CULTURES OF MOBILITY, MIGRATION, AND RELIGION IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS WORLD

Eric M. Trinka

Cultures of Mobility, Migration, and Religion in Ancient Israel and Its World

This book examines the relationship between mobility, lived religiosities, and conceptions of divine personhood as they are preserved in textual corpora and material culture from Israel, Judah, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

By integrating evidence of the form and function of religiosities in contexts of mobility and migration, this volume reconstructs mobility-informed aspects of civic and household religiosities in Israel and its world. Readers will find a robust theoretical framework for studying cultures of mobility and religiosities in the ancient past, as well as a fresh understanding of the scope and texture of mobility-informed religious identities that composed broader Yahwistic religious heritage.

Cultures of Mobility, Migration, and Religion in Ancient Israel and Its World will be of use to both specialists and informed readers interested in the history of mobilities and migrations in the ancient Near East, as well as those interested in the development of Yahwism in its biblical and extra-biblical forms.

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for Jenna

כי כל־העמים ילכו איש בשם אלהיו ואנחנו נלך בשם־יהוה אלהינו לעולם ועד
For all the peoples walk, each in the name of their own gods; but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our god forever and ever.

Micah 4:5

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Acknowledgments

1   Introduction

The Origins and Direction of the Project

Biblical scholars have long observed that key stories of Israel's origins and existence are stories of movement. However, it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to explore the biblical texts using the modern category of migration as a heuristic device. The primordial myths of Genesis ground the human condition in the experiences of expulsion, wandering, and dispersion. Ancestral traditions catalog the movements of Abraham and Sarah's journeys, Hagar's eviction, Jacob's flight from Esau, and the sale of Joseph into foreign servitude. The stories of exodus from Egypt and Wilderness wanderings, as well as repeated moments of displacement and relocation at the hands of different hegemonic powers, reveal cyclical themes of promise, salvation, judgement, and restoration. Collectively, these narratives establish the claim that Israel's story of coming to know their God, Yahweh, unfolds primarily through the experiences of people who are on the move.

In a similar way, historians of ancient Israel have spent the better part of half a century attempting to clarify which aspects of textually recorded movement are verifiable within the historical record. The importance of answering questions of this latter type revolves around the concerns to elucidate not only the particulars of Israel's emergence but also to better understand how historic instances of movement, namely those of the so-called exilic period, relate to the compositional history of the biblical text.

All societies operate according to socially patterned norms of space and movement. These *cultures of mobility* influence, among other things, conceptions of divinity and religious praxis. This book investigates prevailing cultures of mobility and migration in the ancient Near East and their influence on religious life in Israel and Judah. My primary goal is to reexamine familiar evidence of mobility and migration in ancient Israel, Judah, and their environs through the lens of modern mobility and migration studies. The need for such a treatment arises from the reality that much biblical scholarship that has so far attempted migration-informed readings of biblical texts has frequently done so with limited reference to the fields of mobility and migration studies or, more problematically, by shallowly

representing migration studies literature for the purpose of introducing sleek or provocative readings.

Readers have become increasingly attuned to the reality that race, gender, class, and other subjectivities have a purchase on the interpretive enterprise. It is time that our own ideological assumptions about mobility are explicitly accounted for as hermeneutical factors and that cultures of mobility within and around the biblical corpus become part of our historical reconstructions and textual expositions. Just as with readings that pay careful attention to other subjectivities, mobility and migration-informed readings must account for the world of the reader and the world(s) of the biblical corpus. This is no simple task since modern cultures of mobility do not always maintain parity with the world of the text. Nevertheless, our readings will be enriched by exploring texts for the cultures of mobility that they contain, affirm, and contest.

