PLANT METAPHORS IN PROPHETIC CONDEMNATIONS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

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Acknowledgments

This project owes its genesis to a suggestion by Marc Zvi Brettler that I compile an annotated bibliography of recent studies of biblical metaphor. After reading approximately twenty years of published works, covering both theory and application, I found a gap in the existing research that I thought I could fill: instead of exploring a specific text or metaphorical theme, I would take a comprehensive approach to a range of metaphors to see if I could discern patterns in their selection and use. My goals were both practical and methodological. I wanted to understand better how the biblical authors perceived the world around them, and I also wanted to find new ways to use cognitive metaphor theories to enhance our understanding of biblical metaphor.

I am grateful to Dr. Brettler for his encouragement and thoughtful feedback as this project progressed. I offer my sincere thanks as well to the faculty at Brandeis University, especially David P. Wright and Tzvi Abusch, for their support over the years. Special thanks go to the SBL Metaphor Group—Ryan P. Bonfiglio, Hanne Løland Levinson, Pierre Van Hecke, and Andrea L. Weiss—for the opportunity to share early versions of my research and for their helpful comments on the project. I am also grateful to Bernard M. Levinson for his friendship and wise counsel over the years.

To my parents, who passed away while I was working on this project, I owe a debt of gratitude for their unwavering support and belief in me. Thanks also to my extended family, including my friends, the Reillys, for taking up the drumbeat of encouragement these last few years. Finally, on a lighter note, I would like to express my appreciation for the prophetic authors—for their creativity and empathy as much as for their righteous anger and biting social commentary. Also deserving acknowledgment are fig trees and other woody plants—for inspiring (and frustrating) me with their many mysteries.

Tables and Figures

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor (Yale) Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABIG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ACEBTSup	Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en bijbelse Theologie Supplement Series
AEL	Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–1980.
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
Atiqot	ʿ*Atiqot*
b.	Babylonian talmudic tractate
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BHQ	Biblia Hebraica Quinta
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Gelb, Ignace J., et al., eds. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. 21 vols. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2010.
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series

CC	Continental Commentaries
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CLR	Cognitive Linguistics Research
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. *The Context of Scripture*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2006.
CTL	Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics
DCH	Clines, David J. A., ed. *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2016.
DULAT	Olmo Lete, Gregorio del, and Joaquín Sanmartín. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Translated and edited by W. G. E. Watson. 3rd ed. 2 vols. HdO 112. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
ET	English translation
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HANE/S	History of the Ancient Near East/Studies
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HdO	Handbook of Oriental Studies
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
Jastrow	Jastrow, Marcus. *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*

Joüon	Joüon, Paul, and T. Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. SubBi 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006.
JSem	*Journal for Semitics*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
LXX	Septuagint
mpl	masculine plural
ms	masculine singular
MT	Masoretic Text
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NETS	Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PJ	*Palästina-Jahrbuch*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
Siphrut	Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures
SJ	Studia Judaica
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)

SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
Taʿan.	Taʿanit
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 17 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2021.
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

1

Introduction

The agrarian economies of the ancient Near East needed peace to foster prosperity. Warfare within the homeland disrupted the lives and livelihoods of commoners in numerous ways. People living on farms or in unwalled settlements generally fled from approaching armies, seeking refuge in walled towns or leaving the region altogether. Those who dwelled in, or escaped to, a town risked famine, thirst, and pestilence if the enemy besieged that town, and anyone captured by the invading army faced the possibility of death, deportation, or enslavement.[1] Moreover, besieging armies often consumed or destroyed the crops and vegetation in the region surrounding the town, either to support their own siege activities or to punish the besieged. If victorious, they might also destroy the towns and settlements that they conquered, leaving behind displaced, impoverished, and starving people. In extreme cases, an invading army could take steps to make the land uninhabitable by reducing its capacity to produce food in the future. Texts from the ancient Near East describe, for example, sowing weeds into crop land and destroying fruit trees, which take years to cultivate before they produce fruit.[2]

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1. See Israel Eph'al, *The City Besieged: Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East*, CHANE 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 57–68; and Charlie Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods: A Survey of Warfare in the Ancient Near East*, RBS 88 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 311–92. The success of Assyrian siege tactics in the eighth century may have led to a change in behaviors. In a situation where walled towns were less able to withstand a siege, people may have chosen to leave an invaded region altogether, returning only after the attacking army had departed. See Ernst Axel Knauf, "Was There a Refugee Crisis in the Eighth/Seventh Centuries BCE?," in *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Yuval Gadot, and Matthew J. Adams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 159–72.

2. See Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods*, 367–79; Aren M. Maeir, Oren Ackermann, and Hendrik J. Bruins, "The Ecological Consequences of a Siege: A

Even those who escaped the most devastating effects of warfare could experience significant hardship. The simple inability to properly cultivate fields and care for fruit trees during years when armies stalked the land carried both short- and long-term consequences. The first year, uncultivated fields and untended trees meant crop shortages and the potential for famine in the region. In addition, the unplowed land provided a haven for locusts to lay their eggs, which could then develop into crop-destroying swarms in the second year and beyond. The cumulative effect of such disasters could lead people to permanently abandon their homes rather than face years of struggle and famine.[3]

For those in the modern era who have never experienced warfare in their own homelands, it may be easy to overlook the extent to which the prophetic corpus presents an image of life in a war-torn region—not only in its combat imagery, but also in its descriptions of denuded lands, famine, pests, and pestilence.[4] In the decades surrounding the demise of Israel in the eighth century BCE and of Judah in the sixth, an international struggle over control of the southern Levant frequently brought battles into the homelands of the two kingdoms. At various points, Assyria, Aram-Damascus, Egypt, and Babylonia each waged campaigns to acquire hegemonic control over the kingdoms in the region. In addition, from

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Marginal Note on Deuteronomy 20:19–20," in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 239–43; and Avraham Faust, "Settlement, Economy, and Demography under Assyrian Rule in the West: The Territories of the Former Kingdom of Israel as a Test Case," *JAOS* 135 (2015): 765–89.

