent past of biblical authors (2014: 229, 237-238). He adopts comparative analogies from twentieth century traumata and atrocities, mapping the impact of such events on their survivors onto similar events in the ANE, and applying insights from this exercise to the study of Micah, in particular (2014: 224-227). The outcome is a heuristic outline of how a trauma-informed reading of Micah would affect our understanding of the text.

Thus, it remains possible that the Hebrew Bible includes examples of transgenerational trauma, with the roots of these traumata expressed obliquely. But this is a plausible argument, not a proof, and can be no more than a plausible argument as long as the trauma influencing the text is latent rather than explicit. However, applying this theory to the Reed Sea narrative might still be a fruitful exercise. If we read the text in light of the theory (suspending questions over to what extent one can prove the influence of a latent trauma), we can then ask whether these results are in step with other studies of literature produced in the wake of a trauma. Taken in conjunction with less speculative markers of trauma, this will help us arrive at informed conclusions over the influence of trauma from the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile on the composition of the Reed Sea episode.

iv) Meaning making

This line of argument can be taken further. A biblical text might be not only an oblique manifestation of transgenerational trauma; it might be composed out of a desire to come to terms with that trauma and find meaning within it. As Claassens puts it: ‘Trauma

needs to be interpreted – past traumatic experiences must be reframed and organised in terms of some sort of meaningful narrative that may help to reconstitute a self' (2020a: 2). She examines several biblical texts in this light, including the story of Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah in Gen 30, arguing that such texts enable both the storyteller and the reader to recover from trauma, to heal, to become more resilient and to reframe their sense of self (2020a: 155-157).[114]

Taking this argument further, Janzen argues that the entire Deuteronomistic History bears the watermark of trauma from the fall of Jerusalem, and exists to help the authors' community come to terms with this trauma. The text places 'the siege, famine, mass death, destruction of Jerusalem, and forced migration to Babylon within an ethical framework that attempts to make sense of this trauma that the exilic[115] readers have undergone.' (2012: 3).

A traumatised narrative brings an experience of past trauma into the present and keeps it there. The trauma, a 'constantly repeated past' becomes inescapable in the present and preserved for the future (2012: 42).[116] But if that prospect seems oppressive, a traumatised narrative can be a positive force, forming and defining the affected community and enabling them, ultimately, to come to terms with the experience which traumatised them: 'traumatic narratives… can be reworked by the social group in which they are spoken in order to appropriate them into pre-existing communal narratives… to take an experience that is not believable or understandable… and rework it into something that is.' (2012: 42). So, as an

[114] Claassens begins from a slightly different standpoint from me. While I am arguing that Exod 13.17-15.21 manifests trauma experienced by its authors, Claassens focuses on trauma experienced by the characters within biblical narratives. Still, these characters themselves move towards healing and a clearer sense of meaning and identity, and Claassens seems to be arguing that readers whose experiences mirror those of the characters might find a trauma narrative useful for the same purposes.

[115] Janzen begins by implying that Dtr was composed and read during the Exile, but then suggests that the text was created by a child of survivors from the fall of Jerusalem (2012: 3-4). Perhaps he envisages DtrH being born in Babylon and still being there when he did his authorial work.

[116] Chapter five draws out the contrast between 'acting out' and 'working through' a trauma, and how working through can help to break the repetitive cycle of trauma.

extension of the idea that a traumatising event can be articulated through telling an unrelated story, existing narratives can be adapted to not only express traumatised pain but to make sense of it. Crafting a traumatised narrative can be an exercise in making meaning, helping a community to heal.

This meaning making is complicated, however. While Dtr as a whole constitutes a 'master narrative', outlining how Israel and Judah's apostasy forced YHWH to give them over to their enemies, in order to punish them and ultimately redeem them, there are moments within the text which clash with this neat and orderly explanation. At these moments, uncontrolled trauma intrudes into the master narrative. For example, Josiah is not rewarded for turning his nation back to YHWH, and Manasseh is not punished for his disobedience. Moses is punished for unspecified sin, while Joshua is not, although the reader has no reason to believe Joshua is any less guilty. Fidelity to YHWH is not rewarded, disobedience is not punished, and the deity seems inconsistent in whom he chooses to punish and pardon (2012: 62-63, 78-79). While DtrH seeks to explain the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile as the work of a just, righteous and all-powerful deity, these intrusions call that explanation into question (2012: 47, 59). While traumatised narratives can be bent into a shape which articulates a logical meaning behind the author's suffering, unprocessed and unassimilated trauma can still burst into the text, unbidden by the author, and subvert the text's overarching purpose.

Crucially, Janzen suggests that Dtr was composed by a descendent of survivors from the fall of Jerusalem, rather than survivors themselves. The author[117] would have been surrounded by family members and indeed a wider community who had experienced the destruction of Jerusalem, and would therefore have been profoundly affected by their trauma (2012: 4). The author would therefore have inherited trauma, from his family, his community

[117] He uses the singular form, apparently assuming there was only one author of Dtr.

or both, and this secondary trauma is likely to have manifested itself in the literature he created. Janzen therefore arrives at conclusions which echo Morrow and Smith-Christopher.

Difficulties arise with this hypothesis when Janzen begins to argue that, because trauma is often latent in survivors' offspring (and even in survivors themselves), trauma is not in those cases directly addressed by the literature affected individuals produce. Instead, trauma is evidenced by 'gaps or absences' in the text (2012: 5). If trauma is evidenced by an absence, this raises the question of how the reader can detect there is something missing. But allowing for that caveat, this hypothesis is illuminating. It demonstrates that both Dtr's master narrative and its intrusions can be ascribed to transgenerational trauma: the master narrative seeks to explain why the traumatising event took place; the intrusions manifest raw, unassimilated and enduring trauma. A biblical text can thus communicate trauma – even transgenerational trauma – through forging rational meaning and through cries of unresolved anguish.

v) Gaps in existing research

The application of transgenerational trauma to biblical texts is still in its infancy and, at this stage, there are key indicators of trauma which have not yet been commented upon as markers of transgenerational trauma within the Hebrew Bible. The most obvious examples of such symptoms are extreme and enduring fear, and anger and desire for revenge. However, these characteristics have both been noted within biblical texts as indicators of simple trauma. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that these same characteristics might indicate transgenerational trauma, depending on when the authors were alive and working.

Trauma will often cause extreme and enduring fear in a survivor. Indeed, this fear might even be described as 'speechless terror'. Psychologists (such as van der Kolk and van

der Hart [1995: 172] and Herman [1997: 33, 46]) and literary theorists (such as Caruth [1996: 29] and Des Pres [1973: 675, 678-681]) comment on how trauma survivors often experience extreme fear; fear which can be so overwhelming that the survivor is rendered simply incapable of describing those experiences. This speechless terror has been linked with the Hebrew Bible, too. O'Connor envisages this kind of terror within the book of Jeremiah, with its repeated references to fear and the prophet's apparent struggle to articulate what he has experienced (2011: 21-24).

More broadly, the Hebrew Bible as a whole has been described as affected by speechless terror. Although the fall of Jerusalem is described in several biblical accounts[118], the Hebrew Bible is notoriously silent on the subject of the Babylonian Exile. The Exile is 'a black hole in the biblical tradition' as Carr puts it (2014: 74). Since the Bible is silent on the realities of life in Babylon, Carr argues that this life must have been traumatic to the point of defying description, creating 'speechless terror' in those subjected to it (2014: 74-75). Therefore, although this experience was shattering to the exiles, including those who (in Carr's view) composed the majority of the Hebrew Bible, this trauma remained a tacit influence; never directly addressed (2014: 75).

This argument has several weaknesses. Firstly, we cannot assume the Exile was inherently traumatic, as I discuss above. Secondly, this proposition of 'speechless terror' seems to rely on an argument from silence. And thirdly, if descriptions of the Exile are absent from the Hebrew Bible, this may have been for any one of several possible reasons: for example, its authors simply might not have felt the Exile would be interesting or important for their readers, or they may have wished to directly erase the Exile from the nation's collective memory by striking it from the official national history.

[118] The event itself is described in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and its aftermath in Lamentations.

Profound fear and even speechless terror are assuredly common markers of trauma and can be transmitted to the children of survivors. However, there is a gap in the existing research in terms of presenting a case for a biblical text being influenced by extreme fear arising from transgenerational trauma. And the argument for speechless terror within the Hebrew Bible, even on the part of individuals directly affected by traumatising events, is not yet convincing.

Perhaps the clearest gap of all within the application of transgenerational trauma to biblical texts is attention to anger and desire for revenge. Extreme anger is well-documented in patients seeking psychological help in the aftermath of traumatic events (c.f. Herman, 1997: 189), and is a common feature of survivor literature (Tal, 1996: 7), not to mention biblical texts supposedly composed by trauma survivors (Garber, 2011: 320). But there seems to be a gap in research, in terms of anger arising from transgenerational trauma, within a biblical narrative.

I am surprised that this marker of trauma is not mentioned in Morrow's study of transgenerational trauma in Second Isaiah. The book contains passages which could well be interpreted as expressing rage on the part of the writer, most notably the vitriolic account of Babylon's destruction in Isaiah 47. I can only assume that, in a short article, Morrow preferred to focus on symptoms of trauma which he felt came across more strongly than anger in Second Isaiah. Or perhaps he envisages rage as being an extension and outworking of the survivor's sense of guilt and shame (2004: 84-85). Nevertheless it seems peculiar that he has omitted any mention of anger or desire for revenge from his essay.

vi) Summary

Some valuable and insightful work has already been done in applying the concept of

transgenerational trauma to biblical texts. At the same time, there is still fertile ground for exploring further how the Hebrew Bible may have been influenced by transgenerational trauma. My study of Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 builds on the research already published, while also touching on markers of trauma not previously associated with transgenerational transmission with regard to a biblical text.

Implications for the Reed Sea episode

Despite the significant length of time between the fall of Jerusalem and the likely date for the final reshaping of the Reed Sea story, it is very much a live possibility that trauma from this event influenced the authors and their text. We have seen that the children and even grandchildren of survivors often suffer from PTSD and other psychiatric disorders, and we must take seriously the prospect that the authors of the Pentateuch experienced transgenerational trauma of the same kind. We cannot know whether this trauma was the outcome of biological transmission, psychodynamics, pervading parental anxiety, abuse arising from a dysfunctional family environment or a combination of these factors. But that is almost immaterial. Their parents' and relatives' suffering and trauma must have had an effect on the authors of the Pentateuch. Whatever its precise cause, they are likely to have suffered from survivor's child syndrome.

Moreover, the authors may have inherited a 'chosen trauma' arising from the shock and upheaval suffered by their whole community, as a result of the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonia. As the Reed Sea episode forms part of the book of Exodus, an articulation of Israel's origins, it would hardly be surprising if it included an expression of the shared pain in the community's recent past and indeed an uncontrollable intrusion of their shared trauma. As the returning exiles settled in Yehud and sought to reaffirm their collective

identity through a written record of their shared memories[119], a story of a crushing victory over a foreign oppressor would have helped them reinforce their identity as chosen, set apart and protected by YHWH. Perhaps, in this way, Egypt functions as a proxy for Babylon in Exodus 13-15 and through this proxy, Israel's desire for revenge against their recent oppressors is, to a degree, fulfilled. This would go some way to explaining the scale of the violence wreaked against Israel's enemies by its deity within the Reed Sea episode.

The model of time collapse proposed by Volkan does not fit perfectly in this context. It is not impossible that the Reed Sea episode in Exodus is based on an ancient myth and that the authors intended to portray their enmity against Babylon in light of that myth, but a time collapse typically requires a charismatic leader to reactivate a trauma from a society's distant past, and no such charismatic leader is obvious within the Yehud community.[120] Although Exodus 13-15 presents Moses as a national hero comparable to Serbia's Prince Lazar, Yehud has no clear equivalent to Slobodan Milosevic.

Notwithstanding this, the concept of chosen trauma may still be applicable to the Reed Sea episode, insofar as it highlights the text's potential influence by the collective trauma of the community in which it was produced. For the Yehud community, seeking to articulate and preserve its sense of shared identity, a collective trauma could have offered a rallying point; a marker of identity of the kind Volkan proposes.

Thus, if Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 shows indicators of trauma, these indicators can reasonably be ascribed to trauma directly experienced by the authors of P, to transgenerational trauma inherited by the scribes who reshaped the text in the Persian period, or to a chosen trauma of the shock and upheaval suffered by the whole community. In chapter four, I

[119] Chapter five explores the connection between trauma and collective memory, and how this intersection might have influenced the content and purpose of Exod 13.17 – 15.21.
[120] It is possible that Ezra might fulfil this role, but there is not a great deal of biblical evidence to support this. See chapter 4, *ii) Anger and desire for revenge*, point f).

highlight specific elements within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 which could be designated as markers of trauma. Based on these markers, I demonstrate that the Reed Sea episode bears similarities to other examples of survivor literature and that there is thus good reason to believe it belongs within the same category. Conclusive proof of transgenerational trauma within any text remains elusive. However, the context of the Reed Sea episode's composition and the enlightening clinical research into the nature of transgenerational trauma, when combined with markers of trauma within the text itself, form a compelling case for transgenerational trauma influencing the Reed Sea episode.

Chapter 4 – Reading Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 through the lens of trauma

Building on the foregoing exploration of trauma and its relevance to the composition of the Reed Sea story, this chapter will focus on a close reading of Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 and highlight elements of the text which display common markers of trauma. I will first identify these trauma markers, drawing on six common features of survivor literature created in the wake of modern traumatic events. Clearly, these markers of trauma cannot simply be lifted from a modern context and dropped, unquestioningly, into an ancient one, so I will support this approach by showing how and why an example of modern trauma – the Holocaust – represents a suitable comparative analogy to the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonian. Next, I will ground my study in existing work which applies trauma theory to the study of the Pentateuch, especially the book of Exodus. And the body of this chapter will explore where each of the six markers of trauma I identify are visible in the text of Exod 13.17 – 15.21.

It would be unrealistic to expect proof positive that the authors of Exod 13-15 were traumatised and that the narrative they produced is irrefutably an example of survivor literature. However, it is feasible to demonstrate that elements of this text bear striking similarities to modern survivor literature, and that we therefore have grounds for reading the text in the same light as these modern works. This is what I aim to achieve in this chapter.

I am keenly aware of the pitfalls of being led astray by an interesting and novel theory in spite of a lack of evidence to support it, so I will distance myself from my hypothesis as far as possible and try to avoid confirmation bias in my argument. I will also keep in mind that trauma is merely one of several possible explanations for the form and content of Exod 13-15, and I will present an outline of some of these alternative explanations within the conclusion to this chapter.

Markers of trauma within survivor literature

Survivor literature is disparate in terms of genre, writing style and even content, but these disparate works share some key characteristics. I outlined these characteristics at length in chapter one so will not cover the same ground again here. A brief summary should suffice:

i) Guilt and shame

Survivors of traumatic events often describe a sense of guilt and shame, however undeserved this might be. Guilt and shame can be seen in many examples of modern survivor literature (Des Pres, 1973: 678; Lifton, 1991: 35, 489), not to mention biblical texts which can also be categorised as survivor literature (Garber, 2011: 319; Morrow, 2004: 84).

ii) Anger and desire for revenge

As Herman (1997: 189), for example, has observed, rage and revenge fantasy are common in recovering trauma victims. This desire for revenge against the group or individual responsible for a trauma can be seen in survivor literature, too. The act of depicting traumatic experiences is often underpinned by profound anger (Tal, 1996: 7) and several exilic biblical texts, especially Ezekiel, seem to express the authors' desire for revenge against their enemies (see e.g. Garber, 2011: 320).

iii) The imperative to bear witness; the impossibility of doing so

The great majority of survivor literature wrestles with the simultaneous imperative for the survivor to bear witness and a sense of the inadequacy of any words one could use to do so. Survivor literature is first and foremost the product of a survivor's determination to bear

witness to what they have experienced (Des Pres, 1973: 668-669), but the scale of the suffering experienced by the survivor (and their community) makes language insufficient to describe this experience (1973: 675, 678-681).

Within this characteristic of survivor literature, I am particularly intrigued by the works which seek to communicate a traumatic experience without directly describing the event which caused the trauma. Caruth suggests that because the traumatic event is beyond description, attempting to describe it begins to erode its reality, and that, in response to this, a survivor can sometimes best communicate his or her experience by telling a story unrelated to the traumatic event (1996: 27-29).

iv) Other-worldly language

If conventional language seems inadequate to convey the scale and gravity of a traumatic experience, something more grandiose, more sublime, may seem more fitting to the survivor. Indeed, depictions of traumatic experiences often seem to adopt a quasi-religious tone (see e.g. Des Pres, 1973: 671). And one 'A-bomb writer' laments that 'past literary methods… are inadequate for dealing with the A-bomb' (quoted in Lifton, 1991: 400). If a profound trauma is inherently 'other', inherently 'strange' (Felman and Laub, 1992: 7), then language which is similarly 'other' might be necessary to depict it.

v) Extreme and enduring fear

Experiences of trauma are frequently associated with extreme fear. The *International Classification of Diseases* identifies 'overwhelming emotions such as fear or horror' (2018: online) which often accompany traumatic nightmares or flashbacks. A trauma survivor can experience profound fear without clear association to any specific stimulus (van der Kolk and

van der Hart, 1995: 172). Indeed, 'intense fear' can be symptomatic of PTSD (Herman, 1997: 33) and a survivor will often restrict or alter their behaviour to help 'control their pervasive fear' (1997: 46).

My survey of survivor literature in general has not identified extreme and enduring fear as a marker of this kind of literature. However, this aspect of trauma has been accepted by several Bible scholars who apply trauma theory to biblical texts (see e.g. Carr, 2011b: 295-297; Garber, 2013: 425-426; O'Connor, 2011: 21; 2002: 3-6). So, if Exodus 13-15 is indeed underpinned by trauma, it seems sensible to ask whether this trauma might manifest within the text as fear.

vi) Learned helplessness

This criterion does not appear in my earlier list of markers of survivor literature, as it is not widely attested as characteristic of survivor literature. However, although he seems to be a lone voice in arguing for it, Morrow's suggestion that the exiled Judaeans exhibited learned helplessness is an intriguing one (2004: 80, 83-84). If the Judaeans depicted in Second Isaiah – second generation exiles – can be described as exhibiting learned helplessness as a result of the trauma inherited from their parents' displacement to Babylonia, the same may be true of the second or third generation exiles responsible for the final reshaping of Exodus 13-15. It would be a stretch to apply this characteristic to survivor literature in general but Morrow has raised important questions over whether learned helplessness might represent a common Judaean reaction to the trauma of displacement. If this is the case, learned helplessness might be observed in biblical texts other than Second Isaiah.

These are the six markers of trauma[121] against which I will measure the Reed Sea episode. If these markers are present in the text, this does not necessarily mean that the text should be categorised as survivor literature, but it will make this idea more plausible and it will justify further discussion of it.

The Holocaust as a comparative analogy for the fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile

It is wise to be cautious about applying a modern theoretical framework to an ancient culture. Psychological trauma was only mentioned as a possibility in the early twentieth century (c.f. Freud, 1922: 19) and it was as late as 1980 before Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was finally included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Working backwards from there and discerning trauma in Judaean exiles is a slippery business.

That said, this exercise is justified, as long as we can demonstrate that one or more modern traumata represent a comparative analogy to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the accompanying displacement to Babylonia. As I have outlined in chapters one and three, trauma has been convincingly associated with many modern events and the literature created by their survivors, including: the Hiroshima bomb; combat in the first and second World Wars, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan; war crimes committed by Islamic State and insurrectionists in Sierra Leone; and countless sexual assaults. Given the nature of siege warfare and the likely behaviour of Babylonian soldiers towards their defeated enemies, there is a case to be made for each of these events being comparable to the experiences of the

[121] In chapter one, I also mention a feeling of being watched as a possible marker of survivor literature. However, this feature may be as much due to colonial oppression as to trauma and only Smith-Christopher (2011) seems to notice this feature in a biblical text. Furthermore, there is little evidence of a sense of being watched within Exod 13.17 – 15.21. 13.17 suggests that YHWH stands aloof from both Israel and Egypt, and 14.24 portrays him 'looking down' on the Egyptian camp, in order to throw it into confusion. But this is the full extent of support for a sense of being watched within the text.

inhabitants of Jerusalem. However, I contend that the Holocaust is an especially close and appropriate modern analogy for the events of 586 B.C.E., for the following reasons:

i) Both experiences included destruction, death and threats of death

The Holocaust constituted the eradication of nearly six million Jews: an utterly horrific death toll.[122] A sustained programme of mass shootings, pogroms, destruction of property and deportations to concentration camps constituted a genocide against Europe's Jewish population. Before an individual was themselves displaced to a concentration camp, it was likely that they would already have heard of extreme violence in other areas and therefore felt threatened with death at the prospect of a similar attack on their own community. In addition, many of those imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto (for example) witnessed the removal of friends and relatives, knowing they were bound for extermination (Adelson and Lapides, 1989: 319-323). Numerous survivors of the camps also report witnessing or hearing of the deaths of family members.

Similarly, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, under siege from the Babylonians, experienced a protracted period under threat of death and losing loved ones, culminating in a rout at their enemies' hands. As outlined at more length in chapter three, biblical accounts make it clear that this rout included prominent military and political leaders being put to death (2 Kings 25.18-21) and the city plundered (25.13-17), and suggest widespread slaughter and destruction in the process (2 Chron 36.17-19). It is also significant that Lamentations envisages the Babylonians as agents of YHWH's wrath, proclaiming: 'The Lord has

[122] Several other marginalised groups experienced persecution and extermination at the hands of the Nazis, concurrent with the Holocaust. For example, Slavs, political dissidents, the disabled and homosexuals were all murdered in huge numbers. While not wishing to belittle the egregious persecution against these other groups, I am focusing on the Holocaust itself for the purposes of this study, as it offers a comparable analogy to the siege and fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E..

destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob… he has killed all in whom we took pride… He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds' (Lam 2.2-5). The available archaeological evidence seems to support these accounts, too (see e.g. Stager, 1996; Stern, 2004: 274; Blenkinsopp, 2002a: 187).

In view of Assyria's well-attested brutality against their vanquished enemies – apparently including impaling and flaying, mutilation and murdering children (Bertman, 2003: 267-268; Eph'al, 2009: 49-53; Grayson, 1976: 123-124) – we can hypothesise that Babylon may have adopted a similar level of violence against Jerusalem. Admittedly, there is little direct evidence from Babylon itself to support this hypothesis but, even if Babylon's treatment of Jerusalem was not this barbaric, the city's experience of the siege and its aftermath would still have been utterly harrowing. The inhabitants would have faced a constant threat of death for as long as the siege lasted. Once the city fell, the Babylonians' looting and pillaging is likely to have included widespread sexual violence (Vikman, 2005: 21-23, 29), and there would inevitably have been killing and maiming, even if we make a conservative estimate about the numbers of victims. The combination of prolonged threat to life, witnessing the deaths of loved ones, destruction of property and sexual violence is likely to have been enough to traumatise the Jerusalemites profoundly.

ii) Both experiences included scarcity of food and resources

Conditions in the concentration camps and ghettos were uniformly brutal. In both contexts, Jews were imprisoned, forced to live in impossibly overcrowded spaces and deprived of essential resources such as sanitation and heating. Deaths from hypothermia were common (Adelson and Lapides, 1989: 94-95). Disease was rife. Food was in critically short supply (1989: 92) with residents of the ghettos limited to around 250 calories per day.

The Judaeans, isolated from the rest of the country by the surrounding Babylonian army, were also cut off from sources of food. And the protracted length of this siege (eighteen months, according to 2 Kings 2.2-3,) would have been designed to starve the Judaeans into submission. 2 Kings 25.3 reports a severe famine as a result and Lamentations suggests that food was so scarce as to provoke the trade of treasures for food, and even cannibalism (Lam 1.11, 2.20). (The reference to cannibalism may owe as much to classic tropes of ANE lament as to historical reality, however [see Eph'al, 2009: 61-62, 130-131].)

Not many biblical scholars or archaeologists comment specifically on food scarcity within besieged Jerusalem but Middlemas (2009: 175) and Seevers (2013: 256-258) are among those who do, and siege warfare is generally designed to starve an enemy into surrendering. It therefore seems reasonable to give some credence to the biblical accounts of famine, even if we assume a certain amount of poetic hyperbole in Lamentations.

iii) Both experiences included forced displacement

The displacement of European Jews by the Nazis is well documented. A great many Jews were, in fact, displaced twice: first from their homes to ghettos in cities and large towns, and then from those ghettos to concentration camps.

It seems very likely that some survivors of the siege of Jerusalem were also forcibly displaced. As Oded (1979: 26) and Stager (1996) both note, Babylon routinely conducted deportations of vanquished adversaries. Biblical accounts are united in attesting to large-scale deportations from Judah to Babylonia, although they differ on the numbers of people exiled. While Jeremiah's account sees 4,600 Judaeans removed to Babylon across three separate deportations (Jer 52.30), 2 Kings claims as many as 10,000 were exiled in an initial deportation (2 Kgs 24.14) with 'the rest of the people' deported later (25.11).

It is not surprising, then, that biblical scholars also differ on the extent of the Exile. For example, Albertz envisages 20,000 Judaeans lost through a combination of war and displacement and thus a 'severe bloodletting' for Judah (2003: 90) but Barstad claims that the majority of the population of Judah would have remained in the land, with enough social and religious leaders to constitute a 'functioning society' (2003: 4).[123] Still, scholars seem to agree that there was at least one mass deportation of vanquished Judaeans, even if that deportation was limited to the societal elite.

Furthermore, even if we follow Barstad and Blenkinsopp in accepting a conservative estimate of the numbers of survivors exiled to Babylonia, we can still postulate that many more might have been displaced within Judah. Barstad (2003: 8) interprets the available archaeological evidence as indicative of a large number of small settlements within Judah, established by those who fled Jerusalem. Similarly, Blenkinsopp concludes that significant numbers of survivors would have 'retreated to one or other of the numerous places of refuge with which the country is liberally provided, to emerge once the dust had settled' (2002a: 181). Thus, if we assume that Jeremiah's figure of 4,600 exiles to Babylonia is more plausible

[123] Scholars differ sharply in their views on this question, largely because, as Blenkinsopp acknowledges (2002a: 180), there is simply not enough data available to draw hard and fast conclusions. Some attempt to extrapolate Nebuchadnezzar's customary level of aggression against enemy cities, based either on the archaeological remains of other cities attacked by Babylon (e.g. Ashkelon; see Stager [1996]) or on the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom, as a comparative analogy (c.f. Albertz, 2003: 88-90). Examination of other Judaean settlements can yield insights into how populous these settlements were, and when they were inhabited, thus suggesting how many (if any) Jerusalemites might have migrated there in the wake of the fall of the city (Barstad [2003: 6-8], Blenkinsopp [2002a: 179-181] and Lipschits [2003: 323-328] all favour this approach). Of course, the Hebrew Bible itself can be and is used as a source to inform this discussion; especially the passages from Jeremiah and 2 Kings which give figures for the numbers of people exiled (Bright [2000: 343-344] is among those who begin with the biblical text and then look for evidence to 'fill the gaps'). All of these approaches involve at least an element of guesswork, though. We can say with confidence that thousands of Judaeans were taken into exile, but we cannot say how many thousands with equal confidence. We can acknowledge that the Babylonian army is likely to have been brutal in its attack on Ashkelon, but it does not necessarily follow that it would also have been brutal in its attack on Jerusalem. It seems likely that survivors from Jerusalem might have escaped to other, smaller settlements within Judah, but we can only speculate on exactly how many would have done so.

than the 10,000+ in 2 Kings, it is likely that many more were internally displaced within Judah, as a result of the sack of Jerusalem.

iv) Both experiences affected whole communities

While many experiences can traumatise individuals, the Holocaust and the fall of Jerusalem were collective traumata, profoundly influencing entire communities. The magnitude of the devastation caused by the Holocaust makes it utterly unique: a colossal and extraordinary crime with repercussions that reach far beyond its direct victims. As Laub and Allard express it:

> The Holocaust exists both inside and outside history. It exists as part of the world's history… yet it exists also as a challenge to our understanding of history, to any belief in progress or civilization… It is a crime… whose repercussions in the lives of survivors and their children, on the future of the world itself, continue to be spelled out today. The Holocaust exists as the unassimilable core of Western history. (2002: 800)

Thus, the Holocaust not only casts a dark and enduring shadow over its survivors. It looms large over their children and even over the whole of Western society. The Holocaust represents a rupture in history itself.

In chapter three, I explored transgenerational trauma: how a legacy of trauma can be passed on from a survivor to their children. This kind of transmission is common in the children of Holocaust survivors. To effect any kind of escape from this trauma, a child must make a conscious effort to form their own identity through 'an active claiming of one's own life, of one's own place' (Laub and Allard, 2002: 808).

Just as the Holocaust is still – quite understandably – intrinsic to the Jewish collective psyche and possibly even to Western society, the exile to Babylonia was remembered and grieved for generations after the fact. Biblical reflections on the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath feature both a harrowing individual outpouring of grief at the extent of the

destruction (Lamentations[124]), and survivors' corporate lament at being torn away from their home city and its Temple (c.f. Psalm 79, 137). Even Second Isaiah, probably written in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem and addressed to second generation exiles, depicts the exiled community as 'a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons' (Isa 42.22), as Morrow observes (2004: 82). This would suggest that the Judaeans' collective experience of destruction, ruin and death at the hands of their enemies remained vivid for decades afterwards and influenced the community's shared sense of identity, even when the generation who directly experienced this trauma were dead and gone. As the novelist William Faulkner puts it: 'The past is not dead. It is not even past.'

It must be acknowledged that the comparison between the Holocaust and the fall of Jerusalem is not perfect. The Holocaust was a genocide: an attempted eradication of an entire people group, motivated purely by their ethnic identity. The fall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Exile were the outcomes of a strategic military campaign, rather than an attempt to exterminate the Judaeans specifically. While the Holocaust led to the deaths of an estimated six million people, the Babylonian campaign against Judah was much more limited in scale. And relating to this, twentieth century technology made it possible for the Nazis to enact murder on a truly industrial scale, while this technology was obviously not available to the Babylonians.