This book does not present a theology of migration. Many such works already exist and scholars who exegete biblical texts in response to current contexts of migration should be lauded for their efforts. The findings of this monograph may even be useful for such work. Nevertheless, the purpose of this volume is to present dominant cultures of mobility in ancient Israel and Judah and their worlds with a view to how religiosities were responsive to both mundane and extraordinary experiences of human movement. In this vein, I aim to accomplish two primary tasks. The first is reinterpreting material cultural assemblages for evidence of migrations and mobility-related uses of objects and spaces. The second, and broader task, is analyzing biblical and extra-biblical texts for patterns of religiosity and trajectories of internal religious pluralism evidenced in contexts of mobility. An important area of research that lies beyond the purview of this volume is the networks of mobility and exchange between the Aegean and the Levant during the same time scope. Much research has been conducted on such Mediterranean mobilities. I refer readers to the appropriate starting points for such scholarship below.[1]

The seeds of this project were sown several years ago when I first read Anne Porter's *Mobile Pastoralism and the Formation of Near Eastern Civilization*.[2] Porter's work is not a history of mobile pastoralism, as she acknowledges herself, but a treatise on archaeological and historiographical methods. Ultimately, she views the divide between sedentary societies and mobile pastoralists as an intellectual construct and "not an inevitable condition of animal husbandry."[3] The question driving her investigation is: "What happens to our reconstructions of the past when the mobile and sedentary components of the ancient world are thoroughly interrelated parts of the same societies?"[4] Porter's work has transformed scholarly discussions of the relationship between sedentary and mobile populations in the ancient Near East. It is no longer acceptable to speak in the traditional binary terms of agrarian vs. pastoral or urban vs. rural because ancient Levantine and Mesopotamian people might have been any combination of these things at different points in their lifetime.

The dimorphic social model that Porter challenges is rooted in an ancient metanarrative that society's essence is marked by the qualities of emplacement,

sedentarism, and stasis. Accordingly, movers, in all of their various dimensions, are investigated primarily from the perspective of statis and often understood as undermining or destabilizing the structures of "real" (read: sedentary) society. Social dimorphism is not an invention of scholars studying the ancient world. Instead, the use of the model began through ethnographic comparison as anthropologists built on the basic premise of modern sociology that the sedentary is the core of social existence. Sociologists have since, however, begun to deconstruct this fundamental assumption on which their discipline was predicated. In response to the spatial and mobilities turns, some have championed the position that society is better understood as being constituted by persons and things that are essentially mobile and in dynamic entanglement with one another.[5] Perhaps an understanding that society is generated through movement underlies the overlap in the terminology for mobility and ethics captured in words like the Akkadian *alāku* or the Hebrew הלך/הלכה.

Just as today, mobility, as both dynamic and symbiotic forms of movement, lies at the core of ancient people's existence. Even for those who themselves never traveled far from home, the political and socio-cultural environment of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages was one of intensive inter-regional movement and cross-cultural exchange. Although cities and smaller settlements constituted centers of political power and social control, we should not mistake such emplaced structures for immobility or assume that they were the only sites of encounter, exchange, innovation, or sophistication. Those aspects of society that appear to be unmoving are often created by social and resource flows that serve as points of circulation to facilitate movement. Many seemingly static places undergo movement on their own, albeit at different scales than other people and things.[6]

The cities of the ancient Near East – those places that historians often consider to be the most sedentary – required massive systems of mobilities for water and land management, evidenced in complex canal systems, interdependent herding economies, agricultural and resource distribution circuits, and circulations of labor capital. The oldest-known Mesopotamian nomenclature for a road is the Sumerian logogram KASKAL, which is written by drawing the intersection of two sets of parallel lines.[7] Even though the sign is used in later Akkadian to signify *harranu* (road) or *hulu* (path), it serves as a reminder that roads are not simply linear connections between points. If so, one set of parallel lines would do. Instead, roads are construed primarily as cross-roads and therefore as nodes in networks of encounter and exchange from which society emerges.[8] As we will see, it was frequently the mobile elements of society that both made centralized governance possible and could also most easily upset political balance. Mobility, then as now, was simultaneously a source of power and a means of response to it.

The ubiquity of human movement in these ancient contexts raises questions about the effects of small- and large-scale mobility on the religious lives of persons at all levels of society. Epistemologies (ways of knowing) are shaped primarily by ontology (ways of being). The ways we move through the world

contribute to our constructions and conceptions of it. Prevailing cultures of mobility influenced the ways persons envisioned themselves as agents in earthly and cosmic landscapes and informed how religious practitioners understood/portrayed their deities. It was Porter's work that first caused me to revisit earlier claims made by biblical scholars about the relationship between Israelite religion and mobile lifeways, and to question whether experiences of mobility/movement instigate unique conceptions of divinity.