3. In a seventeenth-century BCE letter from Mari, following the war between Zimri-lim and Eshnunna, the governor of Qaṭṭunān describes his challenges in preventing the people from leaving the city during the first year of the locust swarms. Without military assistance in killing the locusts in the third year, "the plague could have easily led to a total abandonment of the settlement of the region due to the flight of the populace and the cessation of farming." See Karen Radner, "Fressen und gefressen werden: Heuschrecken als Katastrophe und Delikatesse im Alten Vorderen Orient," *WO* 34 (2004): 13 (my translation).

4. Some of the images of damaged landscapes and reduced populations may reflect the effects of a natural disaster, such as the devastating earthquake that struck the Levant in the mid-eighth century BCE, damaging settlements throughout the region. See Steven A. Austin, Gordon W. Franz, and Eric G. Frost, "Amos's Earthquake: An Extraordinary Middle East Seismic Event of 750 B.C.," *International Geology Review* 42 (2000): 657–71.

time to time, the kings of Israel or Judah would attempt, sometimes as part of an alliance with other Levantine rulers, to gain independence from their current hegemon, leading that kingdom to eventually return to the region to reestablish its authority by force.[5]

The burden of these periods of warfare would often have fallen most heavily upon the common people of Israel and Judah—those outside the royal administration and the elites of society—who had little formal power or influence within the kingdoms. Yet the spare retelling of the fall of Israel and Judah that appears in the historiographical texts of the Bible focuses primarily on the actions and fates of the rulers and their officials. The responses to events within the two kingdoms that reside within the prophetic corpus, however, do provide a window into the experience of the common people.

The images of warfare and its aftereffects appear in both literal and metaphorical forms, in some cases placed side by side. Isaiah 1:7–8, for example, declares of Judah:

ארצכם שממה עריכם שרפות אש אדמתכם לנגדכם זרים אכלים אתה ושממה כמהפכת זרים: ונותרה בת־ציון כסכה בכרם כמלונה במקשה כעיר נצרה:

[7] Your land is a desolation, your cities burned with fire. Strangers devour the land in front of you, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. [8] And Daughter Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city "guarded."[6]

The passage follows a literal description of a kingdom devastated by warfare (1:7) with a metaphorical version that depicts Judah as a postharvest vineyard and field, with Jerusalem presented as the only structure left standing after the produce has been gathered (1:8).[7]

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5. See J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

6. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. To facilitate discussion and comparison of the features of the metaphors analyzed here and in the chapters that follow, translations of the biblical text will generally attempt to preserve the basic literal sense, even the syntax, of the Hebrew passages. As such, the phrasing may at times seem awkward by the standards of modern written English. For passages that are more difficult to render into clear English, translations may include an explanatory gloss or alternate translation in brackets.

7. See also the more detailed discussion of this passage in ch. 4.

Similarly, Jer 8:13 and 14a present a harvesting metaphor of gathered grapes and figs alongside an exclamation in which the speaker orders the people, in literal terms, to flee an approaching army and gather in fortified cities:

אסף אסיפם נאם־יהוה אין ענבים בגפן ואין תאנים בתאנה והעלה נבל ואתן להם יעברום:
על־מה אנחנו ישבים האספו ונבוא אל־ערי המבצר ונדמה־שם

[13] "Gathered, I will end them," says YHWH. "There are no grapes on the vine, and there are no figs on the fig tree, and the leaf withers. (What) I have given them will pass away from them."
[14a] "Why are we sitting (here)? Gather together so that we may go to the fortified cities and stand still there!"[8]

That the verb אסף appears in both verses to express the action of gathering—of fruit in 8:13 and people in 8:14—creates a connection between the two images and leaves the impression that the gathered fruit represents the people gathering in the fortified cities. The image is not a hopeful one, however; just as farmers gather fruit to consume it, so the people gather for their own destruction (8:14b–17).[9]

The prophetic authors were more than simply keen observers of the misfortunes of their homelands.[10] They also claimed that YHWH had

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8. Translations of נדמה in 8:14 range from "let us be silent" (KJV, ASV) to "let us … meet our doom" (JPS) and "let us … perish" (RSV). Grammatical analyses of the form have yielded several potential interpretations. The simplest explanation takes נדמה as a *qal* plural cohortative of דמם-I, "to be silent, still; to cease," but *DCH* also suggests that the verb, with emendation, could be a *qal* form of דמם-II, "to weep," or a *niphal* form of דמם-IV, "to maltreat, destroy" (*DCH* 2:450–51, s.vv. "דמם-I–IV"). The prophetic author probably intended to convey the sense that death or suffering awaits the people in the city, but rendering נדמה as either "let us be silent" or "let us perish" fails to adequately convey the wordplay present in the juxtaposition of two verbs that represent different modes of inaction: ישב, "to sit," and דמם-I, "to be silent, still." The translation offered here highlights the contrast in the verse as the speaker, with some irony, rejects sitting motionless in the countryside as the enemy advances in favor of seeking the equally dubious fate of standing still in a fortified city.

9. See further the discussion of this passage in ch. 7.

10. For purposes of this study, which focuses on the development and expression of ideas about Israel and Judah in specific prophetic passages, the authenticity of the prophecies matters less than their content. To avoid confusing claims about the authorship of specific texts with questions about the named prophets as historical figures, I

given them special insight into the causes and courses of these events.[11] The prophets frequently lay the blame for the troubles of Israel and Judah not on any foreign enemies, but on their own people. On this point, a pattern emerges from the data. The history of Israel and Judah suggests that a direct connection can often be drawn between a ruler's foreign policy—especially his decision whether to seek allies or rebel against the kingdom's current hegemon—and the threats facing the kingdom or the harm inflicted upon it. Thus, we expect to find prophetic passages that condemn the kings' foreign policy decisions (e.g., Isa 30:1–5; Jer 2:17–19).