Notwithstanding these differences, the siege and fall of Jerusalem can be compared fairly to the Holocaust, in terms of the enforced displacement of large groups of people, the brutality of the conditions involved, and the breadth and longevity of its effects. Therefore, just as trauma is rightly ascribed to numerous survivors of the Holocaust (by Felman and Laub [1992], Krystal [1995] and others), there are grounds for believing the survivors of the

[124] Assuming Lamentations refers specifically to the fall of Jerusalem. See point *ii)*, above.

fall of Jerusalem would also have been traumatised. If much of the literature produced in the wake of the Holocaust is categorised as 'survivor literature', it is reasonable to investigate whether literature produced following the Exile might also be categorised in this way.

Existing studies applying trauma theory to the Pentateuch

As we have already seen, trauma-informed reading of the Hebrew Bible is a growing field within biblical studies, with Garber (2011, 2013, 2015), Janzen (2012) and Smith-Christopher (2002, 2011) making particularly helpful contributions to this area of study. This body of work has included trauma-informed studies of pentateuchal texts. For example, O'Connor (2016) has shown how trauma may have played a part in shaping the text of Genesis, and Claassens (2020a) has drawn illuminating parallels between several narratives from Genesis and modern trauma literature.

Trauma has already been associated with the study of Exodus, too, with Aiton Birnbaum (a psychologist rather than a Hebrew Bible specialist) attempting to show where collective trauma and PTSD are visible within Exodus and Numbers (2008: 536-543).[125] There are a number of issues with Birnbaum's paper, but his association of Exodus with trauma at least adds weight to my own thesis of a traumatic influence to Exod 13-15. The narrative of slavery and persecution in the early chapters of Exodus is, Birnbaum claims, 'replete with trauma' (2008: 536-537) and the ten plagues and Reed Sea narratives represent the 'traumatic climax' (2008: 538) of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt. Following these multiple traumatic events, the Israelites experience further dramatic upheaval through a

[125] Birnbaum understands a traumatic event as 'an unusual or shocking incident subjectively experienced as an uncontrollable threat to survival, often involving violence and major life consequences' (2008: 534) and adopts the *DSM-IV* criteria for diagnosing PTSD, including an intense emotional reaction, intrusion, arousal, numbing and avoidance of traumatic stimuli (2008: 534). I myself draw on this definition extensively, as part of this thesis, so I have no issue with Birnbaum's understanding of trauma. However, his application of this understanding to the biblical text is problematic.

disease epidemic, prolonged warfare and the death of their leader (2008: 538-539). (Birnbaum appears to take Exodus and Numbers – and indeed all narrative sections of the Hebrew Bible – as literal historical accounts.)

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Moses shows signs of strain. Birnbaum goes as far as to claim, 'the biblical text seems to indicate that Moses exhibited a number of individual post-traumatic symptoms' (2008: 540). Frustratingly, he does not elucidate exactly what symptoms Moses exhibits, simply stating that these symptoms are 'presented elsewhere' (2008: 540), presumably in his unpublished paper, 'Posttraumatic stress reactions among leaders: Moses and the Peor affair'. Indeed, Birnbaum hypothesises that Israel as a nation suffered collective trauma, deriving from their adverse experiences. To support his claim, he uses biblical references in a literal and uncritical way, referring to the Israelites' 'crying and helplessness', 'abandonment and isolation', social violence and later intrusive recollections of the Peor plague (c.f. Deuteronomy 4, Joshua 22) as indicative of trauma (2008: 540-541).

Unfortunately, there are significant problems with Birnbaum's conclusions. Few of the behaviours he ascribes to trauma are widely agreed as indicative of trauma by psychologists. The Israelites' violence could perhaps be conflated with the rage and desire for revenge common in survivor literature, and isolation (emotional detachment and self-limitation in order to avoid exposing oneself to further trauma) is indeed common in trauma survivors (Herman, 1997: 43, 46). But the Israelites' weeping at the mass death at Peor (Numbers 25.6)[126] is just as likely to be an expression of collective grief as of trauma in its truest sense, and I can find nothing in this account to suggest the traumatised 'helplessness' that Birnbaum claims is present in the text (2008: 540). Furthermore, the Israelites' later recollections of

[126] Not Numbers 24.6, as Birnbaum states (2008: 540).

Peor seem to be deliberate acts of remembrance rather than examples of traumatic memories intruding into their consciousness.[127]

Finally, Birnbaum's conclusions are underpinned by an assumption that the biblical account is strictly historical. The Israelites could only have been traumatised by the events within the narrative if those events really did happen, exactly as the biblical account relates. Scholars who, like me, remain sceptical of the historicity of Exodus, are likely to see this as a fundamental flaw in Birnbaum's argument.

I would argue for an alternative understanding of trauma within the text. Just as O'Connor sees the disasters, famines and upheaval in Genesis as mirroring the experiences of exiled Judaeans (2016: 307-309), the depictions of death, disease, violence and oppression included within Exodus and Numbers may be manifestations of the authors' own trauma. Survivor literature is characterised by a simultaneous imperative to bear witness to the traumatising event and impossibility of doing so. Faced with this tension within themselves, authors will sometimes tell an unrelated story as a means of depicting the event which traumatised them. In this way, the events within Exodus and Numbers might convey trauma from the authors' own past. Indeed, the events of Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 do exactly that.

Although I cannot accept Birnbaum's conclusions, his work is valuable insofar as it highlights the possibility of a traumatic influence on Exodus and Numbers. My own study builds on his by suggesting where this influence derives from and illustrating where it might be observed in a different passage within the book of Exodus.

[127] See Caruth (1996: 4-11) for more detail on traumatic intrusion as a symptom of PTSD.

How and where markers of survivor literature are visible in Exod 13.17 – 15.21

Thus far, I have established that there is good reason for believing the fall of Jerusalem and displacement to Babylonia to be highly traumatic for those who experienced them, and that this trauma influenced the authors of the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses. I will now highlight specific features of the text which suggest a traumatic influence. Evidence of trauma, in the form of common markers of survivor literature, can be seen in the following verses[128]:

i) Guilt and shame

a) 14.15 – This verse represents a textual difficulty – an apparent non sequitur from 14.14, in which YHWH rebukes Moses, without any obvious provocation: '"Why are you crying out to me?"'. In a manuscript variant, Syr adds 'and Moses prayed to the Lord' to the end of 14.14, apparently to explain YHWH's rebuke of Moses (Propp, 1999: 468), but this is a simple insertion and does not appear in any other MSS.

Several commentators on Exodus notice YHWH's short temper, but they can only speculate on what prompts him to rebuke Moses in this verse. Some see Moses as representative of his people and YHWH therefore attributing the 'crying out' to him (e.g. Alter 2004: 393) and directing a 'reproachful question' at Moses (Noth, 1962: 113).[129] Others infer that Moses shares the people's doubts and transmits them to YHWH, or is 'scolded' for reporting the people's discontent to YHWH (e.g. Fretheim, 1991: 157; Propp, 1999: 479). Alexander believes that Moses' own cry is unreported in the text and that YHWH 'challenges' Moses for his lack of action (2017: 277). And Brueggemann proposes

[128] For this analysis of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, I refer to my own translation of the text, which can be found in Appendix 1.
[129] Similarly, Sarna envisages YHWH addressing Moses as the leader and representative of all Israel (1991: 73) but he does not comment on whether YHWH's question to Moses might constitute a rebuke.

that YHWH's rebuke is aimed at the Israelites rather than Moses himself, because of their grumbling and lack of faith in vv11-12 (1994: 794).[130] All of these arguments seem speculative: there is no obvious explanation for YHWH's outburst.

Both Fretheim and Propp appear to base their assumptions of a divine rebuke on the abruptness of the shift between vv14 and 15, which lends an impression of suddenness to YHWH's question. The Hebrew verb itself (אמר) translates simply as 'said' and offers no clues on what tone YHWH adopts. Does he ask Moses in bewilderment why he is crying out? In sympathy? As a gentle but firm challenge to his lack of faith? The sudden break between vv14 and 15 may be the best clue available on the subject. As an adherent to the documentary hypothesis, Propp suggests that this break may be due to a join between fragments of different source documents.[131] But on the same page, Propp speculates that the redactor might have let this 'unevenness' stand, in order to suggest hidden discontent on Moses' part and a rebuke of this discontent from YHWH (1999: 479).

Trauma theory offers an alternative answer to this question. As Lifton perceptively notes, a trauma survivor's guilt is most often 'death guilt': that is, it derives from having survived an experience which claimed others' lives, and from the survivor's helplessness to prevent those deaths (1980: 118). Survivor guilt can therefore be said to result from feelings of helplessness and passivity.

YHWH's sharp rebuke could be ascribed to the Israelites' passivity and inaction in a moment of crisis (see e.g. Alexander, 2017: 277). Narratives composed in the wake of traumatic events often feature passive protagonists who 'fail[ed] to exert control over

[130] Meyers implies that YHWH speaks sharply to gain Moses' attention and focus him on the task at hand, but acknowledges that the manner in which YHWH goes about this 'may seem impatient' (2005: 115).
[131] Childs (1976: 220-221), Noth (1962: 105-106) and Durham (1987: 183-184) all postulate that verses 14 and 15 might belong to different sources, but do not offer this as an explanation for the suddenness of YHWH's question.

events', and give a 'sense of being overwhelmed by unjust force', as Jeffrey Alexander observes (Alexander, 2004b: 226). He notices this trend particularly in reference to literature influenced by the Holocaust, and the same appears to be true here. Faced with the onrushing Egyptian army, the Israelites are 'unarmed and defenceless' (Alexander, 2017: 268). Meyers expresses the same thought more colourfully, describing the Reed Sea narrative as 'the rescue of a motley and dispirited group of powerless refugees from the well-equipped army of a mighty imperial state' (2005: 115).

Helpless and with no control over what is happening around them, they can only cry out to YHWH and blame Moses for their impending deaths (vv10-12). It could be argued that 'crying out' is, in and of itself, an active response to a crisis, but I would counter that the Israelites' cry is an acknowledgement of their own helplessness and their reliance on the deity to act on their behalf. It is interesting that 'Why are you crying out to me?' is immediately followed by 'Tell the Israelites to *move on*' (emphasis added).

This sense of helplessness can be attributed to the authors' trauma, and the rebuke put into YHWH's mouth by the authors of the text may reflect their own self-blame and their frustration with their compatriots for their passivity in failing to prevent the deaths of loved ones during or soon after the siege of Jerusalem. The helplessness and self-blame in Exodus 14 seem to express survivor's guilt on the part of the authors.

An alternative explanation for the abrupt shift between v14 and v15 would be that trauma is making an intrusion – an 'eruption' – into the master narrative, as Janzen hypothesises with regard to other texts. The textual difficulty may be an example of 'traces of trauma that have slipped into – or perhaps we should say behind – the main narrative of the history' (2012: 34). Within a story of incredible divine salvation, the unmentioned but implied crying out to YHWH between the two verses might be an intrusion into the

authors' present of their shared memory of abandonment by the deity, quickly suppressed by the question, 'Why are you crying out to me?'.

This explanation is tempting, as it offers not only an answer to a textual difficulty but potential justification for my thesis that the narrative is influenced by trauma. But although I am fascinated by Janzen's idea, I am not entirely convinced by it. If an author's trauma is manifested in the text they create without the author's own knowledge, this makes it extremely difficult for a reader to argue conclusively either for or against the presence of trauma in the text. His theory is an intriguing possibility and may be relevant to this narrative, but I cannot make the case for that with real conviction. However, notwithstanding my scepticism about any traumatic eruption into the text, I still believe 14.15 conveys a sense of shame and survivor's guilt.

b) 14.31 – The climax of the narrative depicts an overwhelming act of power on YHWH's part; he does not just 'throw' the Egyptians into the sea but 'hurls' them (the verb takes the piel [intensive] form).[132] This action is truly awe-inspiring. YHWH's stated aim is to 'reveal [his] glory' (14.4); to demonstrate his power and thus to inspire fear and belief in the Israelites. Among the commentators on Exodus, Alexander (2017: 280), Bruckner (2008: 135), Brueggemann (1994: 795-796), Durham (1987: 197) and Noth (1962: 118) all mention the relationship between YHWH's demonstration of power and Israel's belief and reverence. As a result of the annihilation of the Egyptians, the Israelites 'feared the LORD

[132] Alexander is right to point out that the verb used for YHWH's action is also used elsewhere to describe 'clothing being shaken in order to cause something to fall out' (2017: 279), but 'shaking' misses the force and intensity in this present usage. At the same time, he still notices that, 'The destruction of the Egyptian force is so comprehensive that none of those who went between the waters survive.' (2017: 279).

and believed in the LORD and in Moses, his servant' (14.31) – and 'fear' is an appropriate translation of יראה, expressing awe and respect, as well as fear itself.

This simultaneous fear and belief seem to render the Israelites utterly subservient to the deity. Even Moses, their leader, is placed 'clearly in a subordinate, derivative position' through this display of YHWH's power (Brueggemann, 1994: 795). This can be explained as an expression of self-abasement by the authors of Exodus; an outworking of the shame deriving from their own trauma.

In the diary chronicling his experiences of the Warsaw ghetto, Chaim Kaplan observes that although 'Nazism came to annihilate us… Unconsciously, we accept its ideology and follow in its ways' (quoted in Goldberg, 2017: 214). So although the Warsaw Jews reviled the Nazis, they could not help internalising Nazi ideology on an unconscious level, and even identifying with their oppressors (Goldberg, 2017: 214-216). Goldberg is at pains to emphasise that this unconscious adoption of Nazi ideas is not the same as 'overt bonding' with the Nazis or a desire to join them. But he observes a tendency among the Warsaw Jews towards, 'Adulation of the strong and powerful perpetrator who resorts to unbridled violence' (2017: 220). Kaplan's diary states explicitly: 'You almost begin to believe that this is a people that deserves to rule over everything, and has the courage and authority.' (Quoted in Goldberg, 2017: 220). This adulation was also manifested among prisoners at Buchenwald, who 'regressed to a childlike state and tended to admire… the camp guard… who functioned as the adult figure in that situation' (2017: 221). It is exemplified by an individual who exclaimed: 'Yes! You are the strongest… We have never seen anybody stronger than you… No matter what you do, we will never try to measure our strength against yours, not even in our imagination.' (2017: 221), in a striking echo of the adulation of YHWH in Exod 15.11 (see below).

The previous paragraph might give the impression that I see YHWH as comparable to the Nazis. I must emphasise that I am absolutely not implying that YHWH and the Nazis can or should ever be compared. I am merely noting that absolute power – in whatever guise – tends to prompt a submissive response.

What's more, the adulation of the Nazis was coupled with self-abasement on the part of the Jews: 'We are like horses… we ourselves have become in our own eyes "inferior beings" devoid of the divine image.' (Kaplan, quoted in Goldberg, 2017: 223). Adulation of a powerful oppressor and shame at one's own inferiority and subjugation comprise a common response to trauma at the hands of a tyrant. And there is evidence of this simultaneous adulation and shame within Exodus 13-15. This is an insight into the narrative which seems uniquely available by reading it through the lens of trauma theory. No Exodus commentary I have yet encountered observes that the Israelites' self-abasement could be associated with shame.

In his paper on divine narcissism in the Hebrew Bible, Stuart Lasine claims that YHWH 'can be an abusive narcissist, who may seek the loyalty and submission he needs from his children by breaking their spirit, by burdening them with feelings of guilt and inadequacy, or by keeping them cravenly dependent upon him' (Lasine, 2002: 39). He is partly right. Within the Reed Sea narrative, YHWH is indeed portrayed as creating feelings of guilt and inadequacy in his children[133], but I believe these feelings arise from the authors of Exodus and their own traumatic shame. In the shadow of their trauma, the authors projected their shame onto the Israelites by portraying the deity as supreme and incomparable and therefore inspiring self-abasement and inadequacy in his people.

[133] As we have already seen, YHWH rebukes Moses (as representative of Israel) for his passivity in 14.15. He also inspires a sense of inadequacy through his overwhelming power (14.31, 15.11) and even, paradoxically, through his 'unfailing love' (15.13). See points *i) c)* and *i) d)* respectively.

‘Projection’ is a contested term within psychology. There is some debate as to its exact nature and how it is distinct from ‘externalisation’.[134] However, it is unnecessary, for the purposes of this exercise, to go into great detail on the differences between the two concepts. Projection and externalisation are so similar, and the differences between them so subtle, that they can be said to be largely congruent: both relate to ‘a process whereby a painful impulse or idea is attributed to the external world’ – usually to another individual (Novick and Kelly, 1970: 70).

Freud’s view that this is a defence mechanism, by which an individual distances themselves from an undesirable impulse (usually to do with sex or aggression), has been developed in recent years. Studies suggest that projection can indeed be a defence mechanism, but that it arises from a person (or a group) subconsciously avoiding the recognition of an undesirable trait in themselves, thus making this trait more accessible to their consciousness when evaluating another person (Baumeister *et al*, 2002: 1082, 1091). In any case, the result is the same: the subject attributes a negative quality they themselves possess to an external object.

Projection appears to be at work in the Reed Sea narrative. The authors, experiencing a sense of deep shame, projected this shame onto their portrayal of the Israelites as they composed their narrative. This projection therefore influenced the characterisation of the all-powerful deity. Thus, it is the authors’ trauma that informs the inherent feelings of shame and inadequacy of the Israelites within Exodus 13-15 and, by extension, the characterisation of YHWH in the same text.

[134] Novick and Kelly itemise five slightly different understandings of ‘projection’, for example (1970: 74).

c) 15.11 – The theme of YHWH's surpassing power also finds expression in the Song of Moses. For example, in 15.11, YHWH is described as 'majestic in holiness, terrible in splendour[135], working wonders'. Thus, his 'wonders' are inseparable from the terror he inspires in his enemies, just as belief in him is intrinsically linked with fear in 14.31. (This prevalent sense of fear in the text is, in itself, suggestive of trauma. I will investigate this further under point *v)*, below.) YHWH subordinates not only any mortal who crosses his path but all other deities, too: 'Yahweh is thus extolled as incomparable among… all beings for whom divinity is claimed.' (Durham, 1987: 207). Furthermore, YHWH's victory is cosmic in its scale; a defeat not just of his human enemies but also of the forces of chaos, represented by the raging waters of the Reed Sea (Meyers, 2005: 115-116; Fretheim, 1991: 153).

YHWH is the indisputable supreme actor. All others are dwarfed by association with him. Once again, the authors' own traumatised shame finds expression here, projected onto the Israelites, who are belittled and insignificant in comparison to the supreme and almighty deity portrayed in this narrative.

d) 15.13 – The Israelites praise YHWH for his 'unfailing love'. This חסד – YHWH's loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, goodness, love, mercy – 'implies the fulfilment of a moral obligation… [which] arises from his relationship with Israel's ancestor(s)' (Propp, 1999:

[135] תהלת can be rendered 'glory, praise' or 'praiseworthy actions' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1999: 1692-1693). This is a slightly different concept from כבד – usually translated 'glory' – and 'terrible in praise' would suggest it is the praise of the Israelites which makes YHWH 'terrible'. 'Splendour' sums up the meaning well. נורא carries connotations of fear and dread, deriving from the root יראה ('fear'). An individual described as נורא can be understood as awe-inspiring and worthy of reverence but, more commonly, as fearsome, intimidating or dreadful (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 432-434; Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 431-432). There is not an explicit link with warfare, but a נורא adversary would be formidable indeed.

532). That is, YHWH's unfailing love is expressed in his unique relationship with Israel and is inseparable from this relationship.

Although YHWH's unfailing love might seem the polar opposite of his overwhelming violence described in the verses immediately preceding it (vv3-12) and in chapter 14, they can actually be two sides of the same coin. As Herman observes, trauma victims may be terrorised by an abuser while also seeing him[136] as 'the source of strength, guidance, and life itself'. What's more, 'The relationship may take on an extraordinary quality of specialness' to the victim (1997: 92).

Lasine applies this observation to the deity of the Hebrew Bible, arguing that the depiction of YHWH as infinitely loving and merciful is a 'coping device' for the Israelites he terrorises. They come to see their relationship with YHWH as special and unique, in much the same way as an abused child might hero-worship their terrorising father (2002: 39-41). Lasine even cites a passage from Exodus in support of his argument, commenting on the description of Israel as YHWH's 'treasured possession' in 19.5 (2002: 40).

Thus, if the portrayal of YHWH as incomparably powerful and overwhelmingly violent is an expression of traumatic shame in the authors of Exodus then, perhaps paradoxically, his 'unfailing love' for Israel might derive from the same source.

ii) Anger and desire for revenge

a) 13.18 – Violence is foreshadowed from the beginning of the Reed Sea narrative, with YHWH expressing wariness of the Israelites facing war (13.17) and the people marching out of Egypt in military formation, 'prepared for battle' (Bruckner, 2008: 125; Sarna, 1991: 69; Dozeman, 2009: 309). Brueggemann goes as far as to describe the Israelites as 'a well-

[136] This observation derives particularly from analysis of female survivors of domestic abuse, the vast majority of whom were victims of male abusers.

organized, highly disciplined company' (1994: 789). The stage is set for battle and an outpouring of revenge against Israel's enemies.

Intriguingly, Alexander dissents from this view. He holds that 'dressed for travel' is a better translation than 'prepared for battle' for חמשים and insists: 'At no point in the present narrative is it clearly stated that the Israelites formed an army. On the contrary, the people fear the arrival of the Egyptian charioteers because they are unarmed and defenceless.' (2017: 264, 268). Alexander also makes the astute observation that YHWH initially directs the Israelites so as to avoid military conflict (13.17). This being the case, why would the Israelites be prepared for battle? (2017: 263-265).

Alexander has highlighted an important tension within the narrative. The Israelites are indeed portrayed as vulnerable to attack, while simultaneously being battle-ready. Recourse to Janzen's traumatic 'eruption' would offer an explanation of this apparent contradiction: perhaps trauma is breaking into and subverting the 'master narrative'.

Alternatively, more prosaically, the Israelites may have been 'prepared for battle' in terms of how they were arranged as they left Egypt, while still being largely unarmed. A literal translation of 13.18 would be that the Israelites 'were five' or 'were grouped in fifties' in the sense that they were arranged similarly to units of an army (Clines, 1996: 259; c.f. Brueggemann, 1994: 789; Bruckner, 2008: 125). At the same time, as former slaves escaping their erstwhile captors, they may have lacked weapons (see e.g. Propp, 1999: 488; Hyatt, 1980: 149). Therefore, it is possible to reconcile the Israelites marching out in military formation – with YHWH the warrior as their 'commander' (Alter, 2004: 389) – with an inherent sense of their vulnerability. The stage is set for a violent confrontation, but the violence must be enacted by YHWH the commander-in-chief rather than the people themselves.

b) 14.16 – The language used here (and elsewhere in Exod 13-15) is violent in itself. YHWH commands Moses to ‘split’ the sea and, in 14.21, the waters are indeed ‘broken open’, using the same verb usually used for chopping wood with an axe (Alter, 2004: 394). YHWH’s action, bringing dry land in the midst of the waters, can be seen as recapitulating the act of creation in Genesis, with the cosmic warfare and victory over the forces of chaos which creation entails (Fretheim, 1991: 159-160). The impression of victory over chaos reinforces the divine violence within the narrative. Similarly, in 14.27, YHWH ‘hurled’ the Egyptians into the sea. As mentioned above, this is far stronger than simply ‘throwing’ them: the Hebrew verb communicates overwhelming force. Similarly, in 15.4, the Egyptian officers are emphatically and violently ‘drowned’, with the verb taking the pual (intensive passive) form and, in 15.7, YHWH is praised for having ‘destroyed’ his enemies, with the verb הרס encompassing ‘attack, tear down… demolish, destroy… ruin’ (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1994: 256-257).

Throughout this passage, YHWH’s violence against Egypt, on Israel’s behalf, is not only endorsed but emphasised and celebrated, as scholars observe. The Song of Moses in particular is ‘exuberant’ (Brueggemann, 1994: 799), giving voice to ‘ecstatic excitement’ at the terror and destruction YHWH causes (Durham, 1987: 205).

c) 14.4, 8, 17, 24-25 – YHWH’s humiliation of his enemies stretches as far as manipulating their hearts in order to spur them on towards their own destruction. He shares with Moses his intention to harden the hearts of Pharaoh (14.4) and all the Egyptians (14.17) and enacts this plan in 14.8.

There is extensive debate among commentators on how to best understand this 'hardening' of the Egyptians' hearts. Some argue that Pharaoh's previous actions were so evil as to deserve annihilation (e.g. Propp, 1999: 354; Sarna, 1991: 23), while others suggest that 'strengthen' is a better translation than 'harden': that YHWH merely strengthens Pharaoh's resolve on a course of action on which he was already set (e.g. Alexander, 2017: 274-277, 281; Noth, 1962: 111; Fretheim, 1991: 155).

Whatever nuances there might be in YHWH hardening Pharaoh's heart, the result is the same: Pharaoh and his entire army are enticed to pursue the Israelites. Once they are committed to this pursuit, YHWH lures them into the sea, throws the Egyptian camp into confusion (14.24) and even diverts the wheels of their chariots (14.25) to ensure their fate is sealed. Any appearance of Egyptian self-determination is an illusion: YHWH manoeuvres them throughout the narrative, to bring them to a point where he can utterly destroy them. 'Everything has been pre-empted by Yahweh, who manages all sides of the drama.' (Brueggemann, 1994: 793).

d) 14.28-30 – At the denouement of the narrative, the Egyptians are finally and completely destroyed (Alter, 2004: 395); powerless to resist YHWH's overwhelming force. 14.28 states explicitly: 'The waters turned back over the chariots and horsemen; all of Pharaoh's army which had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained.'

Tellingly, Bruckner observes that YHWH's salvation of Israel goes hand-in-hand with his destruction of Egypt: 'Salvation and destruction came together. The sea of protection from evil was also the sea of destruction for evil forces.' (2008: 134). As Cassuto perceptively notes, this is a matter of vengeance: in order to save Israel, YHWH enacts revenge against the enslaving Egyptians. 'This will be the final retribution, measure for measure, for the casting of the infant sons of the Israelites into the waters of the Nile.'

(2005: 170). Cassuto's comments on the destruction of the Egyptian army as an act of revenge are also illuminating in view of the prospect that the story can be read as a revenge fantasy on the part of the authors (see point *f)* below).

e) 15.7-8 – YHWH's 'burning anger', implied by the violence in Exod 13-14, is finally made explicit in 15.7. This is underlined by the allusion to YHWH's 'nostrils' (15.8), a common Hebrew idiom to express anger (Durham, 1987: 201). Indeed, Propp argues that the Song of Moses presents anger as being one of YHWH's key characteristics (1999: 519) and Dozeman comments on YHWH's simultaneous 'majesty' and 'fury' within this song (2009: 333)

Trauma survivors report feeling so overwhelmed with rage that it makes them 'literally unable to speak' (Tal, 1996: 157). And, as Kalí Tal observes, survivor literature is an inherently angry kind of writing: 'Bearing witness is an aggressive act. It is born out of… a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression' (1996: 7). With anger featuring as such a prominent characteristic of the main protagonist of Exodus 13-15, there is a compelling case for seeing him as a reflection of the authors' own anger and rage.

Just as the authors of Exodus 13-15 seem to have projected their traumatised shame onto the Israelites (see point *i) b),* above), they appear to have projected their overwhelming rage onto the deity. Rage of this intensity might well have been a painful and even frightening impulse on the part of the authors; the kind of impulse often projected onto an external object (Novick and Kelly, 1970: 70). So it would be no surprise if the authors gave their traumatised rage against Babylon free rein in their depiction of Egypt

and made YHWH the instrument by which this rage could be expressed safely and the longed-for violence enacted.[137]

The possibility of the authors projecting undesirable emotions in two different directions (shame to the Israelites, rage to the deity) is difficult to support through recourse to specific examples of psychological case studies or survivor literature. However, if Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is read as a revenge fantasy (of which, more under point f) below), this prospect becomes more convincing. It is common for a survivor to express their 'humiliated fury' in the form of a fantasy of revenge against the perpetrator (Herman, 1997: 189), and a key feature of such fantasies is mirroring the traumatising event – reversing the roles of victim and perpetrator – so as to restore the survivor's sense of power and agency (Haen and Weber, 2009: 85). Thus, the revenge fantasy arises from and is formulated partly in response to traumatised shame. In this case, the authors seem to express their rage through their portrayal of YHWH but are not yet successful in ridding themselves of shame and guilt, which are still manifest in the text through the characterisation of the Israelites.

f) 15.14-16 – YHWH is a source of fear and terror to the nations surrounding Israel (Brueggemann, 1994: 801; Dozeman, 2009: 339). The nations stand terrified at YHWH's violence and anger. They 'tremble' (15.14), they are 'dismayed' (15.15) and they 'melt away' as 'terror and dread… fall upon them' (15.16). YHWH's anger utterly overwhelms them.

[137] I am by no means the first scholar to suggest that a biblical author might have projected an emotion or impulse onto the deity (see e.g. Durkheim, 1926: 226; von Franz, 1980: 35-42; Francis, 1997: 81-96; Hull, 2001: 215; Smith, 1992: 267-268).

Within Exodus 13-15, YHWH's anger and violence are abundantly clear. Establishing a sense of revenge or a desire for revenge is more complicated. YHWH's violence could be said to be revenge for the Egyptians' oppression of the Israelites, particularly for the drowning of their sons in the Nile, as Cassuto has argued (2005: 170). Thus, although I am sceptical of the historicity of this episode, I cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that the text represents an account of divine revenge based (however loosely) on a historical event. If we allow for at least the kernel of the narrative being formed as an oral tradition in the monarchical period, or possibly earlier, it may be that an event perceived as an act of divine revenge from the second millennium B.C.E. has been assimilated into a piece of literature composed in Yehud in the fifth century. However, this theory rests on a good deal of assumption and conjecture.

Equally – and, in my view, more plausibly – the text might represent an Israelite *desire* for revenge against their enemies. K.L. Noll comes close to proposing that representations of divine anger in the Hebrew Bible might be projections of human anger from the societies which produced them. Noll observes that biblical portrayals of the deity are reflections – indeed he uses the word 'projection' – of the writers and their communities (2001: 1). He goes on to argue that disparate biblical portrayals of YHWH were brought together in the Hebrew Bible, comprising an 'anthology' of human projections of the divine; a 'kaleidoscopic… divine personality' (2001: 1-3). I simply want to advance Noll's thesis by one step and propose that YHWH's anger in particular, and specifically in Exodus 13-15, is a projection of the very human anger of its authors and their community. It is an expression of their desire for revenge.