Scholars have intensively explored inter-cultural exchange between Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Levant during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Some have even interpreted the data using the general rubric of migration, exploring movement and trade as catalysts of contact and conduits of interchange.[9] Yet, among most scholars working beyond the boundaries of the Agean/Mediterranean, integration of current migration theory and data remains lacking, and problematic diffusionist models of cultural transfer persist.[10] Perspectives cultivated vis-à-vis the "new mobilities paradigm," which has influenced practical and theoretical trajectories in migration studies, are also conspicuously absent.[11] To the extent that movement, mobility, and migration are acknowledged to play a part in the development of Israelite and Judahite religious identity, few, if any, scholars have attempted to explain the processes of religious exchange and development by reference to growing collections of data on migrants' religiosities. The challenge, then, is to bring collective findings on how migrants actually move and on what migrants actually do with religion to bear on our studies of religious life in the ancient world.

My intention going forward is not so much to intervene in discussions regarding external religious influences from Israel and Judah's neighbors. Much work has been undertaken to shed light on such socio-cultural developments in Late Bronze and Iron Age Canaan.[12] I am instead more interested in showing how findings from mobility and migration studies provide new angles to approach the intersections of mobilities and religiosities in Israel and Judah. Reconstructions of the contents and functions of Israelite religion ought to rely on findings about how human experiences of mobility and movement catalyze processes of ethnogenesis, inform cultural production and transmission, and facilitate the exchange, translation, and accrual of practices. The outcome of analyzing relevant textual, iconographic, and archaeological data through the lenses of these foundational evidential bodies is a fresh set of conclusions regarding internal religious diversity in Israel and Judah from the time of Israel's emergence in the Central Highlands until the exilic period.

Bodies of Evidence Considered

In many ways, this project is an acceptance of Thomas Tweed's invitation for "scholars to attend to the multiple ways that religious flows have left traces, transforming people and places, the social arena and the natural terrain."[13] The primary objective at the start is to locate and analyze the various data points, be

they textual, material cultural, or ethnographic analogs, that can shed light on the operationalization of religiosity in the ancient world.[14] Investigations of mobility, migration, and religion in the ancient past share the common challenge of constructively integrating textual and archaeological data. Those working to reconstruct ancient mobilities and religiosities must challenge the oft-held assumption that mobile elements of ancient society and their cultural lifeways are not traceable in the archaeological record. Despite common misconceptions, mobile persons do leave traceable remains in the archaeological record. The problem is that archaeologists of the biblical periods often operate according to the assumption that society is to be understood primarily according to the activities and ideas of sedentary populations.[15] Not only are scholars often looking for religion and mobility in the wrong places, they are also not always asking the correct questions about material culture found in what are presumed to be primarily sedentary contexts. This is where Porter's pursuit of indirect evidence proves such assumptions otherwise.[16] The archaeological record is rich with artifacts that can be assessed to better understand the lifeways of ancient peoples when texts are silent on such matters; be it in non-literate mobile societies or in contexts of mobility where texts do not maintain the primacy of place in the religious lives of movers.[17] What is required is simply a mindset to ask how seemingly situated remains bear the markers of previous mobilities.

The goal of understanding religion in the ancient world is not achieved simply by unearthing artifacts and cataloging them by relative location, dating, and material attributes.[18] The objective of "thinking from things" in a way that moves beyond cataloging material attributes and establishing chronologies is also fraught with challenges but recognizing the inherent difficulties of studying religion in the archaeological record should not preclude further attempts to understand or make informed claims about the possible uses and attendant meaning(s) of material culture.[19] In a similar way, we must approach the worlds of the text and the archaeological record with due humility, recognizing the very real chasms that stand between the lived experiences of ancients and moderns. Nevertheless, I do not assume that the essence of human personhood has changed so much across time so as to render present investigators incapable of relating to ancient persons. Both then and now, religion and migration can be investigated as socially patterned processes that function according to varying scales of decision-making across multiple spheres of personal, corporate, and environmental interaction. With these considerations in mind, I turn now to enumerate the various constellations of evidence under examination in this volume.