More often, however, the prophetic authors look elsewhere for their explanations of their own kingdom's situation. They argue that YHWH has afflicted, or will afflict, the kingdom, either personally or through a human agent, because the kingdom has failed to properly serve its god. It has not adhered to YHWH's requirements for social justice (e.g., Isa 1:21–23; Ezek 22:12–13; Amos 2:6–8; Mic 3:9–11), or it has not worshiped YHWH exclusively or properly (e.g., Jer 16:10–12; Hos 2:4–15; Amos 2:4–5; Mic 1:5–7). In fact, to the extent that foreign policy plays a role in the prophetic accusations, it appears in complaints that the kingdom's leaders have disobeyed YHWH in their handling of foreign alliances. In other words, properly serving YHWH includes adopting a YHWH-approved foreign policy.[12] The prophets' explanations of the events of their day demonstrate an important aspect of their worldview: that divine favor or wrath consis-

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use the names of the prophetic texts only to refer to the text, never to the prophet as an individual. When I wish to speak of those responsible for the composition of a specific passage in the prophetic corpus, I use the general terms "prophet," "author," or "prophetic author." That said, the discussion of specific passages will address questions about the dates of the texts as needed to support the analysis of the development of the metaphors in the texts.

11. On the role of the prophet in mediating communications between the divine and human realms, see Martti Nissinen, "Prophetic Intermediation in the Ancient Near East," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5–22. For a discussion more specifically of biblical prophecy and the relationship of the prophet to the state, see the essays in Christopher A. Rollston, ed., *Enemies and Friends of the State: Ancient Prophecy in Context* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018).

12. Hans M. Barstad discusses this aspect of Hosea's complaints about Ephraimite and Israelite foreign policy. See Barstad, "Hosea and the Assyrians," in *"Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela": Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, ed. Robert P. Gordon and Hans M. Barstad (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 91–110.

tently operates as a determining factor in whether a kingdom thrives or falters, and therefore examining the cause and effect of historical events requires consideration of everything that may have incurred divine favor or wrath.[13]

1.1. Patterns in Prophetic Metaphorical Imagery

The prophetic authors employed a wide variety of metaphors to communicate their ideas about the sources of YHWH's anger with his people and about the consequences of that anger. A detailed examination of the evidence, however, suggests that three images in particular held greater appeal than others as vehicles for depicting the kingdoms of Israel and Judah: (1) a flock of small cattle (e.g., Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34); (2) a woman (e.g., Hos 2:4–15; Jer 3:6–10; Ezek 16; 23); and (3) a plant or plants (e.g., Isa 5:1–7; Ezek 19:10–14; Mic 7:1–7). Scholars often refer to these three categories as *pastoral*, *marital*, and *agricultural* metaphors, though the terms *woman* and *plant* constitute more accurate category names for the last two sets of metaphors, primarily because not all woman metaphors employ marital imagery and not all agricultural metaphors employ plant imagery.[14] All three metaphor types are attested in biblical and extrabiblical texts, and the prophetic authors exploit particular features of each image to convey their messages.

Pastoral metaphors often provide a way to highlight how a kingdom's leaders have contributed to the fate of the people. Occasionally, YHWH plays the role of shepherd to his people, who are a disobedient flock (Hos

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13. For a discussion of success or failure in warfare as a proxy for divine favor or wrath, see Nili Wazana, "'War Crimes' in Amos's Oracles against the Nations (Amos 1:3–2:3)," in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 479–501.

14. The category *agricultural metaphors* is both too broad and too narrow for purposes of defining the boundaries of plant metaphors in the prophetic corpus. Agriculture may refer to both plant and animal farming, thus overlapping with pastoral metaphors. In addition, the category name creates a distinction between cultivated and wild plants that may exclude wild plant metaphors that otherwise have meaningful similarities to cultivated plant metaphors. On marital metaphors as a problematic category name for metaphors depicting Israel or Judah as a woman, see Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6–30.

4:16; 13:5–8).[15] More common, however, are passages in which the behavior of bad leaders causes the people to stray into disobedience or exile. For example, Jer 50:6–7 describes the leaders of Judah as shepherds who have led the flock of Judah astray from the pasture of YHWH's protection. The author extends the metaphor to describe the consequences of straying for the people, depicting flight from enemies or exile as a scattering of the flock and military defeat as the consumption of the flock by predators. That pastoral imagery lends itself well to condemning leaders flows naturally from the fundamentally hierarchical nature of the relationship between a shepherd and the flock that he leads. Indeed, the metaphor of a king or leader as a shepherd of his people was common in the ancient Near East.[16]

In contrast to pastoral metaphors, woman metaphors usually do not explicitly differentiate between leaders and commoners. Instead, they conceptualize a kingdom or city, as a collective whole, as a human female. Passages of this type hold the entire kingdom or city accountable for its sins. Consequences, including military conquest, may take the form of physical punishment of the woman's body, or it may be expressed in terms of seizure or destruction of her family or property. For example, Hos 2:4–15 accuses Israel of apostasy by describing the kingdom as YHWH's wife, who has been unfaithful to him by consorting with other deities. As a result, YHWH intends to punish her by stripping her of both clothing and wealth, leaving her poor and unprotected, vulnerable to attacks by her lovers, meaning other kingdoms and their deities.[17]

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15. Pierre van Hecke, "Pastoral Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible and in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," in *The Old Testament in Its World: Papers Read at the Winter Meeting, January 2003, The Society for Old Testament Study and at the Joint Meeting, July 2003, The Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België*, ed. Robert P. Gordon and Johannes C. de Moor, OTS 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 200–217.

16. See G. Ernest Wright, "The Good Shepherd," *BA* 2.4 (1939): 44–48; Joan Goodnick Westenholz, "The Good Shepherd," in *Schools of Oriental Studies and the Development of Modern Historiography: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project, Held in Ravenna, Italy, October 13–17, 2001*, ed. A. Panaino and A. Piras, Melammu Symposia 4 (Milan: Mimesis, 2004), 281–310; and van Hecke, "Pastoral Metaphors." That small cattle such as sheep and goats also tend to follow a lead animal from the flock similarly aligns well with the leader-commoner dynamic in many of these metaphors. This flock behavior may have contributed to the term for "ram" also developing the sense of "leader" in biblical and extrabiblical texts (*DCH* 1:210–11, s.v. "אַיִל").