This desire for revenge might derive from the monarchical period or even earlier, being preserved in writing during the Exile or in post-exilic Yehud. More likely, it might

derive directly from the community in exile or in Yehud, for whom the humiliation and trauma at the hands of the Babylonians were still painfully raw. The community's desire for revenge against Babylon might have found expression in a story of revenge from Israel's 'history'; a story reworked, embellished and preserved in what we now know as Exodus 13.17 – 15.21.

There is precedent for this proposition. Ruth Poser's comprehensive treatment of trauma in Ezekiel highlights the impulse for revenge expressed throughout Ezek 26-33 (2012: 490-505), and describes Ezek 38-39 as 'a single, sustained revenge fantasy' against Babylon (2012: 485). It is also striking that, within this revenge fantasy, Babylon is not directly mentioned. Instead, the target of YHWH's wrath is characterised as 'Gog'. There seems little doubt that Gog is a cipher for one of the nations neighbouring Judah, and Babylon is the most likely candidate (2012: 611-612).

What is more, similarities can be observed between Ezek 38-39 and Exod 13-15. Ezek 38.10-16 envisages a planned attack by the enemy, featuring a large and intimidating army (c.f. Exod 14.5-10); 38.16 makes it clear that YHWH is the one who incites this attack, in order to reveal his holiness (c.f. Exod 14.4, 15.11); 38.18 mentions the 'hot anger' of YHWH (אפי, just as in Ex 15.7-8); the earthquake in 38.19-20 is comparable to the earth swallowing Egypt in Exod 15.12; and in 38.23, YHWH reveals his greatness (c.f. Exod 14.31, 15.7). In 39.21, the display of YHWH's 'glory' echoes Exod 14.4 (כבד is used in both verses, albeit with different constructions), and the gathering of Israel in the presence of the nations in 39.21-29 parallels Exod 15.13-17.[138] Thus, if Ezek 38-39 can be

[138] Admittedly, there are differences between the two passages. Ezekiel mentions 'fire and sulphur' (38.22) in contrast to the waters of the Reed Sea, and 39.23 explicitly references the Exile: an allusion which is conspicuously absent from Exod 13-15. Still, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

understood as a revenge fantasy against Babylon, there is certainly a case for seeing the Reed Sea story in the same light.[139]

The theory of 'time collapse' also offers a model for the Reed Sea story as an expression of revenge. I outlined in chapter three Volkan's description of how Serbia was traumatised by its rout at the hands of Turkey at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. In the late 1980s and early 90s, Kosovan Serbs' fear and resentment of Bosnian Muslims erupted into widespread violence as 'Muslims' became conflated with 'Turks' in the Serbian collective consciousness. The Battle of Kosovo – and particularly the hero, Prince Lazar – re-emerged in public discourse, frequently and vividly, and the predominant narrative was one of revenge and nationalistic pride. Slobodan Milosevic, the then President of Yugoslavia, was instrumental in reactivating the memory of the Battle of Kosovo, initiating a time collapse between 1389 and 1989 and deliberately encouraging violence against the modern 'enemy' as an act of revenge against the historical one.

It is very difficult to prove that the Reed Sea narrative represents a time collapse of the kind Volkan describes. There is also a significant problem in that a charismatic leader is instrumental to initiating a time collapse, so it would have been necessary for such a leader to emerge in Yehud to consciously reactivate the memory of the Reed Sea, for the category of time collapse to be applicable to this scenario. Although Egypt might function as a proxy for Babylon, for the analogy to be complete, Moses would need to stand for a post-exilic leader of Yehud and it is far from clear who, if anyone, he might represent.

[139] In a similar vein, Mark Brett argues that within Gen 37-50, Egypt functions as a cipher for Persia and the narrative as a critique of and protest against Persian oppression. Joseph is portrayed as a despot, dominating his own brothers and reducing the Egyptian people to slavery (2000: 131-132), which echoes the social control and dispossession of foreigners enacted by Ezra (2000: 132, 136). Both Joseph and Ezra are endorsed and supported by imperial might (Egypt for Joseph, Persia for Ezra), and both couch their domination in terms of piety and divine providence (2000: 131, 136). Following this line of argument, the Joseph narrative is thus a critique of Ezra and Persia's oppression, with its authors using Joseph and Egypt as a cipher, presumably to avoid potential punishment at the hands of the Persian authorities.

It is possible that Ezra might fulfil this role. Nehemiah 9 is probably the clearest biblical association between Ezra and Moses, drawing parallels between the Israelites' current trials and their ancestors' suffering in Egypt, recapitulating the Reed Sea crossing (9.9-12). However, I am not fully convinced by this possibility. Neh 9 presents the Reed Sea crossing within a wider national history, encompassing Abraham, the Exodus, Sinai, the conquest of Canaan and the nation's apostasy in the monarchical period. In this context, the Reed Sea episode does not stand out as any more significant than these other memories. Nor is Moses especially prominent within this history: he is mentioned only once and then in relation to Sinai rather than the Reed Sea. If the authors of Nehemiah (or indeed Ezra himself) had intended to reactivate the memory of the Reed Sea and to draw parallels between Ezra and Moses, it is surprising that Moses is not more prominent in this chapter. Furthermore, the prayer in Neh 9 is attributed to the Levites rather than directly to Ezra.[140]

However, aspects of the time collapse model may still be applicable. In effect, the authors of the Reed Sea narrative appear to have created a kind of time collapse in reverse. Instead of beginning with an already well-established episode from their nation's 'history', and identifying contemporary circumstances and enemies with those from this episode, they seem to have begun with Babylon – their recent enemy – and created a narrative and enemy within a fictive past to help them express and process their rage against Babylon.

As to whether this can be called a 'revenge fantasy', the definition of revenge fantasy is itself disputed. Frechette, for example, differentiates revenge fantasy from a 'controlled expression of rage', arguing that texts which express desire for revenge but envisage a deity, rather than human agents, enacting this revenge, cannot properly be categorised as

[140] Zerubbabel might also fulfil this function but there is, if anything, even less biblical support for parallels between Moses and Zerubbabel than for parallels between Moses and Ezra.

‘revenge fantasy’ (2016: 78). However, to my mind, this differentiation is only convincing if we accept that texts like Isaiah 47 (to which Frechette refers) are genuine divine oracles; words spoken directly by the deity. If the words attributed to the deity are, instead, an imagined divine response, then this merely projects the desire for revenge from the human authors onto the deity. Their revenge fantasy stands and is enacted by a divine proxy.

Revenge by proxy, even within a fantasy, is understandable in a context where the victim feels especially lacking in power (as Lillie and Strelan observe [2016 : 290], for example). Thus, there is precedent for revenge by proxy within modern cinema, especially in instances where the victim is female (Henry, 2014: 36, 45). There are also biblical examples of YHWH being portrayed as enacting revenge on behalf of his people. Such an example can be seen in Ezekiel 38-39, as we have seen. Morrow argues that Deut 7 can likewise be understood as a fantasy of divinely-ordained revenge (2011: 289).[141]

Since the Reed Sea narrative and Song of Moses depict overwhelming violence by Israel’s God, against their enemies, the prospect remains of the text being born out of its authors’ revenge fantasy against their own contemporary enemies. This does not fit exactly with the model of a trauma-induced time collapse but there is still reason to believe that this passage articulates a revenge fantasy on the part of the Yehud community. The sheer scale of the manipulation and violence YHWH is portrayed as enacting against Israel’s enemies (14.16-18, 25, 27), the extent of Egypt’s death and destruction (14.28-31) and the

[141] Tellingly, within Deut 7, the actions of YHWH and the people are intertwined: YHWH instructs the people to destroy their enemies (7.2) and it is indeed the people who are envisaged as carrying out this destruction (7.5, 16) but it is equally construed as an act of divine retribution (7.10). Similarly, Exod 14 envisages YHWH acting in partnership with a human agent: Moses. Moses stretches out his hand over the sea at YHWH’s instruction, and YHWH then divides the waters (14.16, 21). Later, Moses stretches out his hand again, whereupon YHWH restores the waters to their place and sweeps the Egyptians into the sea (14.26-29). Both Exod 14 and Deut 7 therefore envisage revenge carried out by YHWH with human participation; perhaps conveying a recognition that the deity is uniquely placed to enact revenge on a scale and with a severity impossible to human agents in their own right. (Frechette hints at this [2014: 80].)

profound terror and dread YHWH is credited with inspiring in other nations (15.14-16) all suggest a longing for supreme revenge on the part of the authors.

iii) The imperative to bear witness; the impossibility of doing so

a) 14.13-15 – Survivors of trauma often express an inner conflict between feeling compelled to bear witness to what they have experienced, while also feeling that any language they could use would be inadequate to articulate the depth of their suffering. As we have seen, survivors of the Holocaust feel a huge responsibility to share their experiences, while simultaneously feeling they can do little more than scream to express their pain, grief and outrage (c.f. Des Pres, 1973: 668-675; Laub, 1995: 63-64). Trauma effectively renders them mute.

There are suggestions of this traumatic tension within the Reed Sea narrative. In 14.13-15, YHWH first commands the Israelites to be silent, then rebukes them (or at least rebukes Moses as their representative) for speaking up. The Israelites, in fear of their lives and helpless to defend themselves from the onrushing Egyptian army, cry out in terror and are immediately silenced. Among commentators on Exodus, Brueggemann (1994: 793) and Meyers (2005: 114) both observe the extremity of the Israelites' peril and the intensity of their fear. Brueggemann goes further and associates the Israelites' speech with their lack of trust in the deity (1994: 793). YHWH requires silence of them as evidence of trust and obedience (as Durham implies [1987: 192]). The Israelites' enforced silence can be understood as mirroring the narrative's authors; driven to speak of what they and their community experienced but rendered speechless by the inadequacy of language to convey what they witnessed.

As I mentioned in chapter one, this aspect of survivor literature is a matter of some debate. Some literary theorists point out, fairly, the extensive body of literature, film and art produced by trauma survivors, including those who survived the Holocaust. Trauma can be and is expressed in language, they argue (c.f. Lang, 2000: 18). If such trauma is impossible to articulate, how can we explain the apparent creative fertility arising from it? But the volume of survivors' creative output belies the torment behind it; their unquenchable thirst to tell their stories and their inability to be satisfied with their efforts to do so. However many times a survivor bears witness to their experiences, whatever artistry they use to do so, the compulsion to tell and retell their stories is insatiable.

Indeed, I believe this entire narrative and the song which follows were a means for the authors to circumvent the impossibility of bearing witness to their experiences. Articulating trauma does not necessarily involve a literal description of facts (Lifton, 1991: 408, 450). Other approaches to witnessing are common in literature and art created by trauma survivors. For example, *Badenheim 1939* describes the Holocaust only in terms of an allegory (Lang, 2000: 26) but the novel can only be fully understood against this background. And several writers of 'A-bomb literature' have used allegory and figurative language to depict Hiroshima and its suffering, apparently feeling that a literal description of events would be inadequate to convey their experiences (Lifton, 1991: 403-422). Similarly, the authors of Exod 13-15 recast their experiences and the still-raw emotions those experiences generated, in a different story, set in a far-distant time. The markers of trauma within the text thus derive from its authors. The story is a manifestation of the authors' trauma, without a direct description of the events which caused that trauma.

b) 14.30-31 – This prospect is reinforced by the Israelites' reaction to the deaths of the Egyptians. When confronted with the bodies on the sea shore, the Israelites see what YHWH has done but the narrator does not put a word in their mouths. Instead, their reported response is to fear (יראו) YHWH (see e.g. Alexander, 2017: 280; Noth, 1962: 118).[142] The narrator leaves the Israelites mute in the face of death and destruction on a huge scale, and subject to extreme fear, itself a marker of trauma (see point *v)* below).

c) 15.1-19 – Breaking this silence, Moses leads the Israelites in an effusive song of praise to YHWH, extolling his strength, majesty and wonders. Does the imperative to bear witness finally win out against the inadequacy of language for the task? Not exactly. The Song of Moses is couched in generalisations and mythological language (see e.g. Alter, 2004: 398; Hyatt, 1980: 161). As the Israelites sing of YHWH hurling 'horse and chariot' into the sea (15.1), it is implied that they are referring to the Egyptian army but this is obscured, as Meyers observes (2005: 111). Pharaoh and his army are only mentioned briefly, in verses 4 and 19. Moreover, the singers quickly move on to describing impersonal nations trembling in fear of YHWH, and to his faithfulness in leading his people to his sanctuary. The song therefore alludes to YHWH's actions against Egypt but is light on detail. It could be read as a recapitulation of the Israelites' experiences but only in an idealised, mythologised form which actually distorts the sequence of events described in the two previous chapters. The representation of the Reed Sea crossing in terms of mythological concepts is particularly significant. With its allusions to creation, divine victory over chaos (15.4-5, 10, 12; see Fretheim, 1991: 166-168) and YHWH's enemies descending to the underworld

[142] Although some commentators present the 'fear' of YHWH as 'reverence' (c.f. Cassuto, 2005: 172; Durham, 1987: 197), this disregards the sense of outright fear inherent in יראו.

(15.5; see Sarna, 1991: 78; Hyatt, 1980: 164), and its emphasis on YHWH as supreme among all deities (15.11), Moses' song features other-worldly language and tropes of the kind typical of survivor literature.

d) 14.4, 8, 9, 23, 15.9[143] – Although the experiences of the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile are largely obscured by silence and generalisation, there are hints within this text of those specific experiences. In particular, the repeated use of the verb 'pursue' (רדפ) in 14.4, 8, 9, 23, 15.9 might be read as an echo of being attacked and plundered by the Babylonian army. If this seems speculative, it is worth observing that רדפ is also used in Lamentations 3.43, 66, in the context of a response to the Babylonian conquest specifically, and a longing for revenge against the Babylonians.

Moreover, the ideas of pursuit, of a strong and victorious deity and of YHWH holding back and loosing the waters are all discernible in Job 12, which has itself been read as an echo of the Babylonian conquest, directly emulating the tone and content of Lamentations 3 (Houck-Loomis, 2018: 187-188).[144]

Nor do the similarities between Job and the Reed Sea episode end here. Job 12.22 presents YHWH manipulating and confusing dark and light (Purdue, 1991: 98-100): a sense of confusion which can also be seen in the puzzling Exod 14.20. Job also references slavery, with the man Job portrayed as a slave in chapters 1-3, and as subjected to 'hard service' in 7.1 and 14.14 (Purdue, 1991: 127, 169). Furthermore, Purdue points out that the word translated as 'hard service' (צבא) appears in Isaiah 40.2 specifically to describe the

[143] It goes against my methodical instinct to return to 14.4 out of sequence but it makes the most sense to do so now, in terms of the logical flow of my argument.
[144] This idea is supported by the more conservative Habel, who envisages the Chaldean raiding parties mentioned in Job 1.17 as 'evok[ing] associations with the organized destruction wrought by the Babylonian army on Israel.' (1985: 92).

fate of exiles in Babylon (1991: 127).[145] It is possible that the Israelites' slavery in Egypt might in itself echo this fate.

In the same way that Job has been read as alluding to the Babylonian conquest, with its tropes of pursuit, of slavery, of the deity as a warrior and of YHWH controlling and manipulating the waters, so too Exod 13.17 – 15.21 hints at these specific events, despite the silence and generalisations which dominate the text and attest to the authors' struggle to bear witness to the experiences which traumatised them. The Reed Sea episode thus gives clues to the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile as specific events, as well as to trauma in general.

Within Job, the established theological order is thrown into disarray as Judah reels from the traumata of destruction and exile and gropes for a sense of meaning to its shared suffering. No longer can the people insist that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished. The concept of a just deity is subverted as a righteous man is made to suffer excruciatingly and entirely undeservedly (Houck-Loomis, 2018: 184, 195-198; Purdue, 1991: 109-110). Might this subversion of divine justice have also informed the extermination of the faceless Egyptian soldiers in the Reed Sea story?

iv) Other-worldly language

a) 13.21, 14.19 – At the opening of this narrative, YHWH is depicted wrapped in cloud and fire. Here, just as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the fire represents theophany: a powerful manifestation of the deity (Meyers, 2005: 111-112; Sarna, 1996: 111). YHWH is thus visibly present in a form which marks him out as distinctly transcendent and 'other'. The

[145] The man Job thus functions as a representation of exiled Israel. Houck-Loomis advances the same argument (2018: 6, 197) but Habel disputes it (1985: 41).

other-worldly atmosphere is added to by the appearance of an angel or divine messenger in 14.19: another unmistakable example of YHWH's immanence (Alexander, 2017: 278).[146]

Other-worldly or quasi-religious language are very common in biblical literature, of course. So it would be absurd to argue that a biblical text must fall into the category of survivor literature, simply because of the presence of this kind of language. However, the Reed Sea narrative seems especially rich in other-worldly language and tropes, including overtones of conflict on a mythological scale.

b) 14.16, 21-22, 27 – The scale of the action is miraculous: YHWH splits the ocean to allow the Israelites to cross on dry land, before turning the waters back and hurling the panic-stricken Egyptians into the depths. The narrator is at pains to present this episode as singular and divinely-enacted.

What's more, the narrative presents YHWH's actions as conflict on a cosmic, mythological level. As Meyers observes:

> The defeat of the Egyptian forces is nothing less than the defeat of chaos, of the universal forces antithetical to life and represented in mythic terms by raging waters. The "dragons" and "leviathan" that are crushed when God divides the primordial seas – doing so brings about "salvation" in the world in Ps 74:12–17 – here are the pharaoh's armies. (2005: 115-116)[147]

Similarly, Brueggemann sees the parting of the sea as an echo of the Genesis creation myth[148]: 'replicating the coming of dry land… when the sea is divided for the sake of

[146] 'Messenger' is a better translation of the Hebrew than 'angel' but, whether messenger or angel, this being can be seen as a bodily representation of YHWH (see e.g. Cole, 1973: 121).

[147]Fretheim also underlines this dimension of YHWH's victory: 'God's victory at the sea is not simply an event of local significance, vanquishing a historical enemy, however important. It is a cosmic victory.' (1991: 153). Alexander is more cautious about this idea. He accepts that the Reed Sea episode echoes the early chapters of Genesis but argues that this link focuses on 'reversing the consequences of Adam and Eve's expulsion from God's presence', rather than consciously drawing on elements from other ANE creation myths (2017: 309-310). He seems alone in raising this objection, though.

[148] Of course, this assumes that the writers of Exodus borrowed from Genesis, rather than vice versa and, as Alexander points out, it is difficult to prove which book borrowed from which (2017: 292-293). In any case, the allusion to creation in Exod 13-15 seems clear.

inhabitable land' (1994: 794). It might even have been intended as a response to and refutation of other ANE creation myths, which depict creation as arising from conflict between a deity and the forces of chaos, represented by the sea (Bruckner, 2008: 138-139).

Even in the context of the Hebrew Bible, in which 'other-worldly' language is commonplace, this is an extraordinary episode. The scale of YHWH's involvement, along with the echoes of creation and cosmic conflict, creates an impression of sublimity and transcendence. It calls to mind the 'language of ultimate concern' employed by Terrence Des Pres in his literary response to the Holocaust (1976: vi).

c) 14.20, 24-25 – It is unclear how light and darkness relate to each other in 14.20, hence this verse being notoriously difficult to translate. In my own translation, I render the verse: 'behold the cloud and darkness shone in the night'. The sense is of light being somehow produced by the cloud and darkness, but how this happens is ambiguous. Among commentators, Propp (1999: 498) and Dozeman (2009: 316-317) notice the confusion but do not clarify exactly what they believe is happening at this point. Dozeman suggests that the ambiguity may be attributed to a combination of different sources (2009: 316).

This confusion over light and darkness lends the text an unreal, dreamlike impression, which is enhanced by vv24-25. In these verses, the wheels of the Egyptian chariots are diverted[149] – wrested from their control – and they are left panicking and helpless as their

[149] Exactly what YHWH does to Egypt's chariot wheels is a matter of some debate. In Sam (echoed by LXX and Syr), the verb is ויאסר, which can only be translated 'bound'. But the א is missing from MT's ויסר, opening up a range of possible interpretations: 'bound', 'diverted' and even 'removed' (Propp, 1999: 500, supported by Dozeman, 2009: 316). Noth favours 'clogged' (1962: 117). Cole envisages the chariots being bogged down, with their axles broken afterwards (1973: 122). Hyatt rules out 'bound', assuming that this implies 'the Egyptian chariots were bogged down in the mud or quicksand over which the Israelites had been able to pass easily. However, this clause comes too early in the account, for there is no reference to the return of the waters until verse 27.' (1980: 145). But, as Propp rightly observes, 'bound' might simply mean that YHWH locked the chariots' wheels (1999: 500). Propp rejects 'removed' as an interpretation, since wheels removed from a chariot wouldn't turn at all, not even with the 'difficulty' the text mentions (1999: 500). The most intriguing possibility is 'diverted'. Perhaps YHWH makes the chariot drivers lose control and collide with each other. Propp hears in

doom is sealed (Alter, 2004: 395; Noth, 1962: 117). It is not just dreamlike but nightmarish, especially from the Egyptians' point of view.

Such confusion and ambiguity are common in trauma literature, including biblical trauma narratives. Literature which conveys trauma is susceptible to traumatised repetition and flashback, so it should not be surprising if the narrative itself is confused and non-linear (as Claassens observes, 2020a: 7-8). This confusion adds to the other-worldly atmosphere of the text. Poser underscores this by showing how the authors of Ezekiel, under the influence of trauma, created a narrative with a novel, non-linear and other-worldly form: 'fiktionale Literatur in Reaktion auf Schwägen, Negationen und Ausschlüsse herrschender (Sinn-)Systeme Gegenwelten oder -wirklichkeiten zu entwerfen versucht' (2012: 254).[150]

d) 14.21, 15.5 – Garber argues that the other-worldly language characteristic of survivor literature includes 'heightened fissures in language, puns, wordplay' (2015: 26), and there are suggestions within Exod 13-15 of wordplay of this kind. For example, חרבה ('dry ground') could be read as a pun on חרב ('sword') in 14.21, conveying the idea of YHWH using the ground itself as a weapon, and תהמת ('the depths') may be a play on the name 'Tiamat' in 15.5 (Bruckner, 2008: 133-134, 138-139). I find these possibilities fascinating but, unfortunately, Bruckner's argument on this point does not seem to have a great deal of support from other commentators. Without more detail from Bruckner on how he reached

14.25 an echo of 14.6, in which Pharaoh harnessed (ויאסר) his chariots (1999: 500). This echo is indeed clearly present, either as the exact same word (as in Sam) or as a pun (as in MT). Pharaoh harnessed his chariots to begin with, but in the later verse, it is YHWH who controls them (Propp, 1999: 500)! Of the possible interpretations of the verb, I prefer 'diverted', since it is the most effective in bringing out YHWH's wresting control of the chariots away from Pharaoh.

[150] 'fictional literature attempts to create counter-worlds or realities in response to the weaknesses, negations and exclusions of dominant systems'.

these conclusions and which other scholars (if any) influenced them, we must leave the prospect of wordplay in Exod 13-15 as an intriguing possibility but, alas, not a convincing argument.

e) 15.6-12 – The Song of Moses is shot through with poetic hyperbole, exemplified by these seven verses. YHWH utterly destroys his enemies (15.7) and the mere breath of his nostrils is enough to pile up the waters of the sea and bring them down upon his adversaries (15.8, 10).

YHWH's destruction of Pharaoh's army is conveyed in terms of a 'vivid hyperbolic image' (Alter, 2004: 398) and this hyperbole continues into 15.11, which portrays YHWH as not just far superior to any human agent but also to any other god. As Durham surmises, 'Yahweh is thus extolled as *incomparable* among the אל ים "gods", any and all beings for whom divinity is claimed' (1987: 207, emphasis added). Davies (1967: 129) and Sarna (1991: 79) also comment on YHWH's incomparability and utter supremacy within the song.

The unmistakable theophany, the cosmic scale of YHWH's action, the dreamlike atmosphere, and the hyperbolic description of YHWH's greatness represent a thread of other-worldly language and tropes which runs throughout Exod 13.17 – 15.21. Even in the context of the Hebrew Bible, in which other-worldly language is commonplace and ecstatic experiences are frequent, the Reed Sea episode is extraordinary, and its thread of other-worldliness can be attributed to the influence of the authors' trauma on the text. The authors, unable to describe their traumatising experiences in a literal, documentary account, appear to have processed and come to terms with their trauma partly by recasting it in hyperbolic language and in terms of a cosmic conflict.

v) Extreme and enduring fear

a) 14.10 – There is a good deal of fear to be found in the Reed Sea episode. Firstly, the Israelites are 'very much afraid' after seeing Pharaoh and his army bearing down on them. The construction of the Hebrew phrase וייראו מאד emphasises the depth of Israel's fear (Clines, 1998: 276-277) and, in response, Moses must reassure them: 'Do not be afraid' (14.13). Brueggemann (1994: 793), Alter (2004: 392) and Meyers (2005: 114) are among the commentators who highlight the intensity of the Israelites' fear.

b) 14.25 – The Egyptians themselves are portrayed as extremely fearful – even panic-stricken – when it becomes clear that YHWH has trapped them and is contending for Israel against them (see e.g. Hyatt, 1980: 155; Alter, 2004: 395). Indeed, when they realise the full extent of their plight, the Egyptians then flee in fear for their lives (14.27).

c) 14.31 – YHWH's destruction of the Egyptian army releases Israel from their fear of their erstwhile captors, but fosters within them a profound fear of the deity himself. When the Israelites see the bodies of the dead Egyptians, their response is fear of YHWH. 'Fear' is indeed an appropriate translation of יראה , effectively summing up the awe, respect and fear conveyed by the Hebrew (see e.g. Alexander, 2017: 280; Brueggemann, 1994: 795).[151] It is also the same verb used to express the Israelites' fear of the attacking Egyptians in 14.10.

[151] Some commentators gloss over the Israelites' apparent fear of YHWH by calling it 'reverence' (e.g. Cassuto, 2005: 172) or 'reverential awe' (e.g. Durham, 1987: 197). But shying away from the sense of pure fear in יראה gives a translation missing an important nuance of the verb.

d) 15.14-16 – These verses from the Song of Moses repeatedly portray Israel's enemies as fearful and terrified of YHWH. The deity's acts in saving and redeeming his people inspire 'terror and dread' in the nations who see those acts (15.16). Their fearful trembling is mentioned twice (15.14-15). As Dozeman comments, 'The nations are disturbed… They tremble…They experience anguish like birth pangs… terror… dread' (2009: 339).

What's more, the inhabitants of Canaan are described as 'motionless like stone' (15.16), suggesting not just fear but traumatised 'constriction', whereby terror causes a victim to freeze physically and escape from reality by altering their state of consciousness – even to the point of an out-of-body experience (Herman, 1997: 42-43). It is possible that this image is informed by the authors' having witnessed others literally paralysed by fear. Within the context of a revenge fantasy, whereby the traumatising experience is inverted and the roles of victim and perpetrator reversed (Herman, 1997: 189; Thomas, 2004: 297), it is understandable that helplessness and extreme fear are transferred from the authors and their community onto their enemies.

It would be going too far to claim that fear is 'all pervading' in the Reed Sea episode, but it is certainly obvious and multi-faceted. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians experience extreme fear, believing their lives are in danger, and YHWH's enemies are depicted as terrified within the Song of Moses. The presence of fear in these chapters is not sufficient on its own to provide a convincing case for trauma underpinning the text. However, trauma is inextricably linked to extreme and enduring fear (for example, see van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 172; Herman, 1997: 33) and, when combined with the other criteria in this study, a stronger case forms for understanding the Reed Sea episode as survivor literature.

vi) Learned helplessness

a) 14.9-12 – The sudden appearance of the Egyptians and the peril they represent leads the 'unarmed and defenceless' Israelites (Alexander, 2017: 268) not to action but to helpless 'crying out' to YHWH.

Morrow outlines the learned helplessness common among trauma survivors and suggests the Judaean exiles – and especially second-generation exiles – may have developed learned helplessness themselves, characterised by despair, passivity and low self-esteem (2004: 82-84). Similarly, trauma-induced helplessness might have found expression in the characterisation of helpless and passive Israelites in the Reed Sea episode: a piece of literature reshaped and augmented by second-generation exiles.

b) 15.14-15 – The terror and trembling of the 'peoples' may reflect the passivity experienced by the exiled Judaeans. By contrast, YHWH is presented within the song as supremely powerful and beyond comparison even with other deities. He is the ultimate protagonist. Perhaps the Yehud community, in which Exod 13.17 – 15.21 was reshaped and completed, in some respects needed a deity like this, to help them come to terms with their shared trauma and offer them a sense of security for the future.

Is Exod 13.17 – 15.21 a piece of survivor literature?

There is evidence for several of the common markers of survivor literature within the text, and I believe the case for trauma-influenced anger and desire for revenge is particularly strong. The combination of similarities to pieces of recent survivor literature, along with the complex of trauma-inducing experiences associated with the siege and fall of Jerusalem, and

the possibility (if not probability) of trauma arising from the Exile represents a compelling case for reading the Reed Sea episode as an example of survivor literature too.

However, there are weaknesses to this case. It is not (yet) possible to prove conclusively that the exiled Judaeans were traumatised; still less that any trauma they experienced was passed on to their children and grandchildren. And although the text of Exod 13-15 can be read as manifesting trauma and a trauma-informed reading of the text offers novel answers to some textual difficulties, there are several other valid explanations for why the text is formed as it is. For example, it could be a literal, absolutely factual, historical account (although I find that idea implausible). At the other extreme, it could be a simple literary fabrication: a work of fiction for the amusement of Yehud's intelligentsia (although it is hard to reconcile this prospect with the extent to which the Exodus motif has left an imprint on the whole Hebrew Bible). Or it is possible that Exod 13-15 is a bit of both: a historical account which has been embellished with literary artistry to create a more powerful and memorable story.