Several bodies of textual and inscriptional evidence are integral to this project. No doubt, biblical texts play a central role in certain formulations of Israelite religiosity. However, I recognize that they are the works of elite audiences, have undergone significant redaction, and cannot be said to always depict religious contexts accurately beyond the purview of their authors. None of these attributes excludes them as usable data for this project.

I take such factors into account when analyzing various texts as forms of migration or mobility-informed literature that are both products and containers of cultures of mobility. In addition to the biblical corpus, I explore the broad datasets of inscriptional and iconographic evidence that include onomastic data, personal seals, inscriptions, petroglyphs, letters, accounts of festivals, and texts with specific religious functions like incantations. I will also present, and reinterpret, when necessary, contemporary investigations of cultic sites and installations throughout the region. In addition to analyses of temples, *massēbôt*, altars, incense altars, and offering remains, I will discuss religiously significant objects such as amulets, figurines, petitionary deposits, items potentially employed in acts of ancestral veneration, and home furnishings that may have been used in religious rites. These investigations of material culture will be situated in the broader cultural contexts of foodways, birthing and naming practices, and mortuary customs.

Finally, readers should know that my approach to mobility/migration studies and religious/biblical studies is grounded in the meta-theoretical constellation known as critical realism.[20] Without a full exposition of this philosophical grounding, it will suffice to say that my evaluations of textual data and material culture center realist notions of causation, agency, and contingency in experiences of mobility, migration, and religiosity.

Why This Book?

The work of historians depends in part on an assumed equivalence between past and present experience that allows one to speak of the past in presently intelligible terms. While the strength of such continuities ebb and flow, there are moments in the present that find heightened consonance with those long-passed by their similarities in kind, if not also degree. This characterization is particularly appropriate in discussions comparing human movements and migrations of the 20th and 21st centuries with those of the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. Although humans have been a mobile species for much of their existence, there are points at which movement has been more extensive than at others. In both scale and scope, the range of mobilities in these ancient eras maintains continuity with the present so as to invite comparative investigation that other periods of history have not afforded.

From the end of the Bronze Age throughout the Iron Age, the Levant was a place of expansive mobilities. The Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 BCE) was an age of robust inter-regional contact and exchange among polities in the Aegean, eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Elam that has been described as an "age of internationalism."[21] The political structure of the period was one in which independent territorial kingdoms maintained political parity with one another through a system that employed the diplomatic language of the patrimonial household.[22] The hierarchy and diplomatic language of the system is especially apparent in the international correspondence known as the Amarna letters.[23] Limited autonomy was granted and a balance of power

struck among these regional polities that, for a time, benefited the elites of both ruling and vassal classes enough that attempts at territorial expansion were limited. In the end, the age of imperial parity was not to last forever.

The period of transition between the Bronze and Iron Age is commonly explained using the language of systemic *collapse*.[24] Data from the Aegean to the Zagros indicate major changes in the political, economic, and even climatic status quo. Significant population declines and movements occurred, as did the widespread reorganization of both rural and urban socio-economic networks. Ascertaining the causes of this systemic change is difficult. Even as the significant changes in imperial structures and socio-economic organization are acknowledged, it should be recognized that the "dark ages" between the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age were not as "dark" as we might imagine, a testament to the fact that persons and groups maintain differing capacities for resiliency in the face of disruptions.[25] Mobility continued to flourish during this era as populations relocated and interacted with new groups through the processes of resettlement and reorganization.[26] Several scholars have shown that a great deal of cultural creation and exchange continued to take place.[27] Human flourishing was made possible, in part, by older mobility networks that persisted and also by novel ones created in the aftermath of regional reorientations. Thus, Hodos writes of the Mediterranean in the Iron Age, "For the first time in Mediterranean history, individuals and groups of people travelled further, in greater numbers and with increasing frequency than ever before witnessed."[28] Therefore, while there is relatively less evidence for monumental achievements like textual creation or of material cultural artifacts that would qualify as *fine art*, there is no reason to assume any longer that this period was one of socio-cultural stagnation and parochialism. Instead, it is clearer now than ever that it was a time of increasing cultural pluriformity, particularly when viewed in comparison to the predominantly homogeneous material culture found in the Late Bronze Age Levant.[29] This increasingly mobile world is the landscape within which Israel emerges, and one of the contexts that inform its religious identity.