17. The passage depicts the kingdom of Israel—comprising people and land—as a woman for purposes of the overall accusation and punishment, but the author also

Like the metaphor of a leader as a shepherd, the metaphor of a city as a woman is also attested in extrabiblical texts from the ancient Near East. The feminine gender of the Hebrew nouns עיר and קריה, meaning "city" or "town," may have contributed to the biblical authors' adoption and development of this metaphor.[18] In addition, since the kingdoms of the ancient Near East often originated with a single city and its immediate environs, references to a kingdom's main city frequently serve as a metonym for the kingdom as a whole. Consequently, the prophetic audience would have readily comprehended the metaphor of a city as a woman as potentially referring more broadly to the kingdom.

Finally, like woman metaphors, plant metaphors for Israel and Judah usually represent the kingdom as a collective whole. For example, Jer 2:21 describes apostate Judah as a vine, planted by YHWH, that has turned away from him as it has grown. At the same time, by drawing on various parts of a single plant, or by using more than one type of plant, these metaphors can also differentiate between different groups or types of people within the collective. Thus, the vine metaphor in Ezek 19:10–14 distinguishes the rulers of Judah from the people by depicting the rulers as twigs on a vine branch and the people as grapes. As a result of the multiple ways to elaborate on the basic metaphor of a kingdom as a plant, plant metaphors allow differentiation of responsibility for the kingdom's fate, much as pastoral metaphors distinguish between the leader-shepherd and people-flock. In the case of Ezek 19:10–14, the overgrowth of the royal branch that leads to the downfall of the entire vine (with its fruit) conveys the message that the people are suffering for the actions of their leaders.[19]

Metaphors depicting people as plants were both highly conventional and highly productive in the ancient Near East. They provide the foundation for numerous common Hebrew terms found in the Bible, as when offspring are referred to as פרי, "fruit," or זרע, "seed."[20] The ubiquity of such

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extends the metaphor by incorporating her children into the image, who represent the current generation of people within the kingdom, whom YHWH will now disown (2:6–7). Another type of extension of the woman metaphor presents different cities as sisters (Jer 3:6–10; Ezek 16; 23).

18. Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 61–74.

19. See ch. 5 for additional discussion and analysis of Jer 2:21 and Ezek 19:10–14.

20. For a discussion of these and other common terms and expressions, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Planting of Man: A Study in Biblical Imagery," in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, ed. John H. Marks

metaphors means that comprehension of expressions in which a whole city or a kingdom is a plant or plants would likely have posed no problem for the prophetic audience. Metaphors that present kingdoms or cities as plants are not well attested outside the Bible, but at least two texts from Mesopotamia describe the city of Babylon as a date or date palm tree.[21] The date palm grew well in Mesopotamia, and in addition to the uses of its fruit as both a food source and a sweetener, its wood provided building material to a region that otherwise does not produce many trees.[22] That combination of prolific growth and economic significance probably contributed to the sense that the tree or its fruit could serve as a symbol for an important city like Babylon. A similar dynamic may have contributed to the relative popularity of viticulture metaphors for depicting Israel and Judah among the biblical authors.[23]

1.2. Patterns in the Prophetic Condemnations

In addition to the employment of a common set of metaphors to depict Israel and Judah, a second pattern also appears in the prophecies that condemn the kingdoms. The material contains two types of messages. The first, and by far more numerous, type simply expresses an accusation of collective wrongdoing and a pronouncement of doom. For example, Isa

and Robert M. Good, (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 129–36. For biblical and extrabiblical examples of metaphors of people as plants in the context of warfare, see Nili Samet, "On Agricultural Imagery in Biblical Descriptions of Catastrophes," *JAJ* 3 (2012): 2–14.

21. Selena Wisnom, *Weapons of Words: Intertextual Competition in Babylonian Poetry; A Study of Anzû, Enūma Eliš, and Erra and Išum*, CHANE 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 233. In addition, a late Babylonian hymn may compare the city of Borsippa and its main shrine, Ezida, to "groves of date trees whose crowns reach the clouds." See Steven W. Cole, "The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 29. The imagery in the poem is suggestive of trees, though the text does not specifically mention date palms. For the text of the hymn, see F. Köcher, "Ein spätbabylonischer Hymnus auf den Tempel Ezida in Borsippa," *ZA* 53 (1959): 236–40.

22. Cole, "Destruction of Orchards," 29–30.

23. Victor H. Matthews, "Treading the Winepress: Actual and Metaphorical Viticulture in Ancient Near East," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 19–32. See further the discussion of the appeal of viticulture metaphors in ch. 3.

1:4–9 first accuses Judah of rejecting YHWH. The passage then details the consequences of that rejection, describing the conquered kingdom metaphorically: as a beaten body, covered in wounds and sores (1:5–6); as a harvested vineyard and field (1:8); and as barely escaping the fate of the destroyed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (1:9). In 1:7, the author ensures that the audience will understand the metaphors by presenting more literal images of Judah's towns burned down and its crops consumed by the invading army. Thus, the message in Isa 1:4–9 has two components: an accusation of wrongdoing; and a pronouncement of doom. Variations of this type of condemnation might be simpler still, depicting only the accusation or only the announced doom.

The second type of condemnation is more complex. These metaphors still usually include accusation and punishment elements like those of the simpler metaphors, but they add to the image a more detailed depiction of the kingdom that they are condemning. They construct a national identity for Israel or Judah that emphasizes a collective history, character, and fate for the people and their land. The basic condemnation in Isa 5:1–7, for example, describes Israel and Judah as a vineyard that will be trampled and consumed by cattle (5:5), just as a conquering army destroys the land, captures its people, and consumes its resources. The author does not simply call Israel and Judah a vineyard, however. Rather, he begins in 5:1–2 with a creation myth for the two kingdoms. It describes the people as a grapevine variety that YHWH chose, planted, and cultivated on his land. Yet despite all of YHWH's effort on their behalf, the people have produced nothing but the rotten grapes of injustice and unrighteousness (5:7).[24] A comparison of Isa 1:4–9 and 5:1–7 demonstrates how both the simple and the complex condemnations may include within their structure the language and imagery of conflict and warfare—burning, trampling, capturing, consuming—but only the complex condemnations craft a national identity for the kingdom, which their authors use to show their audience how YHWH views them.

The chapters that follow explore both types of metaphors—the simple collective condemnations and the national identity condemnations—in passages that employ plant metaphors. The relative popularity of plant metaphors and the wide variety of plant options available to the biblical authors for depicting Israel and Judah make these metaphors an optimal choice for examining the ways that the prophetic authors conceived of

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24. See the detailed analysis of Isa 5:1–7 in ch. 4.