It must also be noted that, even if the similarities between the Reed Sea episode and modern survivor literature were overwhelming, the Reed Sea narrative cannot be categorised as survivor literature in its truest sense. The available modern survivor literature was all composed by individuals who had themselves experienced the events which caused the trauma inherent in their literary works. It is my contention that, although the core of the Reed Sea narrative was composed by trauma survivors, a significant portion of it was shaped by a group of scribes who were *descended* from survivors.

While I hold that this trauma would have been transmitted to them by their parents, grandparents or even wider community, I will resist the temptation to widen my definition of survivor literature to accommodate Exodus, lest I dilute the raw and visceral trauma expressed

within this category and, somehow, belittle the suffering of those who survived Hiroshima and the Holocaust. Instead, I propose a new category of literature, similar but different to survivor literature. I propose to call it 'survival literature': writing which conveys a community's latent trauma and, in so doing, helps that community to understand itself, shape its post-traumatic identity and heal. In short, survival literature is literature which helps a community to survive.

There is a valid case for reading Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 as a piece of survival literature. However (and, I confess, slightly to my disappointment), the idea of trauma within the text, while compelling, is not unassailable. Research into other passages of the Pentateuch might yield further evidence of the authors' trauma and such evidence would strengthen my case. For now, I must let my hypothesis stand as an innovative and illuminating interpretation of the text, but not yet an irrefutable argument.

In this chapter, I have suggested that trauma offers new insights into how Exod 13.17 – 15.21 assumed its final form. I have not yet fully explained *why* the authors chose this specific story to express their pain and grief. The answer to that question lies in an exploration of the Yehud community's collective memory.

Trauma expert Kai Erikson observes that '…trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity' (1995: 186). Thus, a collective trauma can not only cast a shadow over a community for several generations but also reinforce the bonds within that community. Furthermore, creating certain stories and preserving them in their collective memory can not only express traumatised pain, anger and grief, but help a community to 'heal and adapt' (Smith-Christopher, 2014: 238). The next chapter will explore

the relationship between trauma and collective memory, and how these two factors might have combined in the formation and preservation of the Reed Sea story.

Chapter 5 – Traumatised memory in the Reed Sea episode

We can see, then, that Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 shows evidence of the trauma which overshadowed its authors. But what was the authors' purpose in preserving a narrative and song marked by trauma in this way? An assumption that they were motivated simply by a desire to record a literal historical account of events appears implausible. Collective memory studies seems to offer a more enlightening perspective.

I believe that the authors of Exodus were writing in order to shape the collective memory of their community. Through the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses, the experiences of the fall of Jerusalem and exile to Babylonia were preserved – and, along with them, the accompanying trauma – in such a way as to be passed on easily and 'remembered' by subsequent generations. To be clear, Exod 13-15 is not a repository for simple, unreconstructed memories of historical events, but a means by which memory is communicated: a memory vector or 'mnemotechnic' as Assmann calls it (2011: 196-199).[152]

The Exodus was clearly a hugely important memory to the communities in which the Hebrew Bible was written and edited. The Exodus is referred to repeatedly throughout the Hebrew Bible and is especially vivid as an image for the return from Exile within the writings of the sixth century prophets. Second Isaiah and Ezekiel both present the return from Babylonia in terms of a 'Second Exodus' and their respective uses of this trope shed light on why the Reed Sea episode may have been so significant for the authors of Exod 13-15, and why they chose this specific story to convey a sense of their own suffering.

In Ezekiel, the return from Babylonia is to be not only a recapitulation of the Exodus but superior to it (Allen, 1990: 15-16). There are some similarities between Ezekiel 20 and Exodus 13-15. Within both passages, YHWH's wrath is hard to ignore. Both include the

[152] Assmann posits eight such vectors, which Culp has since summarised and re-categorised into just three: story, song and ritual (Culp, 2020: 109).

image of YHWH gathering his people. Both could be said to show concern for fidelity and obedience to YHWH (c.f. Exod 14.31; Ezek 20.39-40). But whereas in Exod 13-15, the deity's wrath is targeted against Israel's enemies, Ezek 20 describes his wrath being turned against his own people – his giving over of his people to flawed and impossible laws (20.25-26) put them in a position similar to Pharaoh in terms of being manipulated and misled (Block, 1997: 639). While Exod 15.13-17 envisages YHWH gathering his people, leading them to a secure home and striking terror into the hearts of neighbouring nations, Ezek 20.34-40 presents this gathering as a time of judgment and purging, with those who survive being appointed to serve YHWH (Levitt Kohn, 2002: 108).[153] Thus, the authors of Ezekiel repurpose the Exodus image for their own ends, lending it a very different tone from Exod 13-15. Ezekiel's concerns for purity and for the exclusivity of Israel (see e.g. Rom-Shiloni, 2011: 141-143; Strine, 2012: 473) are probably not especially relevant to the Reed Sea episode in Exod 13-15.

The tone and mood of Second Isaiah seem far more in step with Exodus. In Second Isaiah, the Exodus is eschatological: the return to the land is marked by YHWH's manifest presence in Zion, with his people (Anderson, 2010: 181). The gathering of Israel from all four compass directions, in the presence of the nations (43.5-9), echoes YHWH's establishment of Israel in his dwelling in Exod 15.13-18. The emphasis on passing 'through the waters' (Isa 43.2) suggests a victory over chaos and also over calamity more generally. Indeed, the redemption envisaged in 43.1-2 is associated with creation, echoing the overtones of creation myth within Exod 15 (Goldingay, 2005: 188; see also Fretheim, 1991: 166-168). Isa 42-43 also seems to include direct allusions to Exod 14-15: 43.16-17 seems a direct reference to

[153] This seems more akin to Sinai than to the Reed Sea crossing itself, as Allen notes (1990: 14). What is more, Ezekiel emphasises idolatry as defiling the land and the people: a concept absent from Exod 13-15 (Patton, 1996: 80).

Exod 14.22-23, and 42.13 describes YHWH as a ‘man of war’ – the exact description offered by Exod 15.3 (Whybray, 1975: 78).

Just as Second Isaiah presents the return from Exile as a moment of triumph, a gathering of YHWH’s scattered and oppressed people and a vital step in his coming to dwell among them (Anderson, 2010: 181-182), the Reed Sea story in Exod 13-15 can be understood as an eschatological event. This may explain why the authors of Exodus chose to express their pain, loss and suffering through this specific story. Reeling from the destruction of Jerusalem by their enemies and forced displacement to Babylonia, a story envisaging triumph, restoration and vindication by their deity would have been more important than ever to the authors and their community. Although their trauma still intrudes into the text, the story allowed them to reframe the pain and humiliation of 586 B.C.E. as a memory of strength, victory and fulfilment.

In this chapter, I examine how the rubric of collective memory is relevant to Exod 13.17 – 15.21, and how the trauma underlying this text is likely to have affected the Yehud community’s collective memory. I begin by outlining where the concept of collective memory originated, its most prominent exponents and the key features of their arguments, and how these ideas have already been applied to the study of the Hebrew Bible. Next, I explore traumatised memory – that is, how collective memory is influenced by an experience of shared trauma, along with examples of how those ideas, too, have been used in recent biblical studies. All of this is to set the context for the heart of this chapter: how the experience of shared trauma preserved in Exod 13.17 – 15.21 affected the collective memory of the community in which it was reshaped and completed (post-exilic Yehud), and subsequent generations of Israelites.

In my summary of collective memory, I have focused particularly on Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, both of whose ideas have been especially influential within memory studies, widely cited and developed by other scholars.[154] Similarly, in my discussion of traumatised memory, I have concentrated on LaCapra and Alexander, whose ideas are ground-breaking, influential and relevant to any study of how trauma affects a community's collective memory.[155] I also offer illustrations of how conclusions from all four scholars have been applied to biblical texts. My decisions on which biblical scholars to include have been made easier by the small number of scholars involved in this kind of study. Nevertheless, their work remains insightful and all the more valuable for its rarity. I have, however, given particular attention to scholars who have applied collective memory studies to Exodus and/or Moses, as these studies are most directly relevant to my own work.

A notable absence from this chapter is Marianne Hirsch and her work on postmemory. This theory is fascinating, Hirsch's work is especially engaging, and my instinct is that it may be relevant to the study of the Reed Sea episode. I have omitted postmemory from this thesis simply because it adds another layer of complexity to memory studies, and space does not allow me to explore the concept to a satisfactory depth and apply it to the Reed Sea episode alongside traumatised memory.

What is collective memory?

The term 'collective memory' appears to have been coined by Maurice Halbwachs in his incomplete 1941 work *La Topographie Légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: Etude*

[154] For example, Connerton (1989) and Zerubavel (1995) cite and build on Halbwachs' theories, and Halbwachs and Assmann are both referenced throughout Erll and Nünning's edited volume of essays on cultural memory (2008).
[155] Le Goff (1992) has also written useful material on history and memory, but not with such a clear link to trauma.

de Mémoire Collective, and explained at more length in *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (1952).[156] I have drawn on this second work, more coherent and more extensive than the first, in order to summarise and critique Halbwachs' ideas. Halbwachs proposes the idea of collective memory as an explanation for why an individual's memories are influenced by the group(s) to which they feel a sense of belonging (1992: 49), and why certain past events recur within a group while others are forgotten (1992: 39). Central to his thesis is his contention that an individual's memory derives from outside themselves (1992: 169-170). That is, the individual is influenced and shaped by the society in which they live, and this shaping includes the individual's recollections of the past (1992: 50-51).

It must be noted that Halbwachs did not create his ideas *ex nihilo*. His influences are not immediately clear, partly because he provides surprisingly few references for such a substantial work. But a handful of direct references to Emile Durkheim (1992: 55, 66, 76, 78, 89, 164) give the strongest hint of a guiding influence. Indeed, Halbwachs' interest in memory as a product of a group appears to owe a good deal to Durkheim's concept of collective consciousness (c.f. Durkheim, 1933: 147).[157] It was Durkheim who first considered 'the ties which bind us to society and which come from the community of beliefs and sentiments' (Durkheim, 1933: 147; Halbwachs, 1992: 52-53) which assert themselves through 'unwritten rules' such as 'custom and public opinion' (1933: 147). Durkheim also notes the role of the older members of a society in preserving 'traditional beliefs and practices' (1933: 293-294), echoed by Halbwachs (1992: 48). Similarly, Halbwachs appears to have adopted

[156] For this study, I have referred to Coser's translation of Halbwachs' original work, published in 1992.
[157] The most appropriate translation of the French term 'conscience collective', coined by Durkheim, is a moot point. Simpson, for example, favours 'collective conscience' (Durkheim, 1933: 147), but this implies an element of moral judgment in the concept which may be misleading. 'Collective consciousness' is a less literal translation but may communicate the concept more helpfully, suggesting as it does awareness, sentience and thought.

Durkheim's view that the collective consciousness is at its most potent and influential when it is specific and deeply ingrained (Durkheim, 1933: 290; Halbwachs, 1992: 183).[158]

In more recent years, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann has written extensively and influentially on collective memory, developing Halbwachs' ideas and applying the concept of collective memory to Ancient Israel. Several other contemporary writers have made significant contributions to the field of study, but nearly all of these other significant contributors reference Assmann and largely accept his conclusions. He is also highly readable, with a wonderful turn of phrase.[159]

While clearly influenced by Halbwachs, Assmann's writings soon reveal that his understanding of collective memory has a slightly different emphasis. For Assmann, collective memory is not merely a matter of how a society preserves memories it perceives as important, but also of how these memories form the society's shared identity (2011: 16). Assmann is an Egyptologist first and foremost, and he seems to approach the phenomenon of collective memory predominantly through the lens of the ancient world. That said, since Assmann focuses largely on ancient or pre-industrial societies, his examples are similar enough to Ancient Israel to give reasonable grounds for applying his ideas to the Hebrew Bible.

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[158] While Halbwachs has built on some elements of Durkheim's work, he appears to have departed from him at other points. For example, where Durkheim seems vague on which 'traditional beliefs and practices' give shape to a society's collective consciousness (he mentions 'proverbs, adages, dicta' [1933: 170] but little else), Halbwachs is more specific, especially on how recollections of the past influence families (1992: 59, 63), religious groups (1992: 101-102) and social strata (1992: 128-130). Conversely, where Durkheim assumes that collective consciousness will inevitably become 'feebler and vaguer in its entirety… more abstract and more indecisive' (1933: 171), Halbwachs does not mention this, and seems to assume its enduring influence. Also, Durkheim's understanding of collective consciousness seems, paradoxically, to be quite individualistic: for Durkheim, the collective consciousness relies on a 'consensus' of individuals, whereby 'all consciences vibrate in unison' (1933: 152) and 'each [member of a society] contains within himself all that social life consists of' (1933: 151).

[159] 'Anyone who during today fixes his eyes on tomorrow must preserve yesterday from oblivion by grasping it through memory.' (2011: 17) is a good example of Assmann's skilful phrasing.

i) Purpose

Collective memory has a simple purpose: to ensure that events and figures which embody qualities seen as important and desirable are remembered by a community. While memories which encapsulate a 'physical or moral quality' (Halbwachs, 1992: 59) prized by the group are preserved, painful and undesirable aspects of the past are forgotten (1992: 51).[160] Just as a society passes value judgments on individuals while they are alive, it extends these judgements when they are dead (1992: 175), by either preserving or neglecting memories relating to those individuals.

However, not all memories are equal. Some are everyday, prosaic and relate to the recent past: anecdotes which an individual might share with a contemporary. Assmann calls such recollections 'communicative' memories (2011: 36). The class of memories most relevant to this thesis is different. Memories deliberately preserved by a group – stories which are foundational to a community and its collective identity – stand apart from the ordinary recollections of individuals. It is these memories, called 'cultural' memories by Assmann, which are most applicable to Exod 13.17 –15.21. The difference between communicative memory and cultural memory can be summarised as 'the difference between the everyday and the festive, the profane and the sacred, the ephemeral and the lasting, the particular and the general' (2011: 43).

'Cultural memory' is therefore similar to collective memory but more focused: effectively a subset of collective memory. Cultural memory concentrates on foundational stories – myths – which explain the origins of the world, the specific community and its relationships with its deity and the cosmos (Assmann, 2011: 38). Its purpose is thus to shape the community's shared identity.

[160] Halbwachs' thesis contrasts with the concept of cultural trauma, whereby real or imagined grievances from a group's past are supposedly brought to the fore by the group's leaders (see below).

Indeed, the shaping of collective identity is central to cultural memory's function. The preservation of important ideas and values is crucial in its own right, but doing so also reinforces how a community sees itself . 'Just as an individual forms a personal identity through memory, maintaining this despite the passage of time, so a group identity is also dependent on the reproduction of shared memories.' (Assmann, 2011: 72). As a society refers back to its shared memories, which embody its values, those values reinforce its shared identity in the present (2011: 62).

Assmann comments on this subject to a much greater extent than Halbwachs, but he is supported by other theorists. For example, Connerton observes that commemorative ceremonies are particularly powerful in expressing a community's 'master narrative' and therefore reminding the members of that community of their collective identity (1989: 70).

Assmann suggests that the Exodus narrative was a foundational memory for Israel, which 'provided the basis for the identity not only of the people, but also of God himself.' (2011: 180). He appears to believe that the narrative is at least partly based on a literal historical event, calling it a 'foundational act' (2011: 180). But he also suggests that to argue over the historicity of the event is to miss the point: 'What matters here… is not the historical accuracy but the importance of this story for Israelite memory' (2011: 180). The Exodus narrative – the memory of the Exodus – plays a key role in shaping Israel's collective identity, so from that point of view, it is of little consequence whether or not the narrative depicts a literal historical event. (See section *iii)* below for a lengthier discussion of the relationship between collective memory and history.)

If the Exodus (and the Reed Sea episode as part of it) should be understood as an identity-forming myth, this opens up intriguing possibilities for the text. If Israel, Moses and YHWH are portrayed positively and Egypt negatively, this may be as much because of the

authors' concerns for the identity of their contemporaneous community, as because of any actual historical events behind the text.

ii) Memory figures

If an idea or a value is to be remembered by a society, it must be anchored in a 'memory figure': a concrete example of that idea or value (Assmann, 2011: 23-24). This concrete example might be an event, a place or a person (Halbwachs, 1992: 200), which makes me wonder whether (and to what extent) Moses might function as a memory figure within Exod 13.17 – 15.21.[161] Halbwachs describes the Exodus tradition as a memory figure, in that numerous communities who perceive themselves as victims of oppression – not least the ancient survivors of Assyrian and Babylonian terror – find their plight reflected in this literary event (1992: 190). He stops short of proposing that Moses himself might be a memory figure, though.

Interestingly, Assmann goes on to develop his thoughts on how time and place can serve as memory figures (2011: 24-25), but does not offer further comment on how a person might fulfil this function. However, in *Moses the Egyptian*, he suggests that Moses might be, in effect, a deposit for both memories of Akhenaten (a rebellious Egyptian priest) and Israelite anti-Egyptian sentiment (Assmann, 1997: 11, 34-40). Moses is, it seems, remembered in a certain way by the authors of Exodus, because of the circumstances in which they lived and worked. Thus, he functions as a memory figure, although Assmann does not directly apply this label to him. I am not convinced there is sufficient evidence to give credence to the

[161] As an example of a person as a memory figure, Halbwachs mentions Catherine of Siena seeing Jesus Christ as an example of suffering, influenced by the social and political upheavals of her time. Thus, Christ was a memory figure for Catherine: she saw her values embodied by this individual, and her memories of him were influenced by the context in which she lived (1992: 109).

‘Moses as Egyptian’ theory[162], but in articulating this theory, Assmann at least raises important questions on how biblical figures – Moses in particular – might function as a memory figure for Israel.

Intriguingly for my own work, Assmann muses that the Pentateuch’s depiction of the exodus might be a ‘traumatic memory’ (1997: 25). I agree with Assmann’s observation but disagree with his conclusion. For Assmann, markers of trauma within the text of Exodus derive from religious and political upheaval in fourteenth century Egypt; from Akhenaten's revolution (1997: 25). ‘Moses’ is thus a relic of trauma. I would agree that the indicators of trauma within the text are indeed very clear, but I would contend that the origins of such traumas are several centuries later than Assmann would have us believe.

To summarise, within collective memory, important ideas coalesce around concrete exemplars, in the forms of events, places and people. All three of these forms of ‘memory figures’ are applicable to the Hebrew Bible and, indeed, to the Exodus story itself.

iii) Reconstruction

In order for events and figures to be remembered in a certain way within a community, it is often necessary for an individual’s memories to be reconstructed. This occurs not merely through tacit influence but also by means of overt societal pressure to remember in a certain way: to reconstruct recollections of the past into their desired form (Halbwachs, 1992: 51). ‘Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not

[162] Assmann is not the first to advance this theory. Freud first suggested it in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) and it was then developed by Joseph Campbell, who saw the biblical story of Moses as an archetype for a mythological hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949).

possess.' (1992: 51). Not only that, but this pressure continues to exert influence on an individual, even when s/he is no longer physically present within the society to whom s/he feels a sense of belonging. Collective memory is thus underpinned by bonds of intimacy and 'kinship' (1992: 49, 53, 56).

The implication, of course, is that a community's memory of an event may, in itself, be reconstructed. In the same way that an individual's memories may not be entirely true to actual past events, so a community will 'remember' a version of the past which may distort the literal historical events (deliberately or unconsciously), so as to emphasise important ideas or values. For example, the Bar Kokhba revolt against Rome, from 132-135 C.E., is described by contemporary Jewish sources as a crushing defeat, and Bar Kokhba himself is presented as a liar and a rogue. But from the nineteenth century onwards, a new interest in Jewish self-determination – and therefore in Jewish antiquity – has resulted in a revised memory of the revolt: it has come to be remembered by the Jewish community, not as a failed uprising but as a moment of heroism and an expression of their indomitable national spirit and struggle for freedom (Zerubavel, 1995: 48-55). And Bar Kokhba is remembered as a beloved folk hero, with his memory embellished by newly created legends (1995: 54, 103-104).

Just as a collective memory may be reconstructed, it may be revised. A memory is very difficult to modify, especially if it derives from a long time past or has influenced a great many people, or both, and has therefore become deeply ingrained in society (Halbwachs, 1992: 183). But even a prized memory can be 'opposed' and 'transformed' by ideas from the present, if these new ideas 'correspond to a collective experience, if not as ancient, at least much larger' (1992: 184). So, a community's collective memory can be radically revised if the community is confident that newer beliefs, shored up by revised memories, will replace the older beliefs adequately (1992: 187). Furthermore, a community's deeply-held beliefs can

be thrown into question by an experience of shared trauma. Traumatic events can be said to 'undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience… violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.' (Herman, 1997: 51). This being the case, a traumatised community might deem it necessary to revise their beliefs and, at the same time, to revise the memories which inform their belief system.

'Memory culture' can be said to apply to all societies – ancient and modern – and focuses not on what a community finds useful to remember but on what it decides must not be forgotten (Assmann, 2011: 16). Historical accuracy is not essential within this – the question of historical fact is irrelevant. What matters is the preservation of knowledge, and preserving cultural memories as myths makes them more real and more powerful than any dry description of historical facts could ever be (2011: 38). The boundaries between memory and myth therefore become blurred. So it would be tempting to describe cultural memory as 'cultural myth-making' instead. However, even if a community realises that a particular cultural memory deviates from historical fact, that community can still choose to 'remember' people and events in that way. (This is illustrated by Israel's ready acceptance of the modern legend of Bar Kokhba and the lion, which has no basis whatsoever in contemporary source material [Zerubavel, 1995: 103-104]). A cultural memory therefore remains a memory, despite being simultaneously (at least partly) a myth.

This serves to illustrate a key point: memory is not history. While history (in Halbwachs' and Assmann's understanding) has to do with universal realities, memory is specific to an individual group or community. There is no universal memory or objective 'truth' to a memory's form or content. Indeed, a community defines its shared memories partly in opposition to the memories of other communities (Assmann, 2011: 28-29).

If collective memory reconstructs historical events and figures to express important ideas and beliefs, if a deeply-ingrained memory can itself be revised in light of a contemporary crisis, then even wholesale changes to a community's collective memory are possible. The logical conclusion is that a 'memory' might even be a pure creation, with no basis whatsoever in historical events.

iv) Preservation

For an important person or event to be remembered by a community, it must be preserved. For 'communicative memories', based on everyday experiences from the recent past, this preservation might take place simply by individuals sharing and discussing these memories (Assmann, 2011: 36). However, for 'cultural' memories, stories foundational to a community and its collective identity, the process of preservation is much more formalised. Halbwachs notes that the elderly tend to be seen as the guardians of collective memories, especially in primitive societies (1992: 48), and Assmann develops this idea, arguing that such memories are indeed entrusted only to a select group of people, but that these carrier groups vary from one society to another. Poets, bards, scribes, priests and teachers may all be given the mantle of preserving memories, carrying them and ensuring they are passed on appropriately (Assmann, 2011: 39). And just as a very select group of people preserves cultural memories, other groups (e.g. women and members of lower social strata) are flatly excluded from articulating these memories in any kind of public context (2011: 40).

Assmann illustrates this trend by referring to classical China and Ancient Greece, where certain specialised forms of communication had to be mastered before an individual could presume to carry and express cultural memories, and to twentieth century Senegalese bards (2011: 39-40). However, this does not seem to be applicable to all societies. For

example, I would question to what extent specialised forms of communication of cultural memories can be observed within modern, Western societies. To be sure, we still have poets, artists and teachers, but I doubt whether their art is as formalised, and whether they hold the same influence over the population, as their counterparts in less industrialised contexts.

Nor can we assume that all carrier groups of cultural memories operate within the same limitations. A 'bard' is not the same thing as a 'scribe'. So while Rwandan bards may be required to learn eighteen royal rituals, word for word, with little scope for their own literary creations (Assmann, 2011: 39-40), the scribes who composed the book of Exodus may have had a very different role. As revisionist Bible scholars argue, such scribes would have had freedom to create stories, as well as responsibilities to record legal documents and financial transactions (see e.g. Davies, 1998: 16-18). So, although Assmann does not make this explicit, the possibility remains that a cultural memory might be created by its carrier group, not simply preserved by them.

There is a linguistic difference, too. Cultural memories tend to be expressed in an older form of the community's language, instead of the contemporary vernacular (e.g. Ancient Hebrew instead of Yiddish) (Assmann, 2011: 18; 2008: 117-118), lending those memories a tone which suggests weight and significance. Davies agrees, claiming that scribal compositions – at least biblical texts – feature an 'artificial archaic language, which marks off literary texts from other writing and from speech' (1998: 34). The argument for such artificial archaisation in biblical texts is contested but it is intriguing that this trend is observed in other cultures. This raises questions about whether it might, after all, apply to the Reed Sea narrative.

Thus, a community's most significant memories are jealously guarded. Only a select few individuals are allowed to keep and communicate them, and this communication is done

by means of rituals and festivals, and through carefully preserved texts (Halbwachs, 1992: 101-102; Assmann, 2011: 72-74). The memory of the Passover is preserved and communicated through the Seder meal (Halbwachs, 1992: 116; Assmann, 2011: 73). A cultural memory's 'special' status is therefore made clear to the community by its preservation by a select group of people, by its archaic language and often by the ritualised form in which it is communicated.

Neither Halbwachs nor Assmann reaches an entirely clear conclusion on how a society decides precisely which memories must be preserved. Both give hints on this, however. Halbwachs emphasises an element of collective judgment: society preserves memories of events and figures which encapsulate important and desirable ideas or moral qualities (1992: 59), and Assmann implies something similar; that events and figures must be perceived as somehow foundational to the society's history, in order for that society to deem it necessary to remember them (2011: 38). Assmann also observes, astutely, that power can influence the selection and preservation of collective memories. A ruler may co-opt his society's memories to emphasise qualities and ideas which suit his agenda, to legitimise his leadership and, above all, to ensure that his own deeds will be remembered (2011: 54). So, although memories are chosen for preservation largely by consensus, this can be overridden by a charismatic or tyrannical leader. All of this suggests that collective memories are preserved based on the conscious decision of a society – especially the decision of its leaders – rather than tacit approval or rejection. Certainly, it is not a matter of one generation passively inheriting memories from the generation before (Halbwachs, 1992: 80).

Beyond this, Halbwachs points out that religion is often closely associated with the society in which it was birthed, and is therefore integral to preserving memories of that society's origins and pivotal events (1992: 84). With such a close relationship between

religion and society, we could surmise that religious agents are also likely to be involved in any decisions about which memories their society should preserve.

Memory studies and the Hebrew Bible

The divide between collective memory studies and biblical studies is far from neat. Specialists in the history and memory of the ancient world – Assmann and Ben Zvi in particular – are understandably drawn to Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible to illustrate their ideas. And in turn, it is impossible to entirely separate the study of the Hebrew Bible from its repeated imperative to 'remember' (c.f. Deuteronomy).

i) Purpose

Several Bible scholars follow Halbwachs and Assmann, even crediting them as direct influences, in arguing that the Hebrew Bible represents a reflection of the community's desire to preserve important cultural memories.[163] Just as Assmann explains that preserving such memories underpins a community's present, Bible scholars see the Hebrew Bible as a repository of Israel's memories, used to apply important ideas from the nation's past to the present of the biblical authors (e.g. Smith, 2004: 117), and to shape the nation's collective identity (e.g. Blenkinsopp, 2004b: 11-12).

Within Ancient Israel, as within numerous other societies, collective memory was not concerned only with preserving memory figures – places, events and people – but also with interpreting those figures, in the light of present concerns. For example, Mark S. Smith argues that the Yehud community chose to remember Sinai as a pivotal cultic moment, because it

[163] For example, Hendel cites Halbwachs and Assmann as direct influences (2001: 601-603) and, while Blenkinsopp references Connerton instead (2004: 3), Connerton's thesis is itself in step with Halbwachs and Assmann.

helped them come to terms with the loss of the Temple (Smith, 2004: 126, 134). Indeed – and this is an important idea for my own thesis – the entire Exodus narrative was preserved in writing, so as to speak into the present concerns of the community: the escape from slavery, the teaching of Torah and the arrival in a 'promised land' echoed the Yehud community's own direct experiences (2004: 131). The parallels between the Exodus narrative and the return from the Babylonian Exile are clear, although I believe Smith's argument needs support from other sources to be entirely convincing.

Echoing Assmann's ideas on cultural memory as identity-forming, Blenkinsopp argues that the Hebrew Bible serves as a repository for Ancient Israel's shared memories, especially the memory of the fall of Jerusalem (Blenkinsopp, 2004b: 2-3). By extension, in preserving Israel's collective memory, the Hebrew Bible shaped Israel's collective identity (2004: 11-12).

Emphasising the far-reaching consequences of a disaster for a society's identity, Blenkinsopp argues plausibly that the fall of Jerusalem was sufficiently catastrophic to have left an imprint on any and all biblical texts produced afterwards (2004b: 2, 3). Perhaps because of my own interest in trauma literature, I expected him to go on to demonstrate how the fall of Jerusalem resulted in markers of trauma within the text of the Hebrew Bible, but Blenkinsopp changes tack at this point, arguing that Israel preserved the memory of the fall of Jerusalem, 'not so much to perpetuate the memory of the disaster as to explain *why it happened*.' (2004b: 5, emphasis added).[164] Thus, the Hebrew Bible preserves the memory of the fall of Jerusalem to help the community come to terms with the disaster. And through preserving and processing this memory, the community's collective identity is changed.

[164] Janzen argues something very similar with regard to DtrH. For Janzen, the Deuteronomist's desire to answer the 'why' of the Exile is not a marker of trauma but, conversely, minimises the suffering of the people and relegates trauma to the margins of the narrative (2019: 41, 48-50).

A sense of shared identity would have been vital following the Exile, at a time when the fledgling 'new commonwealth' was struggling to establish itself. By articulating, processing and coming to terms with the fall of Jerusalem, in the context of constructing a quasi-mythological past, the Yehud community's shared identity was solidified (Blenkinsopp, 2004b: 11-14). This argument is in step with scholars like Crouch who apply the sociological concept of group identity to biblical texts. Crouch points out that ethnic identity is often constructed in times of social and political upheaval and in response to the discovery of similar but distinct alternative identities (2014: 94-97). In response to exactly these stimuli, Deuteronomy was composed as an exercise in identity formation for Israel (2014: 92). Crouch holds that Deuteronomy was largely composed before the Exile and that the drive to articulate Israelite identity was prompted by an Assyrian influence, not a Babylonian one (2014: 98). However, her observations still add weight to the argument for post-exilic texts as identity forming, even if she does not view Deuteronomy as a post-exilic text.