By the Iron II period, new imperial actors arrived on the scene and the peoples of Canaan fell under the spheres of subsequent Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian influence. Already at the end of the Bronze Age, Assyrian leaders like Assur-uballit I, Tukulti-Ninurta I, and Tiglath-pileser I extended their reach to the doorstep of the Levant. Renewed Assyrian domination of the region began under Assurbanipal II in the 9th century but was more fully recognized with Shalmaneser III's repeated campaigns beyond the Euphrates to squelch Neo-Hittite growth.[30] In the 8th century, Tiglath-pileser III initiated a powerful resurgence of Assyrian control over the Levant.[31] Collectively, these incursions, which spanned multiple centuries, resulted in the provincializing of Levantine polities. While the reborn Babylonian empire continued similar efforts in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE by overtaking many of the territories previously subdued by the Assyrians, it did so in a different fashion. Finally, we also witness Egypt's momentary

resurgence around the time of Neo–Babylonia's rise to power. As a result of re-emergent Egyptian pressure, Babylon's energies were focused on the Levant in different ways than those of the unchallenged Neo–Assyrians.[32] Each of these transitions in hegemonic power brought with its distinct cultures of mobility. Throughout, people's religious identities were influenced by being on the move and through indirect participation within various cultures of mobility.

The importance of this project is found in the reality that as humanity moves further into the 21st century, neither human migration nor religious activity appears to be losing momentum. The current number of humans circulating our planet is unprecedented. Globalization, climate change, and conflict zones have generated movements of more people than ever before. In 2020, the number of international migrants reached 280.6 million.[33] Ecological and political conditions that were catalysts of movement in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages are surfacing once again.[34] Some of the most traveled migration routes in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe follow the same paths that ancient movers once trod.

Today, as in the ancient world, cultures of religiosity are interconnected with cultures of mobility. Unfortunately, the intersections of mobilities and religiosities have received less attention than they deserve. Assumptions that the secularization of society would continue, and that religion would eventually go the way of the buffalo allowed researchers to discount religion as an integral aspect of the migration experience. Nevertheless, the fundamental claims of secularization theory have not come to fruition. This is not only apparent in the United States, but throughout the 2/3s world, and even in parts of Europe, such as Austria and Norway, where the theory has maintained solid traction in the last decades.[35] Some have taken the current situation as an indication that the world is witnessing a kind of re-enchantment. Others have argued that secularized society and religion are not mutually exclusive of one another.

The point to be made here is that we cannot adequately understand processes of human migration without accounting for religion in the lives of migrants. Therefore, we must work to further understand the interrelationships of mobilities and religiosities if we are to provide an accurate account of the drivers and modes of human movement and of the effects of movement on religious belief and action. Our recognition of the significant role that religion plays in the lives of many migrants can be a starting point from which we might better understand occurrences of migration in the ancient world and respond to present questions and issues arising from human movement. This pursuit includes deepening our understanding of migrants' religiosities as toolkits that migrants enact throughout all stages of the migration process as well as accounting for religion as a complex set of social forces that maintain causative influence over their lives.

A growing body of anecdotal and ethnographic data indicates that migrants draw on, adapt, and add to their religious toolkits throughout the various

stages of their moves in order to accomplish physical, social, and spiritual ends. Religious identity can be seen, along with other micro-factors of solvency, such as economic or social capital, to influence the perceptions and realities of choice for a particular migrant at a given time and location.[36] Moreover, religious affiliations and attachments offer personal and socially located criteria by which one constructs a complex evaluative schema for determining if and when to leave as well as how to respond to particular opportunities, dangers, successes, and failures along the way. In these ways, migrants' religious identities can inform, overwhelm, and restructure their priorities. Research around migrants' religious behaviors indicates that religious practice and belief in pre-migrational, migrational, and post-migrational contexts has profound influences over migrants' conceptions of movement, responses to place, and overall decision-making throughout the migration process. Many migrants make religiously informed decisions according to different sets of criteria than those generally assumed according to dominant social or economic theories. Just as scholars of religion and migration work together to better understand and account for the mutually influential relationship between migration and religion, it is imperative that scholars of the Bible and of Israelite religion also integrate these findings in their textual exegesis and historical accounts.