Israel and Judah in their condemnations of the two kingdoms. Studying how different authors used the same basic image—kingdom as plant—but molded that image to suit their message helps to identify the factors or considerations that may have constrained the authors' conceptualizations of their subjects. Among the questions it raises is why some plants seem to have proven more compelling than others for depicting Israel and Judah. In addition, the analysis of metaphors that employ a common basic image highlights the aspects of that image with which the authors felt free to innovate. In other words, identifying the norms of conceptualizing the Israelite and Judahite experience in terms of plant imagery also helps to identify and explore that which appears to be abnormal.

Finally, the discussion addresses the rhetorical strategy and effect of those metaphors that construct an Israelite or Judahite national identity. The analysis will demonstrate that among the plants of the southern Levant, viticulture metaphors and metaphors combining grapevines and fig trees proved particularly useful as vehicles for criticizing the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. While the origins and structures of these metaphors differ, grapevines and fig trees carried positive connotations as symbols of Israel and Judah for the people of the two kingdoms—or at least for the people with whom the prophetic authors interacted. They used their audience's preexisting, positive conceptions of Israel or Judah as a land of grapevines and fig trees as the foundation for constructing a national identity for the people. They then transformed or deconstructed that identity to condemn one or both kingdoms. In so doing, they encouraged their audience to adopt a new perspective on the kingdoms. Examining the dynamics of the creation of national identity in the complex condemnations will thus facilitate an exploration of not just how the prophetic authors *thought* about the people of the two kingdoms, but also how they used their metaphorical prophecies to *reason* about their homeland's past, present, and future.[25]

1.3. Nations, Nationalism, and National Identities

The preceding discussion has employed the term *national identity* to describe the way that some prophetic authors portrayed the kingdoms of

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25. On reasoning through metaphor, see Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language*, CTL (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 38–41.

Israel and Judah. The application of national identity theory to an ancient polity requires justification, however, because nations and nationalism, from which national identities derive, are modern phenomena. Most scholars of nationalism argue that the features that characterize nations—such as fixed territorial boundaries, a legal system that establishes a common set of rights and responsibilities for all members, and members who view themselves as active participants in the life of the nation—only emerged in the modern era.[26] Empires, kingdoms, and other types of states existed prior to that time, as did communities with a shared culture, but none of those premodern collectives exhibited the features above that define modern nations.[27]

At the same time, theories of nationalism and national identity formation may still be instructive for understanding currents of thought that arose in ancient communities. Benedict Anderson's definition of a modern nation provides a useful basis for examining the development of national identities in the prophetic corpus. According to Anderson, a nation is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[28] That a nation is imagined reflects the reality that the members of a nation will not all know each other personally, but they may nevertheless perceive themselves to be part of the nation. The limitations of a nation are the criteria by which it distinguishes itself from other nations, and its sovereignty refers to the state and its control of a bounded territory.[29] Subsequent scholarship on the concept of nations has offered a more nuanced view of the aspect of sovereignty. A claimed territory is a feature common to all modern nations, but not all nations have independent control of the state in which they reside. As such, control of the state is a possible, but not necessary, feature of nations.[30]

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26. For a more detailed discussion of these and other features of nations, see Anthony D. Smith, "When Is a Nation?" *Geopolitics* 7.2 (2002): 5–32.

27. Not all scholars of nationalism align with the modernist position discussed here. Other influential schools of thought, the most prominent being perennialism, argue that nations may have their origins in ancient ethnic or cultural communities. For an overview of the debate from each perspective, see Smith, "When Is a Nation?"; and Alexander Maxwell, "Primordialism for Scholars Who Ought to Know Better: Anthony D. Smith's Critique of Modernization Theory," *Nationalities Papers* 48 (2020): 826–42.

28. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

29. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

30. Montserrat Guibernau, "Nations without States: Political Communities in the Global Age," *Michigan Journal of International Law* 25 (2004): 1251–82. Among

If nations are communities whose existence depends, in part, on members seeing themselves as part of the nation, then nationalism and national identities provide a way to foster that sense of membership and to unite the nation's members in support of national goals or ideals. In general, research has shown that in modern "prenationalist societies," people may turn to nationalism when they begin to perceive injustice in their experience within the social hierarchy. Thus, for example, Liah Greenfeld and Jonathan Eastwood argue that nationalism in sixteenth-century England arose when people outside the aristocracy began to experience upward mobility in society for the first time, which led them to question the norms of their day regarding inherited social positions.[31]

Most modernist scholars of nationalism date the origins of nations and nationalism later than this—often attributing these developments to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries and associating them with the rise of capitalism or the industrial revolution.[32] Anderson adds that nations and nationalism were made possible by the development of mass printing capabilities that facilitated the widespread distribution and exchange of new ideas throughout a community.[33] While Greenfeld and Eastwood do not dismiss these developments as contributing to the spread of nationalism within individual countries, they argue that the origins of nationalism should be sought by asking a different question: "What sorts of cognitive problems did these individuals [who turned to nationalism and national identity] have that were solved by constructing a new image

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the examples Guibernau cites as nations without independent states are Catalonia, Quebec, and Scotland (1254). The elements of Guibernau's definition of *nation* align with those of Anderson's model, but Guibernau expresses them differently. He describes the imagined community as "a human group conscious of forming a community," speaks of its limits in terms of the members "sharing a common culture" and "having a common past and a common project for the future," and defines its sovereignty as being "attached to a clearly demarcated territory" and "claiming the right to decide upon its political destiny" (Guibernau, "Nationalism without States," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 592).

31. Liah Greenfeld and Jonathan Eastwood, "National Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Charles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 256–73.