To me, it seems likely that large portions of the Hebrew Bible were composed in order to reinforce the shared identity of the Yehud community, following the return from Exile, as Blenkinsopp suggests, but he does not specify how he envisages the completed text being communicated to the wider community. Blenkinsopp makes it clear that, in his view, the 'vast majority' of residents of Yehud would have been unable to read and write, and even the scribes who are likely to have written down post-exilic biblical texts would have been limited in their linguistic skill and understanding (2004b: 4-5), but he offers no alternative explanation for how the community's 'myths of origin' might have been passed from person to person.

Blenkinsopp's essay on memory and history in Ancient Israel was written at a similar time to Assmann's treatise on Moses as an Egyptian, and the two seem to think along similar

lines, but Blenkinsopp gives no direct reference to Assmann's work. Neither does Blenkinsopp acknowledge Vamik Volkan, which is surprising as the opening pages of Blenkinsopp's essay closely resemble Volkan's work. He even directly mentions transgenerational transmission of memories, especially memories of a disaster (2004b: 3). The only significant difference between Blenkinsopp and Volkan on this subject is that Blenkinsopp does not name 'trauma' as a result of a disaster, despite dancing all around it: he describes specific events which deeply disturbed the societies affected and affirms that such disasters have a significant bearing on the society's subsequent collective identity (2004b: 3). He also supplies the same example of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 as being pivotal to Serbia's national identity (2004b: 3).

The Hebrew Bible, then, preserves Ancient Israel's most important memories, in order to explain and come to terms with its most traumatic experiences, and to reinforce the nation's collective identity.

ii) Memory figures

As Assmann argues, cultural memory can be preserved partly through its association with a 'memory figure': a key cultural object such as a place, a monument, a ritual or an artefact (2011: 23-24). Several Bible scholars have developed this idea, with reference to the Hebrew Bible. For example, Smith highlights the importance of place in shaping cultural memory. Mount Sinai, for instance, is pivotal to Israel's collective memory: at this place, the nation's shared past and religious identity are recast, and Israel's earlier monolatry is reframed into outright monotheism (2004: 119, 126).

Mount Sinai is significant in another respect, too. Ritual and religious observance are key factors in shaping collective memory (Smith, 2004: 123), and Sinai represents a place of

revelation, where the people receive the Law from God, and a place of worship for a people without a Temple. This emphasis on Sinai in Exodus was especially important at the time when the book was written, Smith claims. As noted above, in post-exilic Yehud, when Jerusalem and its Temple had not yet been fully restored following their destruction by Babylon, an alternative sanctuary would have been necessary to help the community come to terms with the fall of Jerusalem. Exodus, completed in this context, therefore remembers Sinai as a place of worship and theophany (2004: 134).

Just as places function as memory figures within the Hebrew Bible, so do events and people (Ben Zvi, 2013: 335). Hendel looks at Abraham from this perspective: the collective memory of Abraham, as preserved in Genesis, is functional rather than simply descriptive of his life and actions. 'To both God and humans, Abraham's memory restores a link between past, present, and future, providing a catalyst for reflection and action.' (2005: 32). So the preserved memory of Abraham is a device to solidify collective identity and make the past relevant to the present and the future. Indeed, within the literary figure of Abraham, there are layers of memory, some of which are in tension with one another, or even directly contradictory. 'Countermemories' have been created and attached to Abraham, as fitted the concerns of the agents who added them – echoing Assmann's description of collective memories being preserved in a manner to fit the interests of present (2005: 41).

Likewise, Moses can be described as memory figure; 'one of the most salient sites of memory in ancient Yehud.' (Ben Zvi, 2013: 335). As Hendel observes, Moses, as a character in the text, comprises many characteristics desirable to Israel and integral to the nation's identity, therefore embodying and mediating multiple different perspectives and values (2001:

620). This depiction of Israel's founding leader makes the 'past' of the Exodus immediate and relevant in the future (2001: 604).[165]

Moses is a complicated figure, however. Ehud Ben Zvi argues that a 'positive feedback loop' developed around Moses: as Moses grew in perceived significance, more and more important ideas came to be attached to him, which only increased his significance even further. Moses thus became a 'magnet' for ideas and values the Yehud community held dear, to the point where remembering Moses came to be synonymous with articulating Israel's collective identity (2013: 335-336). In the same way, Hendel suggests that Moses gathered 'memories' of many different sorts around him: 'Everything else about Moses' life is so interwoven with narrative motifs and religious ideology that it is impossible to disengage the history from the tradition.' (2001: 615). Thus, it is impossible to tell how much of the historical man is left in the literary persona. The literary figure of Moses is just as much a memory figure as Sinai or the Ark of the Covenant.

This proposition is consistent with earlier work by Martin Noth, who notices five overarching themes within the Pentateuch[166], surmises that these themes derived from independent traditions and concludes that the figure of Moses was used as a narrative device to hold these thematic strands together (1972: 156, 160-161). Although there was a historical core to the Moses story (Noth argues), narrative elements containing Moses were added to the themes to which he did not originally belong[167], to give the Pentateuch greater coherence. As

[165] Hendel assumes that the Exodus was a literal historical event, and that memories of Moses were brought together in a coherent form several centuries before Yehud came into existence: it was 'early Israel' which first needed a depiction of its founding leader, and a depiction of the kind which would remain relevant to later settlers who were not themselves part of the Exodus (Hendel, 2001: 604). I would dispute both the historicity of the Exodus and Hendel's dating of the biblical account of Moses.
[166] According to Noth, these themes are: 'guidance out of Egypt'; 'guidance into the arable land'; 'promise to the patriarchs'; 'guidance in the wilderness'; and 'revelation at Sinai' (1972: 46-62).
[167] Noth does not envisage Moses being relevant to 'revelation at Sinai' or 'guidance out of Egypt' in their original traditions (1972: 162).

the Pentateuch was edited and developed, Moses thus became '*the* overwhelmingly prominent human figure of the Pentateuchal narrative' (1972: 174 [emphasis original]).[168]

Thomas Thompson argues something very similar but from a different perspective. According to Thompson, the Pentateuch is in essence a collection of pre-existing narrative units[169] which 'attained their canonical positions because of their association with the patriarchs and Moses respectively' (1992: 358). Thus, instead of Moses being inserted into themes and stories with which he was not originally associated, narrative units within the Pentateuch are arranged according to their relevance to Moses. Thompson argues that the individual events described are not necessarily presented in chronological order or in the context of the geographical locations with which they were originally linked. Instead, their places in the overarching narrative are dictated by the memory figures purportedly involved. The result is that the finished pentateuchal text ties a series of heroes to a series of pivotal events, removed from the chronological and geographical contexts given in the traditions from which they derived (1992: 366-367). Partly because of this, although individual 'units of traditions' may be historically reliable, the finished Pentateuch, as a collection of these units, is not (1992: 365-366).

iii) Reconstruction

The 'reconstructed' nature of collective memory is one of its defining features. Therefore, insofar as a biblical text expresses a collective memory, this memory must have been reconstructed, at least to an extent: its depiction of events and people cannot be assumed

[168] von Rad agrees with Noth that Moses is unlikely to have featured in all of the pentateuchal traditions and that his role would have been embellished as part of the process of editing and compiling the Pentateuch (von Rad, 2001: 289). However, he concludes that it is impossible to tell which source material would have mentioned Moses and which would not (2001: 291).
[169] Whether these units were oral traditions or written fragments is not made entirely clear.

to be a literal historical account. Blenkinsopp notices just this, arguing that collective memory was at the heart of the process of composing the Hebrew Bible. Through this process, the Yehud community attempted to 'construct a past', gathering 'myths of origin… stories about culture heroes' (2004b: 12) in order to fill out the community's shared identity. However, these myths and stories bear little relation to historical events. They represent 'repressed desires or anxieties, a kind of collective false memory syndrome, or simply invented.' (2004b: 13). Blenkinsopp stops short of calling the resultant literature 'fiction', but suggests that the memories of figures and events from Israel's past which became preserved in the Hebrew Bible underwent significant revisions and adaptations in the process of writing and compiling (2004b: 15-16). This does not mean that we must entirely dismiss the possibility of some kind of basis in history, however. As Hendel observes (adopting a more cautious position than Blenkinsopp), biblical narratives, as cultural memories, 'tend to be *a mixture of historical truth and fiction*, composed of "authentic" historical details, folklore motifs, ethnic self-fashioning, ideological claims, and narrative imagination.' (2001: 602 [emphasis added]).

Hendel picks out the Exodus narrative as a classic example of collective memory: 'a focal point of ancient Israelite religion… a foundational event' which would therefore have been vital to preserve (2001: 601). This being the case, there is value in asking how radically, and in what ways, the narrative might have been reconstructed. This forms a key strand of my application of memory studies to Exod 13.17 – 15.21.

iv) Preservation

Israel was no exception to the common tacit imperative to 'keep and remember' significant people and events, in order to reinforce collective identity (Assmann, 2011: 16-17, 72). As a result, the Hebrew Bible contains many such collective memories, which were

preserved in writing, so as to shape and affirm its collective identity, even through periods of intense strain and upheaval. For example, in Assmann's opinion, the covenant with YHWH, as recorded in Deuteronomy, enabled Israel to remember its origins and its identity throughout the Babylonian Exile, despite the strain and disruption that this experience would have enacted upon the nation. Other societies, comparable to Israel, either assimilated into the cultures of their conquerors or simply forgot their past and their identities, because of the lack of a written record of their shared memories (2011: 137-138).[170]

I agree with the principle Assmann proposes, but not its specifics. The idea of biblical texts buttressing Israel's identity seems very reasonable, but I'm not convinced this would have been the case during the Exile. Assmann implies that the covenant would have been preserved for a significant length of time – perhaps for centuries before the Exile, although he does not specify that – which relies on either a well-established pre-exilic oral tradition or a very early written version of Deuteronomy.[171] It is doubtful that Deuteronomy would have existed in a form substantial enough to reinforce Israel's collective identity, before the return from Exile.[172] Like Assmann, I can see a theme of displacement within the Pentateuch. But I do not believe the text and therefore the theme would have been established enough at that stage to help Israel make sense of the Exile and hold on to their collective identity throughout that period, as Assmann argues (2011: 181).

However, I do find Assmann's ideas helpful if viewed from the opposite perspective. Instead of the themes of 'emigration and segregation' within Deuteronomy sustaining Israel in exile (2011: 181), I would instead contend that those themes are a *result* of the Exile. Large

[170] For example, Assmann holds that the 'ten northern tribes' suffered a loss of ethnic identity, following their conquest by Assyria (2011: 137-138).
[171] Assmann also implies that the text might not have assumed its final form until after the Exile (2011: 186). On that point, we agree.
[172] See chapter two for a more extensive discussion of how and when the Pentateuch was written, including my reasons for dissenting from the documentary hypothesis.

sections of the Pentateuch are likely to have been composed during and following the Exile, and the themes of 'emigration and segregation' were therefore influenced by the experience of exile and by the return to a land in which the status of the 'true Israel' was disputed. This, in itself, underpinned Israel's collective memory and its identity as returning exiles, distinct from surrounding nations, for subsequent generations.

Very recently, A.J. Culp has developed Assmann's and Halbwachs' ideas, again focusing on Deuteronomy. Culp's work is helpful particularly as it emphasises how a biblical text can not just sustain a community's identity through the memories of previous generations, but also intentionally shape the collective identity of future generations. So for example, Deuteronomy not only preserves Israel's collective memories; it is also a 'memory maker' for future generations, with repeated injunctions to 'remember' the places, people and events it depicts. Through Deuteronomy, remembering certain things in a certain way becomes bound up with the covenant itself: it carries the weight of an act of obedience to YHWH (Culp, 2020: 7-8).

Culp also provides a clearer answer than Assmann on how collective memories are preserved in order to promote remembering. It was Assmann who first proposed a list of eight 'mnemotechnics' in play in Deuteronomy, but this comprises just a brief list towards the end of an extensive volume, and is easily overlooked (2011: 196-199).[173] Furthermore, Culp is right to observe that several of the terms Assmann uses are vague and generic, and say little about the exact mechanisms used to promote memory (2020: 105).

Instead, Culp suggests three 'memory vectors' visible in Deuteronomy: story, ritual and song (2020: 109). Ritual is not directly relevant to my study of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, but

[173] Culp cites seven mnemotechnics in Assmann's work, rather than eight. He seems to have conflated 'visibility: marks on the body' with 'limitic symbolism: inscriptions on doorposts', which are, admittedly, very similar mechanisms (Culp, 2020: 105; Assmann, 2011: 197).

story and song are both included within that text. Story is a powerful means for 'inculcating visual memory', encouraging whoever hears it to imagine themselves present and to own the memory contained within the story as theirs, as a collective and as individuals. Story also serves to explain 'why?' and 'so what?': that is, why particular events matter and what their significance is for life in the hearer's present (2020: 131). Song functions slightly differently. A song is easily remembered and easily shared, suggesting that memories preserved in the form of a song are intended to be passed on from person to person, and especially from generation to generation (2020: 183). A song is also more likely than a story to provoke strong emotions. Culp gives Deut 32.1-43 as an example, which constitutes a warning of the consequences of breaking faith with YHWH, imbuing its hearers with a sense of fear (2020: 183).

Assmann's and Culp's ideas bring into focus how the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses might have served to both preserve Israel's collective memory and promote remembering in subsequent generations. Including both story and song, the text contains two different but equally effective memory vectors, raising the question of how the text was intended to affect the memory and identity of its readers or hearers. Later in this chapter, I outline how the issue of preservation of collective memory is relevant to Exod 13.17 – 15.21.

Traumatised memory

The concept of collective memory has been complicated by the recent blurring of boundaries between collective memory and collective trauma. However, to say this concept has complicated the discussion is not to say it is without value: far from it. The delineation between memory and history, and memory's relation to trauma – articulated most clearly and

most prominently by Dominick LaCapra and Jeffrey Alexander – have opened up a new dimension in trauma studies, influencing sociologists and Bible scholars alike.

In essence, these two theorists develop the key features of collective memory which we have already explored, putting a new slant on these features. It is illuminating to see how they have done this, and their observations are relevant to how collective memory applies to Exod 13.17 – 15.21, particularly since we have already established that the text is influenced by trauma. I will therefore briefly explain how trauma affects collective memory, using the same structure as the summary of collective memory above, and concentrating on LaCapra's and Alexander's ideas.

i) Purpose – acting out or working through?

LaCapra and Alexander illuminate not how a group influences an individual to remember particular events and figures, but rather how a group's collective memory is affected by a shared trauma and even by individuals' accounts of that trauma. They therefore offer unique insights into how the Reed Sea narrative – a text influenced by trauma – relates to the collective memory of the Yehud community.

It is striking that Freud seems to influence this field of study far more than Halbwachs. LaCapra, for example, makes no reference to Halbwachs in any of the three of his books I have studied. Instead, he bases his understanding of memory and trauma on Freud. He uses Freudian terminology such as 'acting out' and 'working through'[174] and, when he describes history as a process of 'transference' of accounts of past events, he is once again using Freudian language.[175]

[174] LaCapra references Freud's essays, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through' (1914) and 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917).
[175] LaCapra's ideas seem to echo Paul Connerton, too, although he does not reference him. Connerton's 1989 volume draws on Freudian 'transference' as a means of forming collective memory (1989: 26, 39), and suggests

Compulsive 'acting out' is a result of trauma, causing the survivor to repetitively relive the past experience at the root of their trauma. Within this acting out, the boundaries between past, present and future become blurred: 'the past returns and the future is blocked out or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop'. To put it briefly, 'tenses implode' (LaCapra, 2001: 21). The alternative to endless acting out is 'working through'; for the survivor to reach a point of acknowledging that a traumatising experience happened to them, but that this event is in the past and does not have to constitute part of their identity. Mourning can be understood as an example of working through (2001: 21-22); a means of helping an individual survivor or a group to come to terms with their loss.[176] However, the survivor or the group must actively choose working through over acting out. And for many trauma survivors, particularly the Holocaust survivors upon whom LaCapra concentrates, working through seems a betrayal of those who didn't survive. They prefer to remain acting out, from a sense of 'fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it.' (2001: 22). Thus, some survivors and groups may work through their trauma by expressing their grief and loss, while others, unable or unwilling to work through their experiences, remain indefinitely at the stage of acting out their trauma.

These differing responses have implications for history and collective memory. As a community recovers from a shared trauma, the people will seek to understand what they have experienced and explain how and why it happened. An element of reconstruction is necessary in this; perhaps more so than in conventional collective memory, since trauma by its nature resists being grasped by the conscious mind. (See section *iii)* below for a more extensive

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that collective memory draws on both eyewitness accounts and historiographical investigation (1989: 14). Both points are very close to LaCapra's conclusions.

[176] LaCapra distinguishes loss from absence. What he calls 'structural trauma' can result from an important absence within a group, but this is distinct from the 'historical trauma' we have described so far, which derives from a shared sense of loss (1998: 47-50).

explanation of this.) Historiographical enquiry is therefore often necessary for a community to process its experiences and establish collective memory, and this historiographical enquiry might be a means of enabling working through: 'historiography… may help… to come to terms with the wounds and scars of the past. Such a coming-to-terms would seek knowledge whose truth claims are not one-dimensionally objectifying or narrowly cognitive but involve affect' (LaCapra, 2001: 42). That is, the process of constructing 'secondary memory', helping individuals or a group of survivors to articulate their (often confused) experiences clearly and in conjunction with other historical evidence, can be a way of helping those survivors to come to terms with those experiences. And it may help survivors to move beyond the alternative – acting out – which would leave them stuck in an endless repetition of their trauma.

So a text overshadowed by trauma might either help the author (and the audience) to work through their experiences or feed into the endless repetition of acting out. A trauma-informed text which appears to reconstruct a community's experiences, in order to shape its collective memory, is likely to enable working through rather than acting out. I believe these criteria apply to the Reed Sea narrative.

At this stage, I must address an important point I have so far left unmentioned: we must examine the assumption that 'trauma' means the same thing for a collective as for an individual. Jeffrey Alexander seeks to challenge this assumption. Building on LaCapra's work on how individuals' trauma can influence their society's collective memory, Alexander differentiates between 'individual trauma', a psychological response to a sudden and overwhelming event, and 'collective trauma', anything that damages the bonds between members of a society and threatens their sense of community (2004a: 4). He critiques the classic psychoanalytic understanding of trauma, especially Caruth's application of this model

to sociology, and instead presents trauma as a social process, by which pain or persecution enters into a society's collective consciousness and changes their shared identity.

If collective trauma does indeed constitute something different from individual trauma, then not everything that is true of individual trauma also applies to collective trauma. Most significantly, Alexander holds that, while individual trauma is an involuntary psychological response to a particular event or set of circumstances, collective trauma is 'something constructed by society' (2004a: 2). A society will create such a trauma when they have suffered a shared experience of sufficient gravity to seriously affect their collective memory and identity. By constructing this trauma, the society begins to come to terms with the existence and origin of suffering, and to apportion blame for it (2004a: 1). Collective trauma is therefore not an involuntary response but a 'socially mediated attribution' (2004a: 8).[177]

Alexander proposes a solution to an awkward question: precisely how a society can be 'traumatised' when the majority of psychological literature presents trauma as a phenomenon affecting individuals. But the suggestion that collective trauma is 'constructed' is problematic. Trauma, as it is understood as a psychological concept, is involuntary on the part of the survivor. It is more imposed upon the survivor than in any way 'constructed' by them. Alexander's suggestion differentiates collective trauma from individual trauma so starkly that I find it difficult to accept the label of 'trauma' for it, at all. There is abundant evidence that societies can be collectively traumatised – a brief survey of accounts of the Holocaust and its aftermath provides ample evidence in itself – but the idea that a collective trauma is 'created',

[177] Alexander asserts that collective trauma is 'imagined' but is at pains to point out that this does not mean it is a complete fabrication, without any kind of basis in a group's lived experience. Collective trauma is 'imagined' in the sense of Durkheim's 'religious imagination': that is, it articulates and gives shape to an intangible, confused experience, often through some kind of 'aesthetic creation' (2004a: 8-9).

merely because a group feels its collective identity has been damaged, seems out of step with trauma's most essential characteristics.

Revising the label 'collective trauma' therefore seems not just advisable but necessary, in order to convey its essence and its difference from 'psychological trauma'. What Alexander seems to be describing could simply be explained as 'collective memory'. A community constructs a shared past, in order to preserve memories of significant events and figures. Within this constructed past, the boundaries between history and fiction become blurred: the events in question may not even have happened at all (2004a: 9). And the 'facts' of this past are dictated not by what is strictly 'true' but by the group's consensus on the version of their past which they wish to preserve, and the effects of this past on their collective identity (2004: 9-10). Thus, the community dictates what an individual should remember, and how they should remember it. In effect, Alexander has circled back to Halbwachs' and Assmann's conclusions. What he calls 'collective trauma' is little more than Halbwachs' 'collective memory': an experience which has a significant impact (positive or negative) on a community, and must therefore be remembered in a form which highlights ideas and values that community holds dear, thus influencing the community's collective identity.

Differentiating between the effects of 'psychological trauma' and 'collective trauma' is confusing and misleading. We must take seriously the deep psychological impact of a traumatic experience for a whole community, just as for an individual survivor. And in the aftermath of a collective trauma, a text which seeks to articulate and explain the community's shared experience can be extremely valuable in enabling that community to come to terms with their trauma and 'work through' it.

ii) Memory figures – sites of memory, sites of trauma

As we have established, collective memory rests on ‘memory figures’: places, events and people which come to represent a community’s most important ideas and values. But LaCapra proposes a fascinating development to this idea: ‘a memory site is generally also a site of trauma, and the extent to which it remains invested with trauma marks the extent to which memory has not been effective in coming to terms with it, notably through modes of mourning.’ (1998: 10). This holds true for many public monuments, especially war memorials, which do indeed express mourning and trauma at the same time as a determination to collectively remember the events which made mourning necessary and trauma unavoidable. However, I would suggest that some sites of memory are sites of triumph, rather than mourning. Trafalgar Square is a commemoration of Nelson’s victory over France, rather than mourning for those who died during the battle. Nelson’s Column itself is a monument to the man’s achievements, over and above any sense of grief at his passing. Perhaps there is inevitably an element of trauma involved in remembering a war, but I would be cautious in assuming that. It is intriguing, though, that LaCapra envisages trauma being so closely tied to memory. If the biblical figure of Moses can be understood as a site of memory (as Ben Zvi argues [2013: 335] and Hendel implies [2001: 615]), it is worth investigating whether Moses might equally be a site of trauma.

iii) Reconstruction – trauma versus history

Collective memory always involves at least an element of reconstructing historical events, even in an attempt to recall the exact details of an event as faithfully as possible. Because of the fallibility of the human mind, it is entirely possible for an individual to recall an event differently from how it actually happened, or even to have a vivid memory of an

event which never happened at all (LaCapra, 1998: 9).[178] This is especially true where the individual concerned is unusually impressionable and strongly influenced to remember particular things. Adding trauma into the equation makes memory more slippery still. A traumatising event is, by nature, difficult to grasp and articulate, and the event's subsequent intrusions into the survivor's consciousness (by means of dreams or flashbacks) come as a result of the mind's attempts to understand and process what happened (LaCapra, 1998: 9). This is entirely in step with conclusions put forward by psychologists such as Herman (1997: 37-42) and van der Kolk and van der Hart (1995: 171-172), and by Caruth in her application of trauma to art and literature (1995: 4-7).

Trauma can be understood as being incompatible with history. A still-traumatised survivor, stuck in the process of acting out, may well express memories of his/her experience but, because trauma itself resists articulation and understanding, any memories the survivor expresses may represent a distorted or entirely erroneous version of historical events (LaCapra, 2001: 88-89). In this way, trauma and history are mutually-opposed.

Trauma therefore makes the process of remembering deeply problematic. Indeed, for LaCapra, trauma is incompatible with 'primary memory'; that is, accounts from those who have directly experienced traumatising events. The details of those events must instead be reconstructed through 'secondary memory'; a critical engagement with and evaluation of primary memory, usually by someone other than the survivor themselves (1998: 20-21). Traumatised memory can never be a simple, dry description of places, people and events. It is necessarily something pieced together from fragments of literal events, combined with personal impressions a survivor forms in their mind.

[178] To illustrate this point, LaCapra mentions the notorious trend of 'false memory syndrome', by which unscrupulous psychotherapists create 'memories' of childhood abuse in some of their patients.

An element of imagination may also be necessary in clarifying and shaping a traumatising experience into a memorable representation (Alexander, 2004a: 9). However, Alexander goes too far in suggesting that, 'events that are deeply traumatizing may not actually have occurred at all'; that it is enough that the society *feels* its collective memory and identity has been damaged by events, for those events to be preserved as traumata in the same way as strictly historical occurrences (2004a: 8, 10). This view is underpinned by examples of 'angry nationalist groups', such as late-twentieth century Serbians and even the Nazis, claiming to be slighted as a pretext for retaliation against their purported oppressors (2004a: 8-9). It relies on a definition of collective trauma as a social construct instead of a psychological reality, so does not apply to the kind of memory reconstruction LaCapra describes.

While it may be impossible to reveal the 'truth' – the literal historical events behind a primary memory – the process of formulating secondary memory, investigating and evaluating primary memory, is an inherently historiographical exercise (LaCapra, 1998: 21; 1994: 84). So, while we should be wary of conflating history with memory, we should be equally wary of seeing history and memory as being in direct opposition to each other (1998: 16-17; 1994: 84). Formulating a memory of events which is widely accepted within a group and internalised by its members often involves historiographical efforts.

Applying these possibilities to my own thesis, the question becomes what sort of memory the Reed Sea narrative might be. Is it a primary memory: a quasi-fantasy produced by authors still in the grip of traumatised acting out? Or is it a secondary memory: a combination of survivors' direct experiences and other historiographical sources? I believe it is something different: a little of both options, in the form of a proxy memory[179], which

[179] I have borrowed the term 'proxy memory' from Morrow's study of trauma and violence in Deuteronomy 7 (2011).

helped the authors express and memorialise their own trauma without directly describing the experiences which traumatised them.

iv) Preservation – mediated mass communication

A collective memory – traumatised or otherwise – must be preserved in order to be internalised by a community. Alexander proposes that a 'carrier group' is needed to articulate and preserve a collective trauma (Alexander, 2004a: 11).[180] Such carrier groups are distinguished by having both a position within society and an ability to articulate a claim of being wronged, which allow them to present a compelling message. They may be part of the society's elite, but they may equally be marginalised. The trauma claim must have an audience if it is to be accepted into the society's collective identity. In the first instance, this audience will be other members of the carrier group. Only once the carrier group has been entirely convinced of the legitimacy of the claim can this claim then be presented to the wider society (2004a: 11-12). Wider society will scrutinise the trauma claim, investigating 'the nature of the pain', 'the nature of the victim', the 'Relation of the trauma to the wider audience' and 'Attribution of responsibility'. When these questions have been answered, the trauma will be accepted as 'a new master narrative of social suffering' (2004a: 12-15).

This process of evaluation of the trauma claim is necessary, especially when the carrier group advancing the claim is marginalised within the wider society and the group's experiences challenge the society's dominant narrative. For example, the claim of Mayan Indians (a marginalised ethnic group) that the violence inflicted upon them by the Guatemalan government in the 1980s constituted a genocide was at odds with the government's glossing-over of this violence, and was only upheld after a five-year investigation by a Commission for

[180] The term 'carrier group' derives from Weber's sociology of religion.

Historical Clarification. Similarly, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was needed before the oppression of black South Africans was acknowledged by the rest of the nation (2004a: 19-20).

Alexander also offers an answer to how collective trauma, and indeed collective memories in general, are disseminated. 'Mediated mass communication' allows trauma claims to be shared widely, dramatically and effectively (2004a: 18), and once the political elite accept the trauma claim, the state bureaucracy will itself disseminate it (2004a: 19-21), presumably largely by use of these same mass communication media.

It seems entirely plausible that a collective trauma would be preserved through carrier groups, but Alexander's thinking again rests on the assumption that a 'collective trauma' might be nothing more than an imagined wrong against a group. It is this assumption which makes necessary the lengthy process of investigation he envisages: in Alexander's understanding of collective trauma, an alleged 'trauma' cannot be assumed to be genuine or significant, and society must therefore weigh up the legitimacy of a trauma claim. There may indeed be an element of unspoken evaluation in a society's acceptance of a true collective trauma but it seems unlikely that this evaluation would be so protracted and regimented.

Although I contest Alexander's understanding of the nature of collective trauma, his ideas of how collective traumata are preserved and disseminated remain valuable. The concepts of 'carrier groups' and 'mediated mass communication' raise intriguing possibilities for the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses as traumatised literature. LaCapra and Alexander both concentrate on collective trauma in a modern context, so do not answer how a trauma claim might have been communicated effectively, before the advent of radio or television. Culp's memory vectors may hold the key to explaining mediated mass communication in an ANE context.

Memory, trauma and biblical studies

At the nexus of trauma theory and collective memory studies, a few intrepid Bible scholars are investigating how trauma might have affected Ancient Israel's collective memory. Of these scholars, David Janzen and Tiffany Houck-Loomis are noteworthy in producing illuminating work, influenced by both LaCapra and Alexander.

i) Purpose – acting out or working through?

Building on LaCapra's conclusion that trauma is incompatible with history (Janzen, 2019: 2), Janzen gives examples of this tension from within the Hebrew Bible. He contrasts Lamentations with the Deuteronomistic History, observing that both books were composed in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem but, while Lamentations represents an example of 'acting out', DtrH is far more rational and distanced from Judah's shared trauma.