The goal is to take migration and religion seriously as social enterprises. This is to say, that neither are social processes that merely happen to people, but rather, both religion and migration are constructive aspects of reality that persons participate in. Studying mobility and religiosities in the ancient world should cause moderns to ponder our own understandings of religious expression as it relates to personal geographies and movement. By recognizing that continuities exist among the archaeological material, textual records, and modern experiences of religiosity in contexts of mobility and migration, we see that the shared search for such ontological clarity binds moderns to ancient peoples. This shared bond should be explored as a resource for answering long-standing questions about what it means to be human. In particular, we should ask what it means to be human when, for most of human history, being human has entailed being on the move.

Notes

1 Arthur Bernard Knapp and Peter Van Dommelen, eds., *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jan Driessen, ed., *Archaeology of Forced Migration: Crisis-Induced Mobility and the Collapse of the 13th c. BCE Eastern Mediterranean* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018); Antonis Kotsonas and Jana Mokrišová, "Mobility, Migration, and Colonization," in *The Wiley Companion to the Archaeology of Early Greece and the Mediterranea*n, eds. Irene S. Lemos and Antonis Kotsonas (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 217–46; Peter van Dommelen, "Colonialism and Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 393–409; Tamar Hodos, *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age: A Globalising World c.1100–600 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Bronze Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

2 Anne Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism and the Formation of Near Eastern Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

3 Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism*, 3.

4 Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism*, 2.

5 Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3–5; John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the 21st Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–3. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 71.

6 Nail, *Figure of the Migrant,* 39.

7 Cf. Da Riva and Fink, "Introduction," 108.

8 Cf. John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–5.

9 Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Migration, Hybridization, and Resistance: Identity Dynamics in the Early Iron Age Southern Levant," in *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean*, eds. A. Bernard Knapp and Peter Van Dommelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 252–65; Walter Burkert, "Migrating Gods and Syncretisms: Forms of Cult Transfer in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Kleine Schriften II*, eds. Walter Burkert, Christoph Riedweg, and M. Laura Gemelli Marciano (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 17–36; Tamar Hodos, *Local Responses to Colonization in the Iron Age Mediterranean* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Thomas Staubli, *Das Imagen der Nomaden im Alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbaren*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 107 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Melanie Wasmuth, ed., *Handel als Medium von Kulturkontakt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Gina Konstantopoulos, "Migrating Demons, Liminal Deities, and Assyria's Western Campaigns," *Advances in Ancient Biblical, and Near Eastern Research* 1 (2021): 129–48.

10 Some exceptions to this trend are Melanie Wasmuth and Pearce Paul Creaseman, eds., "People on the Move: Framework, Means, and Impact of Mobility across the Eastern Mediterranean Region in the 8th to 6th Century BCE," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Connections* 12 (2016); Melanie Wasmuth, *Handel als Medium von Kulturkontakt*; and a handful of scholars in Jan Driessen, ed., *An Archaeology of Forced Migration: Crisis-Induced Mobility and the Collapse of the 13thc. BCE Eastern Mediterranean* (Louvain: Presses Univeritaires de Louvain, 2018).

11 Cf. Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning* 38 (2006): 207–26.

12 Tero Alstola, "Judean Merchants in Babylonia and Their Participation in Long-Distance Trade," *Welt des Orients* 47 (2017): 25–51; Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Swinging on the 'Sorek Seesaw': Tel Beth-Shemesh and the Sorek Valley in the Iron Age," in *The Shephelah during the Iron Age: Recent Archaeological Studies,* eds. Oded Lipschits and Aren M. Maeir (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 27–43; Anne Killebrew, "The Emergence of Ancient Israel: The Social Boundaries of a 'Mixed Multitude' in Canaan," in *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Aren M. Maeir et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 555–72; Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion, and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Ido Koch, "Settlements and Interactions in the Shephelah during the Late Second through Early First Millennia BCE," in *The Shephelah during the Iron Age: Recent Archaeological Studies*, eds. Oded Lipschits and Aren M. Maeir (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 181–207; Benjamin W. Porter, "Assembling the Iron Age Levant: The Archaeology of Communities, Polities, and Imperial Peripheries," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 24 (2016): 373–420.

13 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 62.