32. Maxwell, "Primordialism," 827.

33. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

of the social world?"[34] They suggest that the egalitarian principles that underlie nationalism appeal to budding nationalists because they address a perceived injustice in the existing social structure.[35]

Studies of nationalism in nations that do not control the state in which they reside also find a pattern of perceived injustice as providing the inspiration for a nationalistic response. People in nations of this type may look back to a time when the nation did govern itself, and they may associate the loss of that power with experienced or perceived conflict and oppression. They may also resent the state that governs them as restricting their freedom and sapping their resources without providing benefits that offset these costs. Finally, they may fear that their own culture is being "replaced by an increasingly pervasive global culture."[36]

The precise conditions that have fostered modern nationalism did not exist in ancient Israel and Judah, but an analogous set of pressures could have given rise to similar ideas in the minds of the prophetic authors. In the last decades of Israel and of Judah, the experience of the trauma of warfare and conquest, the ongoing threats from neighboring kingdoms, and the periods of subjugation by one kingdom or another suggest conditions akin to those of modern nations that must submit to a state that they do not control. The prophetic authors could remember or imagine an earlier time when their kingdom was free of hegemonic control, and many would have lived through at least one cycle of attempted rebellion and renewed conquest within their kingdom, giving them living memories of violent conflict and oppression.

In addition, both Israel and Judah profited well from their position atop major trade routes linking Arabia and Africa to Anatolia and Mesopotamia.[37] Tribute demands by hegemonic powers essentially functioned as a tax on these profits. In exchange, Israel and Judah gained protection against attacks from other kingdoms, including from the hegemon itself. In fact, John S. Holladay Jr. refers to Assyrian hegemony as a "protection racket," whereby the vassals paid Assyria not to destroy them:

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34. Greenfeld and Eastwood, "National Identity," 265.
35. Greenfeld and Eastwood, "National Identity," 265–66.
36. Guibernau, "Nationalism without States," 594. See also Guibernau, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).
37. David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

> In the complex reciprocal relationship between Assyria and its smaller
> neighbors, the tributary system was mostly about money and the things
> that money could buy—ideally, at no cost to the Assyrian Empire, except
> for the trouble of making the rounds of the neighborhood to collect the
> rent and protection money and to beat up and rob the "deadbeats."[38]

The prophetic authors generally did not advocate rebellion against their
kingdom's hegemon, but they may nevertheless have recognized and
resented the coercive nature of the hegemon's actions. Finally, beyond the
issues of conflict and oppression, prophetic complaints about Israel or
Judah adopting the practices of other kingdoms or people groups, espe-
cially with regard to worshiping deities other than YHWH, assert that
such behaviors constitute an unwelcome change in the Israelite and Juda-
hite cultures (e.g., Isa 2:5–8; Ezek 8).

The social problems of modern prenationalist societies also have
rough parallels in the late Iron Age conditions in Israel and Judah. The dis-
placement and poverty that would have arisen as a consequence of warfare
within the homeland probably contributed to the social injustices decried
by the prophets—such as taking bribes, fraud, and usury (e.g., Isa 1:21–
23; Ezek 22:12–13; Amos 2:6–8)—by enlarging the population that was
vulnerable to exploitation. These issues highlighted the distance between
the elites of the kingdom and the poorest commoners, and the prophetic
denunciations of those in power indicate that the prophets, at least, per-
ceived the experiences of the poor as unjust. Moreover, just as modern
nationalist movements may respond to perceived injustice between social
strata by advocating political change, so the prophetic authors sometimes
offer solutions appropriate to their circumstances and worldview. They do
not call for wholesale restructuring of society. Several passages do, how-
ever, declare that in the future, YHWH will replace the kingdom's current
leaders with new leaders who will uphold justice for all the people (e.g., Isa
1:26; Jer 3:15; Ezek 34:23–24).

Since the prophetic corpus represents the work of multiple authors
and editors from different locations and time periods, we should not
expect to find a uniform perspective on the sources of the problems facing
Israel and Judah. That said, we do find some similarity in the prophetic

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38. John S. Holladay Jr., "Hezekiah's Tribute, Long-Distance Trade, and the
Wealth of Nations ca. 1000–600 BC: A New Perspective," in Gitin, Wright, and Dessel,
Confronting the Past, 312–13.

responses to these problems. The social and cultural pressures present in Israel and Judah at the end of the eighth and seventh centuries appear to have inspired quasi-nationalist ideas or sentiments in some of the prophets. We can see in select passages descriptions of the people of Israel or Judah as joined in a unified community in which the members, by means of their ability to affect the favor or wrath of the national deity, are active participants in determining the fate of the nation. These texts may set limits on the nation by distinguishing it from neighboring kingdoms in terms of features such as genealogy, shared history, and culture. In addition, they frequently emphasize the sovereignty of their nation by claiming that the community is, or should be, governed by a common set of divine laws and by including territorial claims for Israel or Judah. Further, these assertions about Israel and Judah hold regardless of the state of the state— as independent kingdom, vassal, or imperial province.

The specific set of features that the prophets claim for their imagined, limited, and sovereign communities constitute constructed national identities for Israel and Judah. In this context, *national identity* refers to a set of claims, perceptions, and beliefs about the aspects of one nation that unify it and that distinguish it from other nations. The aspects most often highlighted in constructions of national identity include attributing to the nation and its members: a collective past, present and future; a common culture; a national territory; and a national character (i.e., a common conception of what constitutes a typical member of the nation).[39]

Since national identity is based on human claims, perceptions, and beliefs, the aspects that define the nation may not always comport with history or objective reality. For example, the biblical authors frequently assert that there was a time in Israel's past when the Israelites practiced exclusive worship of YHWH, and that this practice set them apart from other peoples. This claim is probably exaggerated. More likely is that the Israelites' cultic practices were quite similar to those of their neighbors, with a national god and a variable set of local deities or venerated ancestors that people in their communities and families also served.[40] In the

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39. Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, trans. Angelika Hirsch, Richard Mitten, and J. W. Unger, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 27–29. A more detailed discussion of the construction of national identity follows in ch. 2.

40. See Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001); John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, *Household*

postexilic period and beyond, however, claims about this historical connection to YHWH as their sole deity served to differentiate Jews from other peoples. Belief in the history of their originally exclusive relationship with YHWH became part of their identity.