Janzen sees Lamentations as highly demonstrative, showing a clear, raw sense of trauma. The poem is a harrowing lament, a howl of pain and protest, with 'no stable narrative explanation', therefore conveying a sense of profound suffering (2019: 4, 91). The repetition within Lamentations, as well as the poem's acrostic form, are evidence (Janzen argues) of repeated, inescapable traumatic intrusion and of 'acting out' on the part of the poet (2019: 91-93). These points rest on an assumption that Lamentations represents a genuine and visceral response to the destruction of Jerusalem, the slaughter of its inhabitants and the starvation of the survivors. But the poem appears to borrow heavily from other ANE city laments, not just in its form but also in several of its characteristic motifs (see e.g. O'Connor, 2002: 10). This suggests a type of staged grief, rather than deep and unresolved trauma. Furthermore, the acrostic form of Lamentations, to which Janzen himself draws our attention, indicates a high

degree of literary artistry, of which a poet deep in the throes of traumatic intrusion is unlikely to have been capable.

Conversely, the Deuteronomist glosses over or simply refuses to see Judah's suffering in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem, and seems reluctant to apportion blame (2019: 41, 48-50). He does not seem traumatised by what he has witnessed. Instead, he creates a narrative to explain why the twin disasters of the Exile and the destruction of Jerusalem have taken place. The Deuteronomist 'simply seems to want to acknowledge an unfortunate event in the people's past and move on.' (2019: 49).[181] Janzen suggests that the Deuteronomist was especially interested in the Davidic line of succession, and was preoccupied with the monarchy's successes and failures, to the point of overlooking, or at least not fully grasping, the suffering of the people in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem (2019: 41). This approach does not constitute 'working through' trauma however. While working through involves acknowledging trauma, articulating it but seeking to move beyond it, Janzen describes DtrH as glossing over trauma, acknowledging the events which caused the people's suffering but not engaging with the suffering itself.[182]

Tiffany Houck-Loomis does not use the Freudian terminology of 'acting out' and 'working through' but still provides very helpful illustrations of how trauma affected Israel's collective memory and identity (2018: 39), and where these effects can be seen in biblical texts.[183] Houck-Loomis envisages the Babylonian Exile as being particularly traumatic, but

[181] The sermons of Jeremiah appear to reflect a similar authorial intention. The prophet draws the people's attention to their shared past, reframing it in the light of their recent suffering, and seeking to help them understand and move beyond their collective trauma (Claassens, 2017b: 29).
[182] In his 2012 monograph, Janzen describes how DtrH presents the Babylonian oppression of Judah within a carefully-constructed ethical and theological framework, seeking to make sense of these catastrophic events. However, the resultant master narrative is subverted by powerful and uncontrollable eruptions of Dtr's trauma, which intrudes into the text (2012: 3-4). Janzen's 2019 work seems consistent with these ideas but develops them further.
[183] Houck-Loomis is an experienced psychotherapist and an ordained minister, which places her uniquely to speak with authority on both psychology and the Bible.

also this trauma being 'compounded by the many previous exiles amongst Israel and Judah' (2018: 39). This allows her to date the Deuteronomic Covenant (for example) to the eighth-seventh centuries B.C.E., while still maintaining that this text bears an imprint of trauma, presumably from the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom, in particular (2018: 46).

In this context, the Covenant was composed to reinforce Israel's sense of independence from its threatening neighbours and to foster an identity based on 'a god-image that promised safety, wellbeing, and a prosperous future' (2018: 46). However, the text was revised and repurposed during the Babylonian Exile, in order to explain the disaster Judah had just experienced. The wider DtrH places the blame for the exile on the disobedient community, and the revised Covenant now emphasises 'exile and destruction… as inevitable consequences of disobedience' (2018: 79). The Covenant still contributes to the community's collective identity, but this collective identity is now reimagined. Guilt and self-blame now come to the fore, articulated in DtrH – Israel's national history – to the point where they are subsumed into the national consciousness (2018: 101-103). Exile, destruction and self-blame for those disasters 'become[s] inscribed as the dominant history of ancient Israel' (2018: 109).[184]

It is worth noting that Houck-Loomis identifies 'anxiety, aggressive impulses, and splitting' as indicators of the community's developing identity (2018: 91). She expresses this in terms of object relations theory and the Jungian concepts of symbol and the Self (2018: 22-23, 101). But anxiety, aggression, and a sense of separation from one's own body are classic markers of trauma as, of course, is guilt. Houck-Loomis does not make this link between

[184] Holt advances a similar argument, suggesting that Lamentations and post-exilic sections of Jeremiah 'can be understood as representations or configurations of cultural trauma, used as an agent for the building or rebuilding of a national identity in the post-exilic centuries.' (2014: 171-172).

trauma and Israel's collective identity explicit, but it is clear to any reader with a working knowledge of psychological trauma.

So, the Deuteronomic Covenant expresses the trauma deriving from the Exile (and previous exiles) and cements it within Israel's shared memories and collective identity. But the narrative put forward by the Covenant – and the wider DtrH – is subverted by some other biblical texts. Houck-Loomis explores Job as an example of a text which presents a 'counter-narrative' (2018: 1). While DtrH offers an explanation of the origin and reason for the Exile, Job presents a contrasting perspective, with both Job himself and the deity expressing 'aggression, desire, anger, and passion' (2018: 120). What's more, Job's character seems to shift between the prose and poetic sections of the book, revealing contradictory attitudes towards suffering and evil, and challenging the dominant narrative of self-blame which finds expression in DtrH (2018: 120).

Thus, Job presents a counter-narrative to DtrH, showing trauma in its inconsistencies, its subversion of DtrH's core message, and the author's refusal to neatly resolve the question of responsibility for suffering (2018: 117, 122-129). In this respect, Houck-Loomis draws on Janzen's earlier work on trauma's subversion of DtrH's 'master narrative' (2012).[185]

Job not only offers a contrasting narrative of trauma and suffering; it also offers a contrasting collective identity and a contrasting conception of the deity (2018: 166). In step with Herman, and with van der Kolk and van der Hart, who suggest that reimaging the self and the memory are integral parts of a survivor's recovery from trauma, Job represents a revision of the traumatic memory: the author's intrusive and repetitious memories gradually retreat into the past and in their place emerges a memory which conveys trauma, clearly but

[185] Houck-Loomis directly references Janzen's work (2018: 52).

honestly (2018: 133). Although Houck-Loomis does not use the term ‘working through’, that is exactly what she is describing.

Biblical texts can and do constitute examples of trauma affecting Israel’s collective memory and identity. These texts include examples of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’, as well as simply glossing over trauma or subverting texts which seek to do that.

ii) Memory figures – sites of memory, sites of trauma

There is little extant scholarship which applies traumatised memory to the concept of memory figures within the Hebrew Bible. Neither Janzen nor Houck-Loomis explicitly makes this link, despite their important work in bringing together trauma, memory and biblical studies. It is possible that we should infer from Houck-Loomis that the character Job functions as a site of memory and of trauma – after all, Job embodies suffering and his story articulates trauma in the form of a memory distinct from DtrH’s master narrative (2018: 1, 120-129, 133-134) – but Houck-Loomis does not state this directly.

I am aware of no-one who comes closer than Margaret S. Odell to describing simultaneous sites of memory and trauma within the Hebrew Bible. Odell suggests that the צלמי זכר (male images) mentioned in Ezek 16.15-22 represent a ‘fragment of memory’ of the Assyrian invasion, cast adrift by trauma from a wholesale recollection of the conquest, and used within Ezekiel to symbolise Jerusalem’s complicity in Israel’s ruin (Odell, 2016: 114-115). Thus, memory and trauma are bound up together within the male images. But even Odell does not use the term ‘memory figure’ or ‘site of memory’.

Although there is little precedent for arguing that a biblical ‘memory figure’ might also be a site of trauma, there is ample basis for arguing that Moses functions as a memory figure. And since Exod 13.17 – 15.21 bears evidence of the influence of trauma, then Moses

might indeed embody both trauma and significant collective memories. I discuss this possibility below.

iii) Reconstruction – trauma versus history

Following on from Alexander, Janzen differentiates between 'psychological trauma' (the complex of mental and physiological symptoms affecting an individual who has experienced a shocking, overwhelming or extremely upsetting event) and 'collective trauma' (a constructed sense of shared injury) (2019: 5-6). As I explain above, the differentiation between psychological and collective trauma seems to me misleading. However, Janzen's work remains valuable in highlighting the tension between trauma and history, with regard to biblical texts.

For example, DtrH is a national history, seeking to explain Judah's defeat by Babylon as the result of the people's apostasy and the deity's judgment on them. It presents a clear narrative, understandable reasons and apportioning of blame, preserving all this within the community's collective memory. But although DtrH presents a rational explanation for the events which traumatised Judah, trauma itself cannot be integrated into or expressed by an orderly, dispassionate account like this (2019: 35-38, 49-50; see also Houck-Loomis, 2018: 116-117, 137).

Conversely, Janzen understands Lamentations as all trauma with no history. Any sense of rational narrative disappears under the weight of overwhelming trauma, manifested again and again in an outpouring of grief. In this way, 'trauma silences history' (Janzen, 2019: 118-119). So once again, trauma and history are irreconcilable. Lamentations is a reconstruction of memory in that it displays recurring, unresolved trauma, with little if any historical description of events, places and people. Despite my reservations with interpreting

Lamentations as an example of 'acting out', it remains a visceral, emotional response to the destruction of Jerusalem. Any attempt to marry the plangent tone and lament form with a forensic investigation of events would be strange indeed.

Houck-Loomis offers a third option. She notes (following van der Kolk and van der Hart), that recovery from trauma requires the survivor to process their experiences and to articulate those experiences in some form. But if the survivor is simply unable to articulate their experiences in terms directly relatable to the traumatising event, fantasy would be the only means to express trauma and work through it: 'What if some stories are simply erased and the only way to begin to access them are through fantasy, other forms of story telling outside of verbal narrative, or affectively and in the messy work of transference.' (2018: 133-134).[186] This, she suggests, is what underpinned the composition of Job. Job is 'symbolic history': not a literal depiction of events but including enough references to historical events – especially the Exile – for the audience to understand that those events form the background to the text. Through this counter-narrative, contrasting with the neat rationalism of DtrH, the 'unknown' story of the Exile is expressed in fantasy, 'linking affect with experience' (2018: 132). Job expresses the trauma of the exiled Judaeans and enables 'working through' despite never directly mentioning the events which gave rise to their trauma. This raises the possibility that very real trauma can be articulated through narratives based only partly on historical fact, or even on out-and-out fiction. It also suggests that other biblical narratives might show evidence of trauma deriving from the Exile or the fall of Jerusalem despite, at first reading, having no clear link to those events.

[186] Poser advances a very similar argument with regard to Ezekiel. She reasons that Ezekiel, although rooted in real historical events, is largely fictional, since its traumatised authors struggled to piece together their fragmented experiences and were forced to reconstruct a sequence of events using imaginative elements (2012: 334-335).

iv) Preservation – mediated mass communication

As with the 'memory figure' question (see point *ii)* above), neither Janzen nor Houck-Loomis spells out how they envision traumatised memories being passed on, once they were preserved in the biblical texts they discuss. However, it is interesting that Houck-Loomis notes a shift between the prose and poetic sections of Job, in tone and in apparent attitudes towards suffering and evil (2018: 120). Culp's memory vectors (2020: 109) may be relevant to this shift. The prose sections of Job – the 'story' – were preserved and, one assumes, passed on as a written text, in the same form and with the same master narrative as the 'national history' preserved in DtrH (Houck-Loomis, 2018: 101, 137). The poetic core of the book – the 'song' – is likely to be a later addition (2018: 156, 166), subverting the master narrative and more easily passed on from person to person than a written text, which would be accessible only to the educated elite.[187]

A similar divide between prose and poetry, story and song, is visible within Exod 13.17 – 15.21. I believe the combination of two memory vectors is significant here, too, albeit for different reasons.

Exod 13.17 – 15.21 as traumatised memory

I established in chapter four that there is good reason for seeing this text as an outworking of trauma. I will now investigate to what extent the characteristics of traumatised memory summarised above are relevant to the text, and hence whether this narrative and song should be understood as an example of traumatised collective memory.

[187] Houck-Loomis describes the prose sections of Job as 'folk narrative' (2018: 156), likely to have been originally composed during the monarchical period. Without wishing to be drawn into a protracted discussion of the rates of literacy in monarchical Israel, I find it more likely that such a text would have been written by and for an educated elite than the masses.

For this investigation, I reverse the order in which I have previously discussed the characteristics of traumatised memory. This order was convenient for my earlier summary, but working through the list backwards now allows me to draw insights on the nature and purpose of Exod 13-15 from other elements of traumatised memory at play in the text, and thus to close in and finish on the central and fundamental question of what the text is for.

i) Preservation – mediated mass communication

It would be a truism to say that the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses preserve a story that their authors considered important. This seems self-evident, regardless of the reader's opinion on the historicity of the text. Neither is it controversial to suggest that the narrative and the song represent a memory. Even if the story has no basis whatsoever in literal historical events, it may still be an articulation of a memory of sorts, as we have seen.

It is striking that Exod 13.17 – 14.31 presents a prose account of YHWH's victory over Egypt at the Reed Sea, and 15.1-21 presents a poetic account of the very same incident. This repetition has puzzled numerous commentators and given rise to a broad spectrum of opinions on which of the two accounts was composed first, and the extent to which the latter 'borrowed' from the former. The majority of commentators on Exodus argue that the song is older than the narrative, and perhaps one of the oldest passages preserved in the Hebrew Bible[188], but dissenting voices suggest that the existing song might be a later composition, or the product of several stages of revision (see e.g. Durham, 1987: 209). The dating of the song is difficult to prove, and the direction of any 'borrowing' between it and the narrative even more so (as Alexander notes [2017: 292-293]).

[188] For example, see Alexander (2017: 294), Brueggemann (1994: 799), Cassuto (2005: 158), Fretheim (1991: 161), Meyers (2005: 110) and Noth (1962: 121).

The matter is complicated further by the possibility of the authors using artificially archaic language to compose the song. Assmann points out that cultural memories tend to be expressed in an older form of the community's language, instead of the contemporary vernacular (2011: 18; 2008: 117-118), and a few commentators on Exodus hint that this may be applicable to the Song of Moses. As Dozeman observes, 'The debate [around the dating of the Song of Moses] introduces the problem of distinguishing between genuinely archaic literature and the archaizing style of later writers.' (2009: 336). Dozeman stops short of explicitly claiming that the song was a later composition, created with an artificially archaic form of Hebrew, and so will I. Even a scholar with an exceptional command of Paleo-Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew and the distinctions between the two would be hard pressed to conclusively prove or disprove this idea. Davies is quite forthright in arguing for artificial archaisation as a common feature in the Hebrew Bible (1998: 34) but he does not command widespread agreement. Indeed, the prospect of extended sections of biblical text being consciously composed in a language and style indistinguishable from earlier compositions seems unlikely. However, while it seems implausible that the entire song could have been composed *ex nihilo* in the fifth century, I am prepared to believe that Yehud's scribes would have had sufficient skill to employ tone and linguistic features common to an earlier form of Hebrew, as they made additions and amendments to the extant text.

The possibility of artificial archaisation is not in itself enough to convince even me that Exod 13.17 – 15.21 represented a significant cultural memory for the community which composed it. But the presentation of the same memory in two different genres, one after the other, is a stronger argument. To preserve a story in writing, even once, suggests that it is significant for its author. To preserve it twice, in different forms, underlines the story's importance, for its authors and their community.

Culp proposes three 'memory vectors' visible in Deuteronomy (2020: 109). Of these three, two – story and song – are used in Exodus for accounts of YHWH's defeat of Egypt. Story is highly effective in persuading an audience to own the memory contained within the story as their own, and a song is easily remembered and easily passed on from person to person (2020: 131, 183). The use of two memory vectors in Exod 13.17 – 15.21 suggests that the Reed Sea incident was indeed a highly significant collective memory for the community which composed the text, and that this community was anxious to allow the memory to be passed on readily and by various means.

Culp's example of Deut 32.1-43 is remarkably similar to Exod 15.1-21, too. Like the Song of Moses in Exod 15, the Song of Moses in Deut 32 is echoed in Psalms and the prophetic books. And both songs are the subjects of some debate regarding their supposed ancient authorship (2020: 175). We can extrapolate that, if Deut 32 preserves a vital collective memory and indeed is a 'memory maker' for later generations (2020: 7-8, 33-35), this is likely to be equally true of Exod 15.

The context in which Exod 13.17 – 15.21 was composed gives further reason for seeing the text as a preserving a significant collective memory. For the Yehud community, settling into a land few of them would ever have seen before, establishing unity would have been vital. Vivid accounts of episodes from their supposed shared past would have helped meet this need, and the twin accounts of the Reed Sea episode suggest that this memory was especially significant. The community preserved it for posterity in a story; a form which would have encouraged its readers to own the memory as theirs. But the impact of a written text is likely to have been limited to the literate elite[189], at least in the short term. Preserving the episode in a song would have given a second avenue for passing on this memory; one with

[189] See e.g. Davies (1998: 16-17; 1992: 19), Young (1998: 408-409, 419), Schniedewind (2005: 35-37).

perhaps a more immediate mass appeal. Story and song, in this context the most effective available forms of mediated mass communication, were both employed to ensure the memory of the Reed Sea was preserved and propagated.

ii) Reconstruction – trauma versus history

The Exodus narrative is a classic example of collective memory. Hendel calls it 'a focal point of ancient Israelite religion… a foundational event' (2001: 601). But the narrative which records this 'event' is a radically reconstructed version of the past and 'No critical reader will defend its literal historical truth.' (Blenkinsopp, 2004b: 15; see also Hendel, 2001: 601-602). The details of the story themselves make it implausible as a literal historical account. Leaving aside the miraculous elements of the episode, the idea of six hundred thousand men (not to mention women, children and livestock) (Exod 12.37-38) crossing anything that could be described as a 'sea' in a single night stretches the bounds of believability.

At the same time, Blenkinsopp and Hendel also cast doubt on the possibility of the narrative being a pure invention. Since the Exodus is alluded to and knowledge of the story assumed throughout the Hebrew Bible, the narrative in Exod 13-14 can only be a pure invention if all texts containing those other allusions were written after it. So, if we assume that Exod 13-14 was formed during the Exile and completed during the Persian period, as Blenkinsopp and I both do[190], then DtrH, many of the Psalms and most of the prophetic books must all have been composed even later (Blenkinsopp, 2004b: 15-16), which is a very extreme view.

[190] Hendel implies that some form of the Exodus narrative would have been written much earlier – perhaps even in the pre-monarchical period (2001: 608).

Neither the Reed Sea narrative nor the Song of Moses constitute 'history' as a modern reader would understand it. But the language and tone of the two passages suggest it was never the authors' intention to create a rational, dispassionate account of literal, historical events. Typically of an essential cultural memory, the Reed Sea episode is described in mythological language and terms. The episode hinges on theophany, which lends both narrative and song an other-worldly tone. And commentators on Exodus note that the conflict between Israel and Egypt is described in terms of cosmic warfare between the deity and the forces of chaos (Meyers, 2005: 115-116; Fretheim, 1991: 153), with the authors employing tropes which echo ANE creation myths, especially in the parting of the sea itself in Exod 14.16, 21-22, 27 (Brueggemann, 1994: 794). The Reed Sea episode, then, was composed as a foundational myth for Israel: a collective memory – at least mostly fictive – which encapsulated ideas the nation held dear.

The 'other-worldly' tone and mythological tropes of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 may have been prompted by the trauma influencing its authors. It is well documented that trauma often results in the survivor being so overwhelmed with rage that they are 'literally unable to speak' (Tal, 1996: 157), or feeling an inner conflict between a compulsion to bear witness to what they have experienced and the inadequacy of any language to convey their suffering (c.f. Des Pres, 1973: 668-675; Laub, 1995: 63-64).

This trend has been noticed within the Hebrew Bible. We have seen that Houck-Loomis understands Job as conveying trauma deriving from the Exile, despite never directly referencing it (Houck-Loomis, 2018: 132-134), and William Morrow suggests something similar, ascribing the genocide commanded by YHWH in Deuteronomy 7 to the same traumatic root (2011: 283). In the same way, the authors of the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses felt compelled to articulate the experiences which traumatised them but were

incapable of doing so through a direct description. Telling a different story, in a different time, with a different enemy and shot through with myth, enabled them to express the suffering they had experienced.

There are parallels to be drawn between Exod 13.17 – 15.21 and Job. Both include song and story, and both are the subject of debate over whether the story or the song was composed first and how the two relate to each other (Houck-Loomis, 2018: 156-157). And while Job's narrative lacks Exodus' clear anchor in a specific (purported) time and place, its reference to Uz (Job 1.1) still gives it a sense of a time long past, similar to Exodus. The comparison with Deuteronomy 7 is much stronger, though. Like Deut 7, Exod 13-15 is set in the supposed time of Moses – indeed the words of Deut 7 are put in Moses' mouth. Both texts advocate divinely-sanctioned violence against Israel's enemies; in Exod 14-15, YHWH carries out this violence himself, in Deut 7, he commands his people to carry it out. Deut 7 even references the Reed Sea episode in its endorsement of violence (7.17-19). And both texts are overshadowed by experiences of trauma in the authors' past. Establishing a precise dating for Deuteronomy is not within the purview of this thesis, but Morrow believes it was composed in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon (Morrow, 2011: 283), and its reference to the Reed Sea suggests it is later than Exod 13-15.

As Morrow argues, the overwhelming violence – genocide indeed – envisioned in Deut 7 would have helped survivors of the Exile to process their unresolved trauma. Following the destruction of their city and Temple and the threatened annihilation of their entire culture, the survivors' response was, perhaps understandably, a desire to see their enemies annihilated instead (2011: 284-286). The violence encouraged in Deut 7 is an expression of this trauma-driven desire: 'The destruction of the seven Canaanite nations served as a proxy memory for the violent destruction of the exiles' own culture; only now it is

Israel who is in the position of power.' (2011: 289). A desire for revenge against Babylon is displaced onto the seven Canaanite nations.[191]

Morrow's argument is compelling and stands in tension with Janzen's characterisation of DtrH resisting engagement with trauma. Janzen references Morrow's essay along with several others (2019: 7), but dismisses all of them on the grounds that their conclusions do not differentiate psychological trauma from collective trauma in the same way he does. In my view, this differentiation is misleading and Morrow's insights into Deut 7 are valuable. At the same time though, Janzen's observations on the minimisation of trauma within DtrH remain helpful. It is possible to reconcile the two scholars' views and argue that a narrative which contains elements of trauma (Deut 7) might still bear a close textual relationship to a largely rationalist master narrative (DtrH), especially given that trauma is, by its nature, insidious and difficult for a survivor to contain within themselves. Janzen argues a very similar point himself in his earlier monograph, which describes traumatic 'intrusions' into DtrH (Janzen, 2012: 3-5).

Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is a proxy memory in the same model and with the same traumatic root as Deut 7. Within it, the authors' trauma is manifested, deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and inherited from their parents and wider community. Unable to directly describe the experiences at the root of this trauma, the authors created a myth which expressed their traumatised rage and fantasy of revenge against their enemies, and preserved it as a collective memory.

The composite nature of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 (and of the Pentateuch as a whole) adds a further intriguing element to this process of reconstruction. Its authors appear to have

[191] Morrow argues that Deut 7 is based on a pre-existing story, embellished and 'radicalized' so as to express a trauma-infused desire for revenge (2011: 275). In support of this, he highlights close textual comparisons between Deut 7 and Exod 23: 20-33, 34:11-16 and Josh 14-18 (2011: 276-277). Exod 13-15 does not seem to draw on other biblical texts in the same way.

reworked at least one pre-existing tradition in their creation of a traumatised myth, thus reshaping a story which would already have constituted a collective memory of some kind.[192] This almost fits Alexander's framework (2004a) of a carrier group articulating a trauma claim but, as a dominant group within their society, being able to communicate it without need for their claim to be subjected to an extended public evaluation. However, the category of a trauma claim does not fit neatly here since the story is a proxy memory rather than a direct description of the traumatising experience. The question of how an existing tradition – even an existing collective memory – might be reformulated in response to a trauma is a fascinating one, and this story appears to be an example of exactly that. Unfortunately, it remains unclear precisely how the story was reconstructed. It is not possible to see from the finalised text what might have been lost or deliberately effaced from previous versions of the Reed Sea story, as it was reshaped in the Persian period.[193]

Like many other evangelical scholars, I balk at the prospect of entirely dismissing the historicity of the Reed Sea episode. I want to insist that there is a kernel of historical fact to the narrative, however small, but any history within the story is impossible to discern: it is submerged beneath multiple layers of revisions and embellishments; beneath trauma, myth and fantasy.[194]

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[192] To me, this calls to mind the reconstruction of the Bar Kokhba revolt, in which an existing collective memory was radically revised to fit Israel's national interests, hundreds of years after the memory's initial formulation (Zerubavel, 1995: 48-55, 103-104). However, this memory differs from the Reed Sea episode in that it does not appear to have been especially influenced by trauma.

[193] Many commentators on Exodus are ready to speculate on which verses within Exod 13.17-14.31 should be attributed to J, E and P under the documentary hypothesis (see e.g. Propp, 1999: 461, 476; Childs, 1976: 220; Hyatt, 1980: 147). More helpfully, some venture suggestions on how the passage might have drawn on P and non-P (see e.g. Dozeman, 2009: 300-305). However, it is extremely difficult to discern precisely how the combined P and non-P might have been reworked by Persian period scribes.

[194] Hendel seems to feel the same impulse I do to pull back from calling the Exodus pure fiction. He suggests that the narrative might be a grandly embellished account of a real group of exiles from Egypt who settled in Canaan (Hendel, 2001: 605-608).

iii) Memory figures – sites of memory, sites of trauma

Moses can be seen as a site of memory for Israel, embodying nationally significant ideas and values, as has been contended by Ben Zvi (2013: 335) and Hendel (2001: 620). Carr implies this, too, although he doesn't use the term 'memory figure' (2014: 110). The idea is also beginning to gain traction with commentators on Exodus. Carol Meyers is among those who, dissatisfied with exhaustive but inconclusive investigations into the historicity of the Exodus, have adopted the framework of collective memory as a more fruitful line of investigation: 'The term *mnemohistory* represents this kind of thinking, in which the biblical traditions of national origin are understood as phenomena of collective cultural memory rather than as historical record. Moses and the exodus thereby become figures of memory rather than history.' (Meyers, 2005: 10, emphasis original).

Within Exod 13-15, Moses stands at one remove from the Israelites, among them but distinct from them. He is Israel's spokesman before YHWH (Alter, 2004: 393; Noth, 1962: 133), but also YHWH's agent within Israel. He is the target of YHWH's caprice (14.15), but also 'channels the power of, or even becomes, God's own arm' (Propp, 1999: 497), stretching out his arm over the sea to divide the waters and then to turn them back (14.21-22, 26-27). At the climax of the Reed Sea narrative, the people 'believed in' Moses and YHWH together (14.31). Moses' singular role in the Reed Sea narrative marks him out as a memory figure, with regard to this episode.[195]

In becoming a site of memory with regard to the Reed Sea episode, Moses also becomes a site of trauma through his association with a traumatised text. He epitomises traumatised shame and self-abasement, subordinate to an overwhelmingly powerful and

[195] If Ben Zvi's supposition is correct, and Moses became the subject of a 'positive feedback loop' with more and more important memories becoming attached to him (2013: 335-336), then it is impossible to tell whether the authors of Exodus created their story with Moses already in mind or chose Moses as a convenient protagonist to lend weight to their narrative.

violent deity (Brueggemann, 1994: 795) and leading the Israelites in a song of praise to him (15.1-19). He enacts traumatised rage, not only witnessing YHWH's violence at close quarters but playing a part in enacting that violence (14.21-22, 26-27). And he speaks using traumatised, other-worldly language, most notably in the poetic hyperbole of the song (15.6-12).

I do not accept that a memory figure is always also a figure of trauma (as LaCapra argues [1998: 10]), but I believe Moses is both. He is a site of memory for the Exodus, and also a site of trauma, as the focal point of a text expressing the trauma of the ruined and exiled Judaeans.

iv) Purpose – acting out or working through?

To summarise, Exod 13-15 is designed in such a way as to make the memory of the Reed Sea doubly communicable – to be passed on through story and song – thus highlighting the memory's significance. The latent trauma behind the text makes anything approximating a historical account impossible, and the result is a proxy memory; a memory of trauma reconstructed to the degree of being expressed in an entirely different story. And the memory and the trauma are centred on Moses, who comes to embody both.

These observations offer insights into the text's purpose. Clearly, it is not a rationalistic explanation for why the Exile happened. DtrH focuses on the 'why' of the Exile, offering a documentary account of the people breaking faith with YHWH and therefore being subjected to his punishment (Janzen, 2019: 48-50; Houck-Loomis, 2018: 120). In Exod 13-15, there is no 'why'. DtrH comments on the fall of Jerusalem and its reasons at length, but Exod 13-15 never explicitly mentions it. And while DtrH depicts YHWH as threatening punishment for infidelity (e.g. Deut 28.15-68), and then enacting that punishment through defeat,

destruction and exile (e.g. 2 Kgs 21.10-15, 24.10-17), the deity of Exod 13-15 is inscrutable, revealing his plans only to Moses (14.15-18) after initially keeping his thoughts to himself (13.17-18). The Reed Sea episode expresses trauma but offers no answer to the 'why' of the people's suffering.

Neither is this an example of acting out. In acting out a trauma, the survivor is almost possessed by their traumatising experience, unable to escape from it and compelled to repeat it endlessly (LaCapra, 2001: 21). Lamentations is as close as the Hebrew Bible comes to an example of acting out. Although I suspect it constitutes a staged mourning as much as a genuine outpouring of grief, Lamentations expresses grief overwhelmingly: grief is 'ever-present' and articulated over and over again (Janzen, 2019: 4, 91). Exod 13-15 shows none of the repetition of Lamentations, or its competing voices which express different responses to disaster (2019: 91-93). In Exod 13-15, the Israelites are of one voice, crying out to YHWH and haranguing Moses, and singing YHWH's praises, all in unison (14.11-12, 15.1).