14 Yorke M. Rowan, "Beyond Belief: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual," *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 21 (2012): 1–10.

15 Rosen, *Revolutions in the Desert*, 3. See also Øystein S. LaBianca, "Subsistence Pastoralism," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 116–23, 116.

16 Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism*, 8–65.

17 Steven A. Rosen, *Revolutions in the Desert*: *The Rise of Mobile Pastoralism in the Southern Levant* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 4; Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004).

18 Rowan, "Beyond Belief," 3–4.

19 Alison Wylie, *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002), 1–22.

20 Peter Ratcliffe, "Migration Studies," in *Dictionary of Critical Realism* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 313–14. See also Theodoros Iosifides, *Qualitative Methods in Migration Studies: A Critical Realist Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–4; 231–38.

21 Ann E. Killebrew, "Introduction to the Levant during the Transitional Late Bronze/ Iron Age I and Iron Age I Periods," in *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology in the Levant*, eds. Margreet L. Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 595–606.

22 Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000–323 BC,* 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 142. The parity of these powers is well captured in EA 29; William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). For an excellent introduction to the contours of household relations from the Old Babylonian period which were mirrored in subsequent periods, see Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 13–41.

23 While the leaders of the "club of great powers," consistently related to one another through fraternal association, the vassal kingdoms in the regions over which they ruled were addressed as "servants" of their client kingdom "fathers." Van De Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 144. Written primarily in Akkadian, the *lingua franca* of the time, many of these letters catalog the requests of regional "mayors" (Akk. ḫazannu: Egypt. ḫ3ty-ꜥ) to the Pharaoh (Akk. rābisu), identified as the "overseer of all the northern lands," for intervention in matters of territorial disputations, taxation, and quibbling between local powers competing for status and protection. See Gösta W. Alhström, "Administration of the State in Canaan and Ancient Israel," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 587–603. Others stretch beyond the realm of vassal-lord inquiries to display the communication between the imperial actors of the time wherein they discuss the matters of marital exchanges, gifts sent and received by royal households, and the general business of diplomacy. Nadav Na'aman, "The Egyptian-Canaanite Correspondence," in *Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 25–39. Cf. Van De Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 146. For examples of correspondence capturing such exchanges, see EA 11 and 16.

24 Cf. Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C. The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); William G. Dever, *Beyond the Text: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: SBL, 2017), 107–12; Jan Driessen, ed., *Archaeology of Forced Migration: Crisis-Induced Mobility and the Collapse of the 13th c. BCE Eastern Mediterranean* (Leuven: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2018); Mario Liverani, *The Ancient Near East: History, Society, and Economy*, trans. Soraia Tabatabai (London: Routledge, 2014), 383–89.

25 Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Beth Alpert Nakhai, "A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron Age 1," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62 (1999): 62–127; Benjamin W. Porter, "Assembling the Iron Age Levant: The Archaeology of Communities, Polities, and Imperial

Peripheries," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 24 (2016): 373–420. See also Pitkänen, who uses the language of collapse, though appropriately tempers it by asserting that "[O]ne does not need to assume everything collapsed in the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age transition; on the contrary, in some parts life may, or is even likely to, have more or less gone on as before." Pitkänen, *Migration and Colonialism*, 94.

26 Tamar Hodos, *Local Responses to Colonization in the Iron Age Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2006), 3–9. See also Tamar Hodos, *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age: A Globalising World c.1100–600 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 94–97; Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, "Egypt and the Levant in the Iron Age I-IIa: The Pottery Evidence," *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 94–119; Gregory D. Mumford, "Egypt and the Levant," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant: c. 8000-332 BCE*, eds. Margreet Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 69–89; Paula Waiman-Barak, Ayelet Gilboa, and Yuval Goren, "A Stratified Sequence of Early Iron Age Egyptian Ceramics at Tel Dor, Israel," *Ägypten und Levante* 24 (2014): 315–42.

27 Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Migration, Hybridization, and Resistance: Identity Dynamics in the Early Iron Age Southern Levant," in *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean*, eds. A. Bernard Knapp and Peter van Dommelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 252–65; A. Bernard Knapp and Peter van Dommelen, "Mediterranean Introductions," in *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze & Iron Age Mediterranean*, eds. A. Bernard Knapp