The process of constructing a national identity primarily happens through discourse, as people speak or write about a nation. Individuals who identify with the same nation will generally share similar ideas about the nation's defining features, but the details of how they understand, describe, and prioritize those features often differ. As a result, when we examine how the prophetic authors constructed national identities for Israel and Judah, we should expect to find broad similarities in their conceptualizations, but also variation in the details of those conceptualizations. For example, several of the metaphorical condemnations contain an account of Israel's origins that presents Israel as having a long history as YHWH's people, but no two of these accounts are exactly alike. In addition, constructed national identities may serve different strategies, including reinforcing, changing, or breaking down existing conceptions of the nation. In the case of the prophetic condemnations, because they wish to change something about their society, we should expect to find more focus on changing or breaking down existing perspectives on the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Finally, these strategies may or may not be consciously pursued; in some cases, they may simply arise as a product of the speaker's goals for speaking and attitudes toward the nation.[41]

Any study that seeks to apply a modern political or sociological theory to an ancient community risks introducing anachronisms into its analysis and conclusions. It is therefore important to carefully define how and to what extent the theory in question may reasonably apply to the community under study. To be clear, this study does not constitute a sociological exploration of nationalism among the Israelites and Judahites. Though the prophetic authors often call for social or cultural reforms, no evidence exists to suggest that they were trying to engender a political movement to

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and Family Religion in Antiquity, The Ancient World: Comparative Histories (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012); and Albertz et al., eds., *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014).

41. Wodak, *Discursive Construction*, 7–48.

impose these changes upon the kingdoms by force of popular will.[42] The prophetic authors do use rhetoric that shares some features common to modern conceptions of national identity, but they do so in support of their own goals and messages. Indeed, many of the passages that construct a national identity for Israel or Judah preclude the possibility of forming a nationalist movement by immediately destroying the nation that they have just created. In effect, the prophets create straw man national identities for the purpose of knocking them down. Therefore, this study is limited to examining the *rhetorical use* of national identity by the prophets in their condemnations of Israel and Judah. National identity theory facilitates the analysis by providing a framework and language for discussing the features of this rhetoric.

Applying the concept of national identity to an ancient community also raises questions about terminology that must be addressed. Though biblical scholarship has often used the terms *nation* or *city-state* to refer to Israel and Judah, in the discussion that follows, I consistently describe the historical entities of Israel and Judah as kingdoms. As Megan Bishop Moore and Brad Kelle argue, the term "more accurately reflects their patron-client character, bureaucratic organization, and sociological similarity to other ancient civilizations."[43] In addition, while I do follow the well-established convention of describing YHWH as a national deity, I otherwise reserve nation and related terms for use in discussing the communities and identities conceptualized (often in metaphor) by the prophetic authors.

Finally, it is important not to confuse kingdom propaganda with the national identities studied here. Kingdom propaganda focuses on celebrating the power of the deity or the king. It may mention the people of the kingdom, but it shows little interest in depicting them as a *nation*, as a distinctive political community whose members participate in the life

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42. Moreover, the reach of the prophetic messages would likely have been insufficient to foster such a movement. The audiences for the prophetic ideas were probably limited to the cities in which the authors lived and the circles in which they moved—constrained during the preexilic period by the lack of widespread literacy among the populace, and perhaps also by the absence of either motive or means to broadly distribute the prophetic communications within the kingdom.

43. Megan Bishop Moore and Brad Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 324. See also Raz Kletter, "Chronology and United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," *ZDPV* 120 (2004): 15–34, esp. 19–29.

of the nation and are perceived as equal in some meaningful way.[44] What makes the prophetic metaphors studied here analogous to modern constructions of national identity is precisely that explicit conceptualization of, and focus on, the people of Israel or Judah as an empowered community whose defining characteristics apply to king and commoner alike. Passages lacking that community element are better described as kingdom metaphors, not national metaphors.

1.4. Plant Metaphors in the Prophetic Condemnations

As discussed above, this study focuses on just one of the three main metaphorical themes that the prophets used to craft messages about Israel and Judah: plants. While the dynamics of the depictions of Israel and Judah in the pastoral and woman metaphors in the prophetic corpus deserve further study, within the prophetic condemnations, those two categories are more constrained than plant metaphors. Pastoral metaphors tend to have weakly drawn identity elements. Only rarely do the prophetic authors employ such metaphors to create a vision of their kingdom's origins or distant collective past. Instead, these passages tend to focus on the recent experience or future state of the people. In addition, they show little interest in differentiating among different types of flock animals, and they often focus primarily on the leaders-shepherds, rather than on the kingdom-flock as a whole. If the flock becomes the main subject, that change generally occurs only at the point when the author speaks of a future restoration for the people or kingdom. Therefore, these metaphors lend themselves best to understanding how the prophetic authors perceived their leaders or conceptualized an idyllic future for their kingdom.

By contrast, several of the woman metaphors have very well-defined identity elements, so they give a clear impression of how the prophets viewed the kingdoms. They do not, however, employ a very diverse set of depictions of women. In most cases, they focus on the image of a promiscuous woman, either presenting her as a prostitute or as an unfaithful wife. The lack of variety makes woman metaphors in the condemnations less useful for examining a range of metaphor options available to the

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44. Greenfeld and Eastwood, "National Identity," 258. Greenfeld and Eastwood are quick to point out that equality comes in various forms: "For some, equality may be conceptualized in terms of equal civil rights, in others an equal share in the dignity of a 'glorious' but authoritarian society" (265 n. 13).

prophetic authors or for evaluating the factors that might have governed their choice of images.

Conversely, the wide variety of plant metaphors in the prophetic corpus offers ample opportunity to explore the choices that the prophetic authors made in conceptualizing the two kingdoms. Within that broader set of images, only a narrow subset of the various crops produced and plants grown in the region appear in complex metaphors that construct a national identity. That ancient agricultural practices are reasonably well understood facilitates a close examination of the messages of these metaphors. Finally, plant metaphors also appear in reference to kingdoms other than Israel and Judah, making it possible to compare how the prophets perceived Israel or Judah versus their perceptions of other kingdoms.[45]

To facilitate the examination of both plant metaphors and their use in the construction of national identity in the prophetic corpus, chapter 2 provides an overview of the methodological approach to metaphor and to national identity employed in the remaining chapters. The chapter establishes the common set of terms and concepts for speaking about metaphor and national identity that will govern the study. It also identifies several of the metaphors commonly used by the biblical authors to depict conflict and discusses how the prophetic authors incorporated these metaphors into their plant imagery, converting activities associated with peacetime into portraits of warfare and conquest.