Instead, Exod 13-15 represents the authors and their community working through the trauma arising from the fall of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylonia. Working through enables a trauma survivor to move beyond acting out, articulating their experiences in a way which allows them to escape the confusion between past and future, and imagine a future free from the experience which traumatised them (LaCapra, 2001: 21-22). The Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses acknowledge the pain in Yehud's past and articulate the nation's trauma, seeking to transcend it. The result is an outworking of trauma which is simultaneously raw – hence the rage, guilt and fear it demonstrates – and controlled – hence the neatly conceived parallel story which allows the authors to express their suffering without directly describing the traumatising event. The traumata of destruction, defeat and exile are

communicated but finally transformed. By expressing their pain and desire for revenge against their enemies, Yehud's trauma is reimagined as a moment of victory and vindication.

Traumatised memory, triumphant identity

As with all collective memories, the Reed Sea episode informed the collective identity of the community in which it was composed, and at the point when Exod 13-15 is likely to have been composed, forming collective memory would have been vital to the Yehud community. At times of social and political upheaval, concerns around a society's collective identity come to the fore and, as Assmann rightly observes, a crisis in Judah's collective identity was prompted by the fall of Jerusalem, the loss of the Temple and the deposition of the Davidic monarchy (Assmann, 2011: 137-138; see also Crouch, 2014: 97). Both immediately after the events of 586 B.C.E. and on settling in Yehud after the Exile, it was crucial for the community's sense of unity to reinforce their shared idea of who they were. It is no surprise that they wished to work through their traumatised past, move on and redefine themselves as victorious and overcoming. At this time, with these concerns in mind, the Reed Sea narrative and Song of Moses were composed. It is understandable that a story which emphasised victory, restoration and even eschatological hope was particularly appealing to them in this context.

The Reed Sea episode thus played a key role in shaping not only Yehud's collective memory but also their collective identity. This is illustrated by several aspects of the text which demonstrate features of collective identity formation, as outlined by Crouch in her monograph on collective identity in Deuteronomy (2014: 113).[196] Firstly, the Exodus story is a foundational myth for the community; a myth of origins, as Crouch herself observes (2014:

[196] These features of collective identity appear to be derived, at least in part, from the work of A. Cohen (1969).

138). Secondly, YHWH's terrorising of four different nations in 15.14-15, not to mention the destruction of Egypt itself, conveys a clear sense of separation between Israel and their neighbours; a common feature of ethnic identity formation. The 'dwelling' prepared by YHWH for his people (15.13) reinforces the spatial separation of Israel from other nations (despite their continued proximity) (2014: 224). And the use of a hymn to preserve and communicate the superiority of Israel and YHWH over and against their rivals could, in itself, be understood as a classic use of a worship practice to reinforce a community's identity (2014: 113-114).

Through the Reed Sea story, Yehud remembers YHWH as supreme, fearsome to all and terrifying to his enemies, requiring fidelity as an essential trait in his people. They remember Moses as a hero, a servant of a mighty but unpredictable deity, emblematic of Yehud's vindication by that same deity. Above all, they remember their nation as persecuted and eventually victorious. What defines the Yehud community is not victimhood but victory; not trauma itself but working through it.

The narrative and song bolster a collective self-image as victorious despite overwhelming odds; as vindicated by a supremely powerful deity, terrible to his enemies but protective and commanding of his own people; and as liberated from servitude and inheriting a land which was theirs by divine mandate. As the authors of Exodus, their community and future generations remembered the Reed Sea, they remembered this – not destruction and exile – as the foundational myth of their nation. Although the text of Exod 13.17 – 15.21 was born out of trauma and defeat, it created memories of strength and victory.

Conclusion

This thesis was inspired by my fascination with the Reed Sea story. I was (and still am) struck by the story's enormous influence, which ranges from other biblical texts right up to oppressed groups in the present day, and I was also slightly morbidly fascinated with the overwhelming violence YHWH metes out in the course of the story. I wondered why the authors of Exodus felt it necessary to depict this level of violence on the deity's part. So, I embarked on my doctoral research, aiming to establish how far trauma might help explain the extent of the violence within the Reed Sea story. After all, if the authors of Exodus had themselves experienced violence and terror, it would be understandable if violence and terror were manifested in the literature they created. Establishing the extent of trauma's influence on Exod 13.17 – 15.21 and markers of trauma within the text was thus my primary research aim.

I did not originally envisage applying collective memory studies to the Reed Sea episode, but that theory's relevance to the story became clear as I read Assmann's work on Moses as a memory figure. Although Assmann's work suggested to me that collective memory was closely tied to trauma theory, it took some time for me to fully grasp the nature of that link. But once that had happened, I realised how profoundly trauma can affect a society's shared memories, and my secondary research aim became to clarify how the concept of traumatised memory might apply to Exod 13.17 – 15.21.

I have sought to demonstrate three things within this thesis: 1) that Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 is profoundly influenced by the authors' trauma, deriving from the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylonian and inherited from their parents and others of their parents' generation, within the exiled community; 2) that the text therefore bears the watermark of trauma; 3) that the text functions as an example of a collective memory, with this function in itself affected by trauma.

I have done this by outlining the conception and development of the psychological phenomenon of trauma, and common features of literature – including biblical literature – influenced by trauma. In order to establish whether or not the authors of Exodus were traumatised, it was necessary to investigate when, where and by whom the book was written, and therefore what events in the authors' recent past might have traumatised them. Next, I have outlined how trauma can be inherited from the previous generation, and suggested that this is applicable to the authors of Exodus. The heart of the thesis is a close reading of Exod 13.17 – 15.21, in which I highlight where the text exhibits common markers of trauma literature. And the final chapter unpacks the framework of collective memory, how it can be affected by a community's shared trauma, what justifies reading Exod 13.17 – 15.21 as an example of traumatised memory and, finally, what insights can be gained from such a reading.

Limitations of my research

While I believe my argument is compelling, there are points at which my conclusions are likely but not proven. First and foremost, the available evidence does not allow us to say with certainty how a group of scribes in the fifth century B.C.E. would have thought and felt. This is all the more true when trauma is involved, since a survivor might act in a way which manifests trauma without themselves realising that is what they are doing. So, although I believe there is a strong case for the scribes who reshaped Exodus inheriting trauma from their parents and wider community, I cannot prove this conclusively, from the evidence available to me. Related to that point, this thesis assumes that an ANE society would have responded to collective trauma in the same way as a modern, western society. Once again, this is likely but not certain, and it is hard to envisage how it could be proven that survivors of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. suffered from psychological trauma.

The parameters of this thesis have not allowed me to address every question my research has raised. Several of these questions therefore remain. Perhaps the most obvious of these questions is whether the aspects of Exod 13-15 which I ascribe to trauma could be explained in other ways. I have made it clear within the body of the thesis that I consider it very unlikely that the text represents a literal historical account of Israel crossing the Reed Sea. I therefore consider it equally unlikely that the rage, guilt and fear expressed in the text could simply be ascribed to the historical actions of God and reactions of Israel and Egypt.

Alternatively, there is a case to be made for the Reed Sea episode being composed primarily for theological, not historical, reasons. In this line of thought, the events within the narrative and especially the behaviour of YHWH are intended to highlight what the authors perceived as important truths about the character of God. Several commentators on Exodus have argued for this. (For example, see Childs [1976: xiii]; Fretheim [1991: 5-6]; Sarna [1996: xiii]; and Durham [1987: 210].) This argument progresses the study of the text beyond a narrow insistence on its literal historicity, but it foregrounds troubling aspects of YHWH's character. Within the Reed Sea episode, YHWH is aloof, manipulative, vengeful and violent. If the text was composed with the primary aim of highlighting theological truths, we are left with a disturbing portrayal of God. Reading the Reed Sea episode through the lens of trauma helps explain this disturbing portrayal, attributing YHWH's violence and manipulation to manifestations of the authors' trauma, instead of assertions about the character of God as a metaphysical being.

Similarly, the story could have been written to strengthen the cause of monotheism, by emphasising YHWH's supremacy through a depiction of his victory over the forces of chaos and, by implication, over other deities. In this case, YHWH's apparent violence could be understood as a result of the authors' desire to present YHWH as all-powerful and rival

deities as therefore unworthy of being worshipped on the same footing. I would agree with this idea, up to a point. Exod 13-15 certainly does present YHWH as supreme, and reinforcing the centrality of YHWH-worship is likely to have been important to the community settling in Yehud. However, this argument does not, in itself, sufficiently explain the extent of the rage, violence and fear inherent within the text. Trauma seems a more convincing explanation.

Of course, my thesis rests on a Persian-period dating for the completion of the Reed Sea story. Needless to say, the dating of pentateuchal texts is the subject of vigorous debate. If it were demonstrated convincingly that the narrative and song must have been composed before the Exile or, conversely, much later (in the Hellenistic period, for example) then I would need to revise my conclusions. However, a pre-exilic dating for the Reed Sea story would leave open the possibility that the text was influenced by trauma deriving from the Assyrian defeat of the northern kingdom. It would be harder to point to a specific traumatic event overshadowing a text composed in the Hellenistic period but it is not impossible that a transgenerational trauma might endure for this long after the Exile (see e.g. Loewenberg, 2012: 56). In any case, a Hellenistic dating would demand further analysis of why the origins story within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 is so couched in mythological tropes and allusions to YHWH's victory over primordial chaos.

The nature of life within the Exile – and therefore whether or not it could be described as traumatic – is also a moot point. There is not enough evidence available to justify a conclusion that the exiles' lot was horrendous and left them psychologically scarred. Indeed, the available evidence suggests the opposite conclusion. However, trauma prompted by forced displacement is well documented in psychological studies, so the Judaeans' experience of being forcibly removed from their homes and deported to a foreign country is likely to have been traumatic in itself. Thus, regardless of the horrors or otherwise of life in Babylon, there

is good reason for believing that the exiles would have been traumatised by the destruction of Jerusalem, by forced displacement from their homes, or by a combination of those two experiences.

And finally, if the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses can be described as survival literature, it is worth discussing whether this might be equally true of the rest of the book of Exodus. Conversely, as a colleague recently challenged me, what is to prevent me from interpreting any and all biblical texts through the lens of trauma? To the Bible scholar with a traumatic hammer, any text looks like a nail. I believe the answer to both of those questions is to treat each biblical text in its own right. If Exodus as a whole was completed in the Persian period, then the book as a whole postdates the traumatic events of the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. But it does not necessarily follow that trauma must be manifested in every part of the book. It would be necessary to analyse other individual narratives from the book of Exodus, in order to argue that these narratives – and even the whole book – were influenced by trauma.

My thesis, then, is not unassailable. However, I believe my conclusions offer stronger answers to the questions identified above than the alternatives do. Acknowledging these caveats, I will now summarise my key findings.

The Reed Sea episode is overshadowed by trauma

Trauma is a watermark on the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses: trauma which probably derived from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the subsequent displacement to Babylonia. The fall of Jerusalem would have been devastating. It is likely to have included the slaughter and perhaps even torture of its male inhabitants, and sexual

violence against the women. And the siege which preceded it would have been a long, drawn-out process of starvation, accompanied by constant threats of death and the loss of loved ones.

Although the scribes who reshaped Exodus in Yehud are unlikely to have been born in 586, this does not preclude trauma from this date affecting them deeply and thus influencing the composition of their text. Numerous case studies of Holocaust survivors, Vietnam veterans and others have shown that parents can and do pass on their own trauma to their children (see, for example, Baranowsky *et al*, 1998; Yehuda *et al*, 1998), and it would be no surprise if a national trauma on the scale of the fall of Jerusalem would have traumatised the descendants of the survivors in the same way. And naturally, the authors of the exilic P source are likely to have directly experienced the fall of Jerusalem. Trauma deriving from their experiences may well have showed itself in their literary creation.

Volkan's concept of 'time collapse' does not fit this context neatly (2001: 89-93), but his observations on 'chosen trauma' – how trauma can infuse an entire community for generations after the fact – are astute and applicable here (2001: 85-88). The trauma of the fall of Jerusalem and forced deportation to Babylon, inherited from their parents and saturating their whole community, is manifested in the literary activity of the scribes who reshaped and augmented Exodus.

This conclusion is informed by what is, in my view, the most likely dating schema for the book of Exodus. Any significant literary activity before the Exile seems unlikely. Jerusalem was neither large enough to have facilitated extensive scribal activity nor socially-advanced enough to need it until the eighth century B.C.E. (Römer, 2007a: 46; Davies, 1998: 59-60). Some non-Priestly material seems to have been composed before the Exile, but this material appears to have taken the form of disconnected narrative units. Once in Babylonia, the exiles may have had sufficient leisure and facilities to create extensive literary works.

Indeed, the Priestly material appears to be exilic. And the Persian period, shortly following the return from Babylonia, seems to offer an environment and socio-political apparatus to make the production of a national history possible. What's more, at this point at which a fledgling community was seeking to establish itself in a new homeland, a national history would have been desirable in order to foster a sense of shared identity within this community. In this context, the Reed Sea story was shaped into the form in which we now know it.

Markers of trauma are discernible within the text of the Reed Sea episode

'Survivor literature' – that is, literature influenced by trauma experienced by the author – is not limited to a single genre of writing. The category can encompass memoirs (Lang, 2000: 19-20), documentary descriptions of traumatising events (Lifton, 1991: 456), fiction set against the background of those events (Lang, 2000: 21-22), or a hybrid of fiction and autobiography (Lifton, 1991: 399). But despite the diversity of genre, survivor literature tends to share common markers of trauma. Several of these markers are either clearly present or strongly suggested within the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses.

It is not my intention to repeat here my entire argument from earlier chapters, but I will offer a brief summary of my findings:

i) Guilt and shame

A sense of guilt and shame on the survivor's part, a sense of self-blame for the traumatising event(s), can be seen in many examples of modern survivor literature (Des Pres, 1973: 678; Lifton, 1991: 35, 489), not to mention biblical texts which have been categorised in a similar way (Garber, 2011: 319; Morrow, 2004: 84). Since guilt is characteristic of trauma, it should not be surprising if guilt and other markers of trauma appear in literature

produced by trauma survivors. Of course, any guilt on the survivor's part is entirely undeserved, but such guilt is still very common in trauma survivors and in any literature they produce following their traumatising experiences.

I have identified several points within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 at which guilt and shame are discernible. They are suggested by the Israelites' passive crying out to YHWH and his sharp rebuke in response (14.15). They are visible in Israel's subordination to the deity: their subservient fear and belief (14.31) and the simultaneous majesty and terror they ascribe to him (15.11). Paradoxically, guilt and shame are also suggested by YHWH's 'unfailing love' (15.13), similarly to an abused child's hero-worship of their tyrannical father (Lasine, 2002: 39-41).

ii) Anger and desire for revenge

A traumatic experience often results in extreme anger and a desire for revenge against the perpetrator, partly as a response to the guilt and shame the survivor feels (Herman, 1997: 189). Anger and desire for revenge spill over into survivor literature, too (Tal, 1996: 7) and Garber specifically mentions the divine wrath and punishment in exilic biblical texts (2011: 320), expressing the authors' desire for revenge against their enemies.

The violence within the Reed Sea story – the violence which inspired me to undertake this whole research project – is inseparable from a deep sense of anger on the authors' part. The violence at the heart of the story is foreshadowed from the very beginning, when the Israelites leave Egypt prepared for battle (13.18). The language used to describe YHWH's actions conveys a sense of violence, too: he commands Moses to 'split' the sea (14.16), he 'hurled' the Egyptians into the water (14.27) and, finally, the Egyptians are emphatically

‘drowned’, in the intensive passive form of the verb (15.4). They are destroyed (Alter, 2004: 395).

Within the Song of Moses, YHWH’s ‘burning anger’ is made explicit (15.7-8) and he is portrayed as a source of terror to Israel’s neighbours (15.14-16). With anger featuring as such a prominent characteristic of the main protagonist of Exodus 13-15, there is good reason for seeing him as a reflection of the authors’ own anger and rage. Indeed, it represents the authors’ desire for revenge against the enemies of their recent past: the Babylonians.

iii) The imperative to bear witness; the impossibility of doing so

It is common for a traumatised individual to emerge from their experience determined to tell the story of what they have seen, heard and felt. This is necessary not only to communicate their experience to others, but also to process the experience for themselves (Laub, 1995: 63). Trauma is, by nature, not fully grasped or assimilated by the survivor in the course of their experience, and articulating that experience is an important step to enable them to come to terms with it. In the case of an event as monstrous as the Holocaust, many survivors are motivated to bear witness by a sense of duty to friends and loved ones who lost their lives. Some even describe this duty in terms of a ‘sacred mission’ (Des Pres, 1973: 671). The cruel irony is that bearing witness is impossible: no words are adequate to convey the reality of the experience or the magnitude of the survivors’ suffering.

The same irony is at work within the Reed Sea story. It is suggested by YHWH’s command that the Israelites should be silent, swiftly followed by a rebuke as they (or Moses as their representative) cry out to him in terror (14.13-15). Even when the Israelites are confronted with the dead bodies of their enemies, they cannot break their silence. Instead their response is fear of YHWH (14.30-31). The deity seems to require silence as evidence of trust

and obedience (Durham, 1987: 192) and the Israelites' enforced silence mirrors the narrative's authors, who are trapped between the imperative to bear witness to their experiences and their inability to describe those experiences to their own satisfaction.

A survivor caught in this paradox must either constantly tell and retell their story, or find an alternative way to bear witness. One such alternative is to tell a story about the traumatic experience, without describing the event itself (Caruth, 1996: 27). In this way, a faithful history of the event can be conveyed, without depicting it directly. The authors of Exodus, unable to describe their traumatising experiences directly, conveyed those experiences by recasting them in a story set in the distant past.

iv) Other-worldly language

Depictions of traumatic experiences often seem to adopt a quasi-religious tone. If a profound trauma is inherently 'other', inherently 'strange' (Felman and Laub, 1992: 7), then language which is similarly 'other' might be necessary to depict it.

Obviously, the Hebrew Bible contains a great deal of other-worldly language. But even in this context, the Reed Sea episode stands out as grandiose, dreamlike and extraordinary. YHWH's presence in cloud and fire represents theophany (13.21). His actions in manipulating the sea suggest conflict on a cosmic, mythological scale (14.16, 21-22, 27; see Meyers, 2005: 115-116). The confusion over light and darkness creates a sense of unreality within the narrative (14.24-25). The description of YHWH in the Song of Moses is shot-through with hyperbole (c.f. 15.6-12). And there are occasional examples of possible puns (14.21, 15.5), which are characteristic of the wordplay commonly found in survivor literature (Garber, 2015: 26).

v) Extreme and enduring fear

Experiences of trauma are frequently associated with extreme fear or horror (Herman, 1997: 33, 46; see also *International Classification of Diseases*, 2018: online). This fear often manifests itself in traumatic nightmares and flashbacks, or even in 'context-free fearful associations' which may last for years after the traumatising event (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 172). In other words, a trauma survivor can experience profound fear without clear association to any specific stimulus.

This aspect of trauma has been accepted by several Bible scholars who apply trauma theory to biblical texts. For example, Carr draws on Caruth's idea of 'speechless terror' to describe the experiences of the Judaean exiles and explain the Hebrew Bible's silence on day-to-day like in Babylon (2011b: 295-297), and O'Connor argues that fear deriving from the fall of Jerusalem underpinned biblical texts written in its aftermath, particularly Lamentations (2011: 21; 2002: 3-6).

There is a good deal of fear on display in Exodus 13.17 – 15.21, too. The Israelites are 'very much afraid' after seeing the approach of the onrushing Egyptian army (14.10); the Egyptians themselves are portrayed as extremely fearful when it becomes clear that YHWH is fighting for Israel against them (14.25); the Israelites respond to the Egyptians' deaths with 'fear' of YHWH (14.31); and the Song of Moses describes YHWH as provoking fear and terror in Israel's enemies (15.14-16). The mere presence of fear within the Reed Sea episode is not sufficient to make a convincing case for trauma influencing the composition of the text. But when this obvious sense of fear is taken in conjunction with the other markers of trauma within the text, a stronger case emerges.

vi) Learned helplessness

William Morrow's observation of learned helplessness on the part of the exiled Judaeans is intriguing (2004: 80, 83-84), although he seems a lone voice on this point. I am reluctant to apply this characteristic to survivor literature in general but Morrow has raised important questions over whether learned helplessness might represent a widespread Judaean reaction to the trauma of displacement. In the same way, it could also be argued that the Israelites' crying out to YHWH (14.9-12) expresses the authors' own trauma-induced helplessness and passivity, while emphasising YHWH's overwhelming power, control and wisdom. The Yehud community perhaps needed to remember their deity in this light, at a time when the community itself was vulnerable and trying to establish its shared identity.

Thus, there is a strong case for treating Exod 13.17 – 15.21 as trauma literature. It is not 'survivor literature' in its truest sense, as survivor literature is created by those who have directly experienced a traumatising event. Instead, we can describe it as 'survival literature'. It is a piece of literature which helped the authors and their community to survive in the aftermath of trauma and upheaval, to express their pain and forge a renewed sense of collective identity.

The Reed Sea episode is an example of traumatised memory

This thesis has highlighted key features of collective memory: how a large group preserves and communicates memories of significant events and people; how the group reconstructs an event so as to emphasise important values and ideas; how it focuses on a 'memory figure' which embodies such values; and how the group's collective identity is formed through such memories.

Each of these key features is changed by a group's trauma: a traumatised memory not only preserves significant people and events, but also pieces together remembered fragments of the event in an attempt to understand what happened; it is not just reconstructed but simply incompatible with history as the traumatising event cannot be fully grasped by the conscious mind (LaCapra, 2001: 88-89); it focuses on a memory figure which comes to represent trauma, as well as the memory itself (LaCapra, 1998: 10); and while it helps to shape the group's collective identity, it also enables the group to work through their shared trauma and move beyond it (LaCapra, 2001: 21-22).

The Reed Sea episode bears the hallmarks of a collective memory, coloured by shared trauma:

i) It includes examples of mass communication

The Reed Sea narrative presents a prose account of YHWH's victory over Egypt, and the Song of Moses gives a poetic account of the very same incident. The presentation of the same memory in two different memory vectors (genres), one after the other, supports the idea that this incident is a significant cultural memory (Culp, 2020: 109). To preserve the story twice, in different forms, underlines its importance, for its authors and their community.

As the Yehud community settled into an unfamiliar land, reinforcing a sense of unity would have been vital. Establishing collective memories and therefore collective identity contributed to this unity. The Reed Sea episode seems to have been a highly significant memory for the community, who preserved it in a story, to encourage its readers to own the memory as theirs, and also in a song, to make it easy for members of the community to remember and pass on.

ii) It is a reconstructed memory, in which trauma displaces history

While the historicity of the Reed Sea episode is likely to remain the subject of lively debate for many years to come, it seems implausible that the text might represent a literal historical account. Like any collective memory, it is reconstructed, with events presented in a way which emphasises important values rather than strict historical 'facts'. But the reconstruction of the memory of the Reed Sea goes further than this.

The language and tone of the narrative and the song suggest that the authors never intended to create a historical account. Typically of an essential cultural memory, it is couched in mythological language and terms, with the conflict between Israel and Egypt described in terms of cosmic warfare between the deity and the forces of chaos (Meyers, 2005: 115-116). The Reed Sea episode, then, was composed as a foundational myth for Israel, infused with trauma and fantasy. Compelled to bear witness to the violence, devastation and loss experienced by their parents and wider community, but also lacking the words to describe these experiences to their own satisfaction, the authors of the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses communicated and preserved the traumatising experiences by telling an entirely different story. The result is a proxy memory: a myth which expresses the traumatised rage of the authors and their fantasy of revenge against their enemies, and preserves it as a collective memory.

iii) It presents Moses as a site of memory and of trauma

Several scholars have previously argued that Moses functions as a site of memory within the Hebrew Bible (see e.g. Ben Zvi [2013: 335]; Hendel [2001: 620]). Meyers also includes this idea in her commentary on Exodus (2005: 10). This is therefore not a novel claim. And there is evidence within Exod 13.17 – 15.21 to support the idea of Moses as a site

of memory. Within the narrative in particular, Moses acts as Israel's representative before YHWH, receiving his orders for the whole nation (Alter, 2004: 393), but also represents YHWH before Israel. At the climax of the narrative, Moses and YHWH are even conflated as the people 'believed in' both of them at once (14.31).

However, Moses is more than a site of memory for Israel. He is also a site of trauma. Moses himself embodies several markers of trauma literature: shame in his subordination to the supreme and overwhelmingly violent deity; rage in playing a part in YHWH's violence against Egypt; and other-worldly language, as the poetic hyperbole of the song come from his mouth (15.6-12).

iv) It enabled the Yehud community to work through trauma

Each of these three previous features of the Reed Sea episode offer clues to the text's purpose. It is not a simple and literal historical account. Neither does it seem to offer a rational explanation for the experiences which traumatised the authors and their community. This is not to say that the text represents traumatised 'acting out', though. Exod 13.17 – 15.21 expresses the pain of the Yehud community and their thirst for revenge against their enemies, but it is not trapped by this pain: it places trauma in the past and envisages a future of victory and vindication. The text enables the community to work through their collective trauma; to transcend it and move beyond it.

On settling in Yehud after the Exile, the community urgently needed to define itself and foster a sense of collective identity. Articulating and preserving their shared past was a crucial step towards this. Reshaped against this background, the Reed Sea episode places trauma, fear and subjugation in the past and defines the community as victorious and overcoming. Through the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses, the Yehud community

shapes its conceptions of itself and its deity. They remember YHWH as supreme, fearsome to all and terrifying to his enemies. They remember Moses as a hero, a servant of their supreme deity, embodying their endurance, their victory over oppression and their divine favour.

The Reed Sea story was a highly significant collective memory for the communities in which it was composed and later reshaped. The profound influence of trauma on its authors resulted in a proxy memory: a myth which articulated traumatised pain and rage by displacing it into a time long past. But this foundational myth also helped shape the community's collective identity for their present and future. It was born out of fear, anger and suffering but envisioned freedom, security and peace to come.

Further research

At various points, limited space and the parameters of my research have forced me to bracket off important questions. For example, I would have liked to explore: the concept of postmemory and its relevance to the Reed Sea episode; how trauma might inform our understanding of the characterisation of the deity; and to what extent evangelical readers might find these conclusions helpful or even acceptable. All of these questions might form the basis for fruitful further research. I would also welcome the opportunity to investigate how trauma might illuminate other disturbing biblical texts and the deity within them.

Throughout my PhD research, I have held my scholarly integrity in one hand and my evangelical Christian faith in the other. My thesis was partly prompted by my desire to reconcile myself to a disturbing biblical text and its violent deity. I have been successful in that I can now explain the extent of the violence within the Reed Sea episode, without either retreating into theodicy or concluding that God must be a tyrant. However, at the start of this

project, I would have been surprised and probably disappointed to find myself expressing scepticism about any kind of historical basis to the Reed Sea story, just a few short years later.

Cruel sea or cruel deity?

The film *The Cruel Sea* begins with an observation on the nature of violence and cruelty: 'This is a story of the Battle of the Atlantic, the story of an ocean, two ships, and a handful of men. The men are the heroes; the heroines are the ships. The only villain is the sea, the cruel sea, that man has made more cruel.' (*The Cruel Sea* [1953]).

The Reed Sea is not cruel in itself. But, like the Atlantic Ocean, it is made cruel. The Reed Sea drowns the Egyptian army at the behest of YHWH, so it could be said to have been made cruel by the deity. However, the violence within the Reed Sea narrative and the Song of Moses is an outworking of the authors' traumatised rage and desire for revenge, arising from Babylonian brutality. If the Reed Sea is cruel, it is made so by the deity but, more pertinently, by human cruelty.

Appendix 1: Exodus 13.17 – 15.21 with translation

13.17 וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה֙ אֶת־הָעָ֔ם וְלֹא־נָחָ֥ם אֱלֹהִ֖ים דֶּ֣רֶךְ אֶ֑רֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּ֗ים כִּ֤י קָרוֹב֙ הֽוּא֔ כִּ֣י ׀ אָמַ֣ר אֱלֹהִ֗ים
פֶּן־יִנָּחֵ֤ם הָעָם֙ בִּרְאֹתָ֣ם מִלְחָמָ֔ה וְשָׁבוּ֙ מִצְרָֽיְמָה׃

18 וַיַּסֵּ֥ב אֱלֹהִ֖ים אֶת־הָעָ֑ם דֶּ֣רֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּ֔ר יַם־סُ֖וף וַחֲמֻשִׁ֣ים עָל֔וּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל מֵאֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם׃

19 וַיִּקַּ֣ח מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֶת־עַצְמ֥ות יוֹסֵ֖ף עִמּ֑וֹ כִּ֣י ׀ הַשְׁבֵּ֣עַ הִשְׁבִּ֣יעַ אֶת־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל לֵאמֹ֤ר פָּקֹ֙ד יִפְקֹ֣ד אֱלֹהִים֮ אֶתְכֶם֒
וְהַעֲלִיתֶ֤ם אֶת־עַצְמֹתַי֙ מִזֶּ֔ה אִתְּכֶֽם׃

20 וַיִּסְעוּ֙ מִסֻּכֹּ֔ת וַיַּחֲנ֖וּ בְאֵתָ֑ם בִּקְצֵ֥ה הַמִּדְבָּֽר׃

21 וַיהוָ֣ה הֹלֵךְ֩ לִפְנֵיהֶ֨ם יוֹמָ֜ם בְּעַמּ֣וּד עָנָ֗ן לַנְחֹתָ֤ם הַדֶּ֙רֶךְ֙ וְלַ֣יְלָה בְּעַמּ֣וּד אֵ֔שׁ לְהָאִ֥יר לָהֶ֖ם לָלֶ֣כֶת יוֹמָ֑ם
וָלָֽיְלָה׃

22 לֹא־יָמִ֣ישׁ עַמּ֣וּד הֶעָנָ֗ן יוֹמָם֙ וְעַמּ֣וּד הָאֵ֔שׁ לָ֖יְלָה לִפְנֵ֥י הָעָֽם׃ פ

14.1 וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר יְהוָ֖ה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֥ה לֵּאמֹֽר׃

2 דַּבֵּר֙ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וְיָשֻׁ֖בוּ וְיַחֲנ֑וּ לִפְנֵ֣י ׀ פִּ֣י הַחִירֹ֗ת בֵּ֤ין מִגְדֹּל֙ וּבֵ֣ין הַיָּ֔ם לִפְנֵ֥י בַעַל֖ צְפֹ֑ן נֹכְחֹ֥
תַחֲנ֖וּ עַל־הַיָּֽם׃

3 וְאָמַ֣ר פַּרְעֹה֮ לִבְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵל֒ נְבֻכִ֤ים הֵם֙ בָּאָ֔רֶץ סָגַ֥ר עֲלֵיהֶ֖ם הַמִּדְבָּֽר׃

4 וְחִזַּקְתִּ֤י אֶת־לֵב֙־פַּרְעֹ֔ה וְרָדַ֖ף אַחֲרֵיהֶ֑ם וְאִכָּבְדָ֣ה בְּפַרְעֹ֔ה וּבְכָל־חֵיל֖וֹ וְיָדְע֣וּ מִצְרַ֔יִם כִּ֥י אֲנִ֖י יְהוָ֑ה
וַיַּעֲשׂ֥וּ־כֵֽן׃

5 וַיֻּגַּ֣ד לְמֶ֔לֶךְ מִצְרַ֖יִם כִּ֣י בָרַ֑ח הָעָ֗ם וַיֵּהָפֵ֤ךְ לְבַב֙ פַּרְעֹ֣ה וַעֲבָדָ֔יו אֶל־הָעָ֖ם וַיֹּאמְר֣וּ מַה־זֹּ֗את עָשִׂ֤ינוּ
כִּֽי־שִׁלַּחְנוּ֙ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל מֵעָבְדֵֽנוּ׃

6 וַיֶּאְסֹ֖ר אֶת־רִכְבּ֑וֹ וְאֶת־עַמּ֖וֹ לָקַ֥ח עִמּֽוֹ׃

7 וַיִּקַּ֣ח שֵׁשׁ־מֵא֣וֹת רֶ֔כֶב בָּח֑וּר וְכֹ֖ל רֶ֥כֶב מִצְרָ֛יִם וְשָׁלִשִׁ֥ים עַל־כֻּלּֽוֹ׃

8 וַיְחַזֵּ֣ק יְהוָ֗ה אֶת־לֵב֙ פַּרְעֹ֣ה מֶ֔לֶךְ מִצְרַ֖יִם וַיִּרְדֹּ֣ף אַחֲרֵ֣י בְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל וּבְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל יֹצְאִ֥ים בְּיָ֖ד רָמָֽה׃

9 וַיִּרְדְּפ֤וּ מִצְרַ֙יִם֙ אַחֲרֵיהֶ֔ם וַיַּשִּׂיג֥וּ אוֹתָ֖ם חֹנִ֣ים עַל־הַיָּ֑ם כָּל־סוּס֙ רֶ֣כֶב פַּרְעֹ֔ה וּפָרָשָׁ֖יו וְחֵיל֥וֹ עַל־פִּֽי
הַחִירֹ֖ת לִפְנֵ֥י בַעַל֖ צְפֹֽן׃

10 וּפַרְעֹ֕ה הִקְרִ֖יב וַיִּשְׂא֣וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם֙ וְהִנֵּה֙ מִצְרַ֔יִם נֹסֵ֥עַ אַחֲרֵיהֶ֖ם וַיִּירְא֣וּ מְאֹ֑ד וַיִּצְעֲק֥וּ
בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל אֶל־יְהוָֽה׃

11 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַמִּבְּלִי אֵין־קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ
לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם:
12 הֲלֹא־זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר חֲדַל מִמֶּנּוּ וְנַעַבְדָה אֶת־מִצְרָיִם כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ
עֲבֹד אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מִמֵּתֵנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר:
13 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם אַל־תִּירָאוּ הִתְיַצְּבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי
אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תֹסִיפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד עַד־עוֹלָם:
14 יְהוָה יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּן: פ
15 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלָי דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִסָּעוּ:
16 וְאַתָּה הָרֵם אֶת־מַטְּךָ וּנְטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַיָּם וּבְקָעֵהוּ וְיָבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה:
17 וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְחַזֵּק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וְיָבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאִכָּבְדָה בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו:
18 וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּהִכָּבְדִי בְּפַרְעֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו:
19 וַיִּסַּע מַלְאַךְ הָאֱלֹהִים הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּסַּע עַמּוּד הֶעָנָן מִפְּנֵיהֶם
וַיַּעֲמֹד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם:
20 וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הֶעָנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיָּאֶר אֶת־הַלָּיְלָה וְלֹא־קָרַב זֶה
אֶל־זֶה כָּל־הַלָּיְלָה:
21 וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם וַיּוֹלֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת־הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עַזָּה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־הַיָּם
לֶחָרָבָה וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם:
22 וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָם:
23 וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם כָּל סוּס פַּרְעֹה רִכְבּוֹ וּפָרָשָׁיו אֶל־תּוֹךְ הַיָּם:
24 וַיְהִי בְּאַשְׁמֹרֶת הַבֹּקֶר וַיַּשְׁקֵף יְהוָה אֶל־מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ וְעָנָן וַיָּהָם אֵת מַחֲנֵה
מִצְרָיִם:
25 וַיָּסַר אֶת אֹפַן מַרְכְּבֹתָיו וַיְנַהֲגֵהוּ בִּכְבֵדֻת וַיֹּאמֶר מִצְרַיִם אָנוּסָה מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יְהוָה נִלְחָם
לָהֶם בְּמִצְרָיִם: פ
26 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נְטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַיָּם וְיָשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם עַל־מִצְרַיִם עַל־רִכְבּוֹ וְעַל־פָּרָשָׁיו:
27 וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם וַיָּשָׁב הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר לְאֵיתָנוֹ וּמִצְרַיִם נָסִים לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְנַעֵר
יְהוָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם:

28 וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם וַיְכַסּוּ אֶת־הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת־הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכֹל חֵיל פַּרְעֹה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם לֹא־נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד־אֶחָד׃

29 וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָם׃

30 וַיּוֹשַׁע יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם׃

31 וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־יְהוָה וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּיהוָה וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ׃ פ

15.1 אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אָשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם׃

2 עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וַאֲרֹמְמֶנְהוּ׃

3 יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ׃

4 מַרְכְּבֹת פַּרְעֹה וְחֵילוֹ יָרָה בַיָּם וּמִבְחַר שָׁלִשָׁיו טֻבְּעוּ בְיַם־סוּף׃

5 תְּהֹמֹת יְכַסְיֻמוּ יָרְדוּ בְמְצוֹלֹת כְּמוֹ־אָבֶן׃

6 יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה נֶאְדָּרִי בַכֹּחַ יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה תִּרְעַץ אוֹיֵב׃

7 וּבְרֹב גְּאוֹנְךָ תַּהֲרֹס קָמֶיךָ תְּשַׁלַּח חֲרֹנְךָ יֹאכְלֵמוֹ כַּקַּשׁ׃

8 וּבְרוּחַ אַפֶּיךָ נֶעֶרְמוּ מַיִם נִצְּבוּ כְמוֹ־נֵד נֹזְלִים קָפְאוּ תְהֹמֹת בְּלֶב־יָם׃

9 אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תִּמְלָאֵמוֹ נַפְשִׁי אָרִיק חַרְבִּי תּוֹרִישֵׁמוֹ יָדִי׃

10 נָשַׁפְתָּ בְרוּחֲךָ כִּסָּמוֹ יָם צָלְלוּ כַּעוֹפֶרֶת בְּמַיִם אַדִּירִים׃

11 מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְהוָה מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא׃

12 נָטִיתָ יְמִינְךָ תִּבְלָעֵמוֹ אָרֶץ׃

13 נָחִיתָ בְחַסְדְּךָ עַם־זוּ גָּאָלְתָּ נֵהַלְתָּ בְעֻזְּךָ אֶל־נְוֵה קָדְשֶׁךָ׃

14 שָׁמְעוּ עַמִּים יִרְגָּזוּן חִיל אָחַז יֹשְׁבֵי פְלֶשֶׁת׃

15 אָז נִבְהֲלוּ אַלּוּפֵי אֱדוֹם אֵילֵי מוֹאָב יְאֲחֲזֵמוֹ רָעַד נָמֹגוּ כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי כְנָעַן׃

16 תִּפֹּל עֲלֵיהֶם אֵימָתָה וָפַחַד בִּגְדֹל זְרוֹעֲךָ יִדְּמוּ כָּאֶבֶן עַד־יַעֲבֹר עַמְּךָ יְהוָה עַד־יַעֲבֹר עַם־זוּ קָנִיתָ׃

17 תְּבִאֵמוֹ וְתִטָּעֵמוֹ בְּהַר נַחֲלָתְךָ מָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ פָּעַלְתָּ יְהוָה מִקְּדָשׁ אֲדֹנָי כּוֹנְנוּ יָדֶיךָ׃

18 יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד׃

19 כִּי בָא סוּס פַּרְעֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו בַּיָּם וַיָּשֶׁב יְהוָה עֲלֵהֶם אֶת־מֵי הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ
בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם׃ פ
20 וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֹּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֶאנָ כָל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתֻפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֹת׃
21 וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם׃ ס

13.17 And so it was that when Pharaoh sent out[197] the people, God did not lead them by way of[198] the land of the Philistines, although it was nearby. For God said to himself, 'If the people see war, they may return to Egypt.'

13.18 Hence God led the people by way of the desert[199] to the Reed Sea.[200] The Israelites went out from the land of Egypt prepared for battle.[201]

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[197] שלח can be understood as 'to dismiss, send away' or as 'to let free, give free reign to' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1999: 1511-1513). While Pharaoh does not dismiss the Israelites against their will, Ex 12.31-32 includes a number of imperatives which imply that he is not merely allowing them to leave but ordering them to do so.

[198] דרך can be rendered in a variety of ways: 'way', 'path', 'road', 'passage' or even 'journey'. 'Road' suggests an established route, which seems unlikely in these circumstances, so I have followed the NRSV translation, 'by way of…'.

[199] מדבר can also be translated as 'wilderness' or 'steppe', but 'desert' is the most common translation, and there seems no particular reason for preferring 'wilderness' over it.

[200] This body of water is unlikely to be the Red Sea as modern readers know it. It may refer to an arm of the Red Sea (Cole, 1973: 117) or to a 'series of marshes and lakes between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Suez' (Bruckner, 2008: 125).

[201] Literally, the Israelites 'were five' or 'were grouped in fifties' in the sense that they were arranged as an army, ready for battle (Clines, 1996: 259). This concept has no direct equivalent in English, so I have highlighted their battle-readiness, rather than their arrangement in groups of fifty.

13.19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the Israelites swear a solemn oath[202], saying, 'God will surely come to your aid[203] and then you must bring up[204] my bones with you from here.'

13.20 They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the desert.

13.21 The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead the way, and in a pillar of fire[205] by night, to give them light[206], so that they could travel by day or by night.

13.22 The pillar of cloud did not leave its place by day and the pillar of fire went before the people by night.

14.1 The word of the LORD came to Moses, saying:

14.2 'Tell[207] the Israelites[208] to turn back and camp in front of Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal Zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea.[209]

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[202] The sense is of a 'solemn, irrevocable promise… a strongly judicial form of expression concluding with an invocation to God to be a witness to the oath' (Koehler and Baumgarner, 1999: 1397). I have attempted to convey the gravity of this oath here.
[203] פקד means to visit somebody or to 'pay attention to' that individual, with connotations of doing so in order to 'examine one's plight' (Clines, 2007: 737-738). So the NKJV's 'God will surely visit you' doesn't convey this full meaning. The emphatic repetition of פקד suggests an intention to reassure Israel not just of YHWH's presence but also of his help. Hence, I have followed the NIV's translation here.
[204] The hiphil form of עלה suggests causing someone or something to rise up, to 'lead up' or to 'bring up' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 828-830). In this case, bringing up an object seems the connotation most applicable to Joseph's bones.
[205] אש suggests not just 'fire' but 'supernatural fire associated with theophany' (Clines, 1993: 399, supported by Sarna, 1996: 111). This is a difficult concept to translate but it may not be necessary to do so, as YHWH's presence in the fire is a given.
[206] This verb takes the hiphil (causative active) form, making it clear that YHWH caused the fire to give light.
[207] דבר carries a sense of commanding, rather than just speech, so I have translated it as 'Tell the Israelites'. 'Speak to the Israelites' doesn't quite convey the necessary authoritative tone.
[208] Literally, 'sons of Israel'. This idiom suggests YHWH addressing the whole nation so, while I applaud the NKJV's use of inclusive language in 'children of Israel', simply rendering it 'the Israelites' seems satisfactory.
[209] It seems clear that YHWH commands Moses to have the Israelites camp opposite Baal Zephon. The only differences among the major English translations have to do with word order.

14.3 Pharaoh will say of the Israelites[210]: "They are wandering aimlessly[211] in the land; the desert has closed in on them."

14.4 I will harden[212] Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue you, and I will reveal my glory[213] through Pharaoh and all his army[214], and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.' And it was so.

14.5 When the King of Egypt was informed[215] that the people had fled, the hearts[216] of Pharaoh and his servants were changed.[217] He said to the people: 'What have we done, sending Israel away from serving us?'

14.6 He had his chariot harnessed and took his people with him.

14.7 And he took six hundred[218] chosen[219] chariots and all the chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.

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[210] Various translations are possible here. אמר can mean 'say' or 'think' and, in this context, it may mean that Pharaoh speaks to himself or thinks. And the ל construction, introducing an addressee, can mean that something is 'said of' someone (Clines, 1993: 322-325). Thus, 'Pharaoh will say, "The Israelites are wandering…"' is a fair translation, but I believe, 'Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, "They are wandering…"' is better.
[211] בנך takes the niphal (simple passive) form, emphasising the Israelites' supposed helplessness.
[212] חזק often means 'to strengthen' and sometimes 'take hold of, seize' (Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 304; see also Clines, 1996: 187). So it is intriguing that translators tend to assume a negative connotation to the verb in this particular context and render it 'harden'. But there seems to be widespread agreement on this point. (Propp is unusual amongst commentators in preferring 'strengthen' to 'harden' [1999: 466]).The hiphil form makes it clear that YHWH will harden Pharaoh's heart, rather than Pharaoh himself hardening his own heart.
[213] כבד carries multiple possible meanings: 'be made heavy, be honoured, be glorious… reveal one's glory' (Clines, 1998: 349). The implication here seems to be that YHWH seeks to make himself and his glory known more widely, with Pharaoh as his instrument to enable this. Thus: 'I will reveal my glory through Pharaoh'.
[214] חיל can mean 'power' in the sense of wealth or property (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1994: 311), but the inference in this situation is obviously military.
[215] The hophal (causative passive) form of נגד suggests Pharaoh being informed rather than actively hearing.
[216] Can also mean mind or will, but a change of heart is true to the literal wording and is a common English idiom.
[217] הפך with the niphal (passive) form. Their hearts are changed. They do not choose to change their hearts.
[218] A hundred being a common 'military unit' (Clines, 2001: 114).
[219] 'chosen' in the sense of being 'choice'; the best Pharaoh has available.

14.8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and he pursued after[220] the Israelites, and the Israelites were marching out boldly.[221]

14.9 The Egyptians pursued after them and overtook them, encamped by the sea – all of Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his horsemen and his army – by Pi-Hahiroth, in front of Baal Zephon.

14.10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites raised their eyes[222] and behold the Egyptians going after them, and they were very much afraid.[223] The Israelites cried out to the LORD.

14.11 They said to Moses: 'Was it for lack of graves in Egypt that you brought us[224] to perish[225] in the desert? What have you done to us[226], bringing us out of Egypt?

14.12 Is this not the very thing which we said to you in Egypt, saying: "Leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians"? It would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.'

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[220] אחרי is often used alongside a verb of motion, especially with one conveying a hostile pursuit (Clines, 1993: 197).
[221] Literally, 'going out with a hand raised/high', which implies boldness or defiance (c.f. Noth, 1962: 112; Propp, 1999: 493). Once again, this concept has no direct equivalent in English. The NLT's 'with fists raised in defiance' seems to me overly literal and a little clumsy.
[222] This translation has the twin benefits of being very close to the Hebrew's literal meaning and conjuring the image of people, hunched over from a long trudge, lifting their heads to look around them.
[223] The construction here emphasises the depth of Israel's fear (Clines, 1998: 276-277).
[224] The verb takes the hophal (causative) form, implying that the Israelites hold Moses responsible for causing them to leave Egypt, and claim they had little say in the matter.
[225] The pual (intensive passive) form of the verb means that simply 'to die' does not convey the full weight of the Israelites' words.
[226] The echo of 14.5 is obvious and highly ironic.

14.13 Moses said to the people: 'Do not be afraid[227], stand firm[228] and see the salvation[229] of the LORD, which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again, forever.[230]

14.14 The LORD will fight for you. You shall be silent.'[231]

14.15 The LORD said to Moses: 'Why are you crying out[232] to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.

14.16 You hold out your staff. Stretch out your hand over[233] the sea and split[234] it open. The Israelites will go into the middle of the sea on dry land.

14.17 And behold I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians. They will go in after you and I will reveal my glory through Pharaoh and through all his army, his chariots and his horsemen.

14.18 And Egypt will know that I am the LORD when I reveal my glory through Pharaoh, through his chariots and through his horsemen.'

14.19 The messenger[235] of God who was going in front of Israel's camp[236] moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and stood behind them.

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[227] Literally, 'Fear not'.
[228] Or 'take your stand'. The hitpael (reflexive) form is used.
[229] Or 'deliverance, prosperity, help' (Clines, 1998: 331). But the sense is that this event is something remarkable: 'help' therefore seems inadequate.
[230] I accept that 'you will never see them again, forever' is an unusual English construction but the Hebrew conveys an idea of the Israelites' not seeing the Egyptians again, continuing until the end of time (Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 725), and I wanted to capture this.
[231] Other translations of this phrase vary from, 'you shall hold your peace' (NKJV) to 'you need only to be still' (NIV) to 'just stay calm' (NLT). חרש can be literally translated as 'be silent, dumb' (Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 361) and the construction suggests a command so, 'You shall be silent' seems a good option.
[232] The sense of צעק is of a desperate shouting out to YHWH for help.
[233] A Hebrew language expert suggested to me that Moses should be understood as extending his hand upwards rather than outwards, over the sea, but I can find no support for this idea in commentaries or lexicons.
[234] Or 'open, penetrate' (Clines, 1995: 248-249). 'Divide' is inadequate to express the violence implicit here.
[235] Or 'angel' (Clines, 2001: 284-285). But 'messenger' is probably a better translation. In any case, YHWH's messengers tend to be angels and either term suggests a representation of YHWH's presence (see e.g. Cole, 1973: 121).
[236] This can be a camp with military connotations or simply a large group of people (Clines, 2001: 222-223).

14.20 It came between Egypt's camp and Israel's camp and behold the cloud and darkness shone in the night[237], and neither came near the other all night.

14.21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the LORD drove back the sea all night, with a strong east wind, and turned the sea into dry ground[238]. The waters were broken open[239],

14.22 and the Israelites went into the middle of the sea on dry land, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left hand.

14.23 The Egyptians pursued them and went in after them; all Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen, into the middle of the sea.

14.24 And so it was that, at the morning watch[240], the LORD looked down on the Egyptian camp from the pillar of fire and cloud[241] and threw the Egyptian camp into confusion.[242]

14.25 He diverted[243] the wheels of their chariots so that they drove with difficulty. And the Egyptians said: 'Let's flee from before Israel! For the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!'

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[237] This concept is both important and difficult to translate. The sense is of light being somehow produced by the cloud and darkness, but how this happens is unclear. Among commentators, Propp is singular in noticing this confusion (1999: 498) but even he does not clarify exactly what he believes is happening at this point. The NLT renders it 'the cloud turned to fire', but there is nothing in the Hebrew to support this.

[238] חרבה might be a pun on חרב (sword), as Bruckner (2008: 133) suggests. YHWH uses the ground as a weapon by which he crushes the enemies of his people.

[239] בקע carries overtones of violence. It is the same word used for chopping wood with an axe (Alter, 2004: 394). So a clinical 'dividing' of the waters seems insufficient. The verb takes the niphal form, so the waters are passive; the object being broken.

[240] The implication is that this refers to the last watch of the night, as dawn was breaking.

[241] The NRSV translates this phrase as 'the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down', but to my mind, the word order in the Hebrew suggests 'the LORD looked down… from the pillar'.

[242] Once again, translating this verb in such a way as to convey every nuance of the Hebrew is difficult. המם suggests motion, confusion, troubling and even panic. 'Throw into confusion' probably comes closest to summing this up.

[243] Exactly what YHWH does to Egypt's chariot wheels is a matter of some debate. In Sam (echoed by LXX and Syr), the verb is ויאסר, which can only be translated 'bound'. But the א is missing from MT's ויסר, opening up a range of possible interpretations: 'bound', 'diverted' and even 'removed' (Propp, 1999: 500, supported by

14.26 The LORD said to Moses: 'Stretch out your hand over the sea and the waters will turn back over the Egyptians; over their chariots and over their horsemen.'

14.27 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea turned back to its usual place at dawn, while the Egyptians were fleeing away from[244] it. The LORD hurled[245] the Egyptians into the middle of the sea.

14.28 The waters turned back over the chariots and horsemen; all of Pharaoh's army which had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained.

14.29 But the Israelites walked into the middle of the sea on dry land and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left hand.

14.30 Thus, that day, the LORD saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore.[246]

Dozeman, 2009: 316). Noth favours 'clogged' (1962: 117). Cole envisages the chariots being bogged down, with their axles broken afterwards (1973: 122). Hyatt rules out 'bound', assuming that this implies 'the Egyptian chariots were bogged down in the mud or quicksand over which the Israelites had been able to pass easily. However, this clause comes too early in the account, for there is no reference to the return of the waters until verse 27.' (Hyatt, 1980: 145). But, as Propp rightly observes, 'bound' might simply mean that YHWH locked the chariots' wheels (1999: 500). Propp rejects 'removed' as an interpretation, since wheels removed from a chariot wouldn't turn at all, not even with the 'difficulty' the text mentions (1999: 500). The most intriguing possibility is 'diverted'. Perhaps YHWH makes the chariot drivers lose control and collide with each other. Propp hears in 14.25 an echo of 14.6, in which Pharaoh harnessed (ויאסר) his chariots (Propp, 1999: 500). This echo is indeed clearly present, either as the exact same word (as in Sam) or as a pun (as in MT). Pharaoh harnessed his chariots to begin with, but in the later verse, it is YHWH who controls them (Propp, 1999: 500)! Of the possible interpretations of the verb, I prefer 'diverted', since it is the most effective in bringing out YHWH's wresting control of the chariots away from Pharaoh.

[244] Some translations (e.g. NASB, NKJV) have the Egyptians fleeing into the sea, not away from it. This has the advantage of emphasising the Egyptians' confusion but there is no reason within the text itself to suppose they would have done anything other than flee away from the source of danger.

[245] This verb takes the piel (intensive active) form. Thus, YHWH does not merely 'throw' the Egyptians into the sea. He 'hurls' them. (c.f. Alter, 2004: 398).

[246] Literally, 'on the edge of the sea'.

14.31 Israel saw the great work[247] which the LORD had done against[248] the Egyptians, and the people feared[249] the LORD and believed in the LORD and in Moses, his servant.

15.1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD, saying: 'I will sing to the LORD for he is indeed exalted.[250] Horse and chariot he has thrown into the sea.

15.2 The LORD is my strength and my might.[251] He has become my salvation. This is my god and I will glorify[252] him; my father's god and I will exalt him.

15.3 The LORD is a man of war[253]; YHWH is his name.

15.4 Pharaoh's chariots and army he has thrown into the sea; his choicest officers were drowned[254] in the Reed Sea.

15.5 The depths covered them; they sank into the deep[255] like a stone.

15.6 Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

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[247] The literal translation of יד is 'hand', but this does not make clear the connotations of power and of work done which are implicit in the Hebrew.
[248] The NKJV renders this 'the great work which the LORD had done *in Egypt'* (emphasis added) but its context within the narrative suggests to me that it should be understood as referring to YHWH's action *against* the Egyptian army.
[249] 'feared' seems appropriate here. It effectively sums up the awe and respect conveyed by the Hebrew, alongside fear itself.
[250] Literally, 'arising, he has arisen'. So, YHWH has made himself exalted, and the emphatic construction adds weight to this self-exaltation.
[251] זמרת can be translated, 'my refuge', 'my might' or 'my song' (see Clines, 1996: 119), and the translator must make a choice for one of these options. But the 'song' in itself suggests a song of praise or triumph, with YHWH (and his might) as its subject.
[252] Literally, 'I will beautify, adorn him (with praise)' (Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 627).
[253] אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ('man of war') is a common biblical construct, so I have adopted that rather than 'warrior'.
[254] The verb takes the pual (intensive passive) form. So Pharaoh's officers were emphatically and violently 'drowned'.
[255] The 'deep' may suggest not just the depths of the sea but also the underworld (Clines, 2001: 449, supported by Sarna, 1991: 78; Hyatt, 1980: 164).

15.7 In the greatness of your magnificence, you destroyed[256] your adversaries. You sent forth your burning anger; it consumed them like chaff.

15.8 By the breath of[257] your nostrils[258], the waters piled up. The floods stood up in a heap; the depths thickened[259] in the heart of the sea.

15.9 The enemy said: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. I will satisfy my hunger[260]; I will draw out[261] my sword and my hand will ruin[262] them."

15.10 You blew with your wind and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

15.11 Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, terrible in splendour[263], working wonders?

15.12 You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them.

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[256] הרס encompasses 'attack, tear down… demolish, destroy… ruin' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1994: 256-7). 'Destroyed' brings these ideas together.
[257] רוח is multivalent and can mean wind, breath, breeze or, in the context of breath from nostrils, anger (Kohler and Baumgartner, 1996: 1197-1201). I have translated it 'breath' because 'blast' would be a very unusual translation of the word, and because a 'blast' from an individual's nostrils presents a very curious image.
[258] Nose and nostrils are a common Hebrew idiom to suggest anger (Durham, 1987: 201).
[259] Or 'congealed', 'became rigid' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1996: 1117).
[260] The Hebrew suggests a physical appetite; a desire to almost literally devour the enemy. The NKJV's 'My desire shall be satisfied on them' suggests to me sexual connotations, absent in the Hebrew.
[261] Or 'pour out', 'empty out'. 'Draw out' makes more sense in English.
[262] ירש can be rendered 'take possession of… dispossess', when applied to an action against another person or group of people (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 441-442). 'Ruin' seems an effective way to sum up these possibilities while also capturing the aggression expressed in 15.9.
[263] 'glory, praise' or 'praiseworthy actions' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1999: 1692-1693). This is a slightly different concept from כבד – usually translated 'glory' – and 'terrible in praise' would suggest it is the praise of the Israelites which makes YHWH 'terrible'. 'Splendour' sums up the meaning well.

15.13 In your unfailing love[264], you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling.[265]

15.14 The peoples will[266] hear and tremble[267]; agony will seize the inhabitants of Philistia.

15.15 The chiefs of Edom will be dismayed[268], the strong men[269] of Moab will be seized with trembling.

15.16 All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall[270] upon them. By the greatness of your arm, they will be motionless like stone, until your people pass by[271] O LORD, until the people which you acquired pass by.

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[264] חסד is a highly multi-faceted concept, encompassing loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, goodness, love and mercy (Clines, 1996: 227-228; Brown and Gesenius, 1979: 338-339). Therefore, rendering it in English is a frustrating exercise. 'Unfailing love' at least comes close to the inferences of the Hebrew.
[265] NRSV translates נוה as 'your… abode', NASB as 'habitation'. I follow NIV in preferring 'dwelling', which is less archaic but still preserves the essential meaning of the Hebrew.
[266] Opinion is divided over whether vv14-17 should be rendered in the future or perfect tense. For example, NRSV uses the perfect tense, NKJV the future. Do these words anticipate what YHWH will do in the future? Or is Moses declaring what YHWH has already done? (NKJV couples v13 to the previous verses, assuming that YHWH's act of guiding his people to his dwelling is a reference to the crossing of the Reed Sea.) It seems to me that these verses envisage a future when YHWH will complete his saving work of the Hebrews and lead them into their homeland. This is supported by the likely writing or extensive editing performed on the song in the Persian period, when the Yehud community was settling into its new home, and needed reassurance that their deity had given this land to them (see chapter two).
[267] The implication is that this trembling arises from terror.
[268] Could also be translated 'be horrified… be out of one's senses' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1994: 111).
[269] איל means 'strength' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1994: 40) or, therefore, 'strong men'.
[270] נפל can mean 'to fall' literally, as an accident, in the context of dying in battle or, as I think is most appropriate here, 'falling upon' someone similarly to raiding them (Kohler and Baumgartner, 1995: 709-711).
[271] עבר can mean 'go over, pass over' but 'go on one's way' and 'pass by' are both more common usages (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 778-780). And in this context, 'cross over' only really makes sense if it alludes to crossing the Reed Sea (which is described in the song as a past event, not a future one), or to crossing the Jordan, which is not mentioned at all, elsewhere in the song.

15.17 You will bring them in and you will plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, the place which you made for your abode[272] O LORD; the sanctuary of the LORD[273] which your hands established.[274]

15.18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.[275]

15.19 For Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea and the LORD turned back the sea over them, but the Israelites walked into the middle of the sea on dry land.'

15.20 Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel[276] in her hand and all the women followed her with timbrels, dancing.

15.21 Miriam sang[277] to them: 'Sing to the LORD for he is indeed exalted. Horse and chariot he has thrown into the sea.'

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[272] שבת most often means 'rest' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1999: 1407-1411) but the sense here seems to be of rest in terms of a place to stay.
[273] The construct מקדש אדני ('sanctuary of the LORD') is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Lamentations 2.20), as Clines points out (1993: 134).
[274] כנן is a variant form of כון: 'set up, establish… found' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 464-465).
[275] עד conveys a sense of perpetuity.
[276] Or tambourine.
[277] This is not שיר, used in connection with Moses in 15.1 but ענה, 'sing… sing in praise of' (Koehler and Baumgartner, 1995: 854). However, 'singing' is the most effective way to translate both verbs.

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