The remaining chapters explore the range of plant metaphors employed in prophetic condemnations of Israel and Judah. Chapters 3–7 progressively examine those plants that the prophetic authors used most often to depict their homelands: grapevines and fig trees. Since the number and variety of viticulture metaphors greatly exceeds that of fig metaphors, the analysis of this material is not evenly distributed. After chapter 3 provides an overview of viticulture and viticulture metaphors in the Bible and the ancient Near East, chapters 4, 5, and 6 address vineyard, vine, and wine and intoxication metaphors, respectively.[46] Chapter 7 then covers meta-

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45. The prophets also occasionally apply the image of a kingdom or city as a woman to other states (e.g., Isa 47; Nah 3:4–7), so woman metaphors share that advantage with plant metaphors, though to a lesser extent.

46. Most detailed examinations of biblical viticulture imagery focus more on using the texts to reconstruct the practice of viticulture in ancient Israel than on comparing different passages' use of this imagery to create meaning for their audience. See, e.g., Jack M. Sasson, "The Blood of Grapes: Viticulture and Intoxication in the Hebrew

phors based on figs and fig trees, giving special attention to the frequent pairing of fig trees and grapevines. Since fig imagery has not received significant attention in biblical scholarship, chapter 7 also offers overviews of the features of figs and fig trees and of fig imagery in the Bible before turning to the use of the tree and its fruit in metaphors about Israel and Judah.

Chapter 8 completes the examination of the various plants employed in prophetic condemnations of people and communities. The chapter organizes the evidence into two broad categories—metaphors about grasses, and metaphors about woody plants—and it analyzes patterns in the structure and expression of the metaphors in each category.[47] The latter category name, "woody plants," aligns with biblical uses of the Hebrew word עֵץ, which can apply to a range of plants that have hard stems, including trees, bushes, and vines. For purposes of analyzing the conceptual structure of metaphors based on these varied plants, referring to them using one of the standard translation values for עֵץ, such as "tree" and "wood," would be misleading, and it could obscure patterns that exist across the range of these metaphors.[48]

Chapters 4–8 also include detailed discussions of the metaphorical construction of national identity. Each of these chapters presents the full set of prophetic national identity condemnations of Israel or Judah based

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Bible," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Lucio Milano, HANE/S 6 (Padua: Sargon, 1994), 399–419; and Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*, HSM 60 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000). These studies are enormously helpful for understanding the technical details underlying the viticulture metaphors, but they add less to our understanding of the structure or rhetorical strategies underlying these metaphors.

47. Prior studies that have looked broadly at plant metaphors in the prophetic corpus or in specific prophetic texts tend to offer an overview of the topic rather than a detailed analysis and comparison of the metaphorical images employed in different passages or by different authors. See, e.g., Patricia K. Tull, "Persistent Vegetative States: People as Plants and Plants as People in Isaiah," in *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, ed. A. Joseph Everson and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, AIL 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 17–34; and Samet, "On Agricultural Imagery." Kirsten Nielsen (*There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOTSup 65 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989]) does offer an in-depth exegesis of the tree metaphors in Isaiah, however. In addition, Job Y. Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered: A Cognitive Approach to Poetic Prophecy in Jeremiah 1–24*, HSM 64 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010]) examines the plant metaphors in Jer 1–24 as expressions of a larger biblical concept of Israel as YHWH's "royal garden" (152).

48. See *DCH* 6:519–25, s.v. "עֵץ."

on the image or images that are the subject of the chapter. In addition, chapters 4, 5, and 7 each offer a case study of the most complete identity metaphor of its type. Chapter 4 studies the Song of the Vineyard in Isa 5:1–7, chapter 5 examines the vine metaphor in Ezek 19:10–14a, and chapter 7 analyzes the grapes and figs metaphor in Hos 9:10–17. These case studies provide a more in-depth assessment of the message of each passage and of how the prophetic author has used plant imagery to construct a national identity for Israel and/or Judah in service of that message. Since the prophets never employ wine or intoxication as the central image in the construction of a national identity for Israel or Judah, chapter 6 does not include a case study. It does, however, discuss the identity metaphor of Moab as wine in Jer 48:11–12. In addition, chapter 8 includes analyses of two unusual examples of identity metaphors: (1) the depiction of Assyria as a cedar tree in Ezek 31; and (2) the image of Judah as an olive tree in Jer 11:14–17.

Finally, chapter 9 addresses the broader implications of the findings from this study. After presenting a synthesis of the results from the preceding chapters, it considers the national identity metaphors as a group, highlighting several broad patterns in the data that offer insight into the genesis and development of ideas about Israel and Judah as kingdoms and nations. The chapter also includes a discussion of directions for further research to fill in remaining gaps in the systematic mapping of constructed national identities in the prophetic corpus. It closes with an assessment of several benefits of the methodological approach taken in this study for identifying and analyzing patterns in biblical metaphor.

While the study overall spends significantly more time on viticulture metaphors than on metaphors of other plants, ultimately, the project is less about exploring a specific image than it is about systematically analyzing the ways that the prophetic authors conceptualized kingdoms, especially Israel and Judah, including tracing the development of the sources and structures of those conceptualizations.[49] In this way, this study contrib-

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49. By contrast, other recent studies of viticulture metaphors have focused on particular images or on theological aspects of the expressions. See, e.g., Kon Hwon Yang, "Theological Significance of the Motif of Vineyard in the Old Testament" (PhD diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996); and Jeremy Daniel Smoak, "Building Houses and Planting Vineyards: The Inner-Biblical Discourse of an Ancient Israelite Wartime Curse" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007). One exception is Jennifer Metten Pantoja, who examines the metaphor of YHWH as a vint-

utes to the body of evidence demonstrating that the utility of metaphor analysis within biblical scholarship includes, but is not limited to, exegesis of particular passages. Rather, a careful examination of the metaphorical material in the Bible can also yield insights into how the Israelites thought and reasoned about their world.

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ner within a broader frame of YHWH as a planter. See her *The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People*, BibInt 155 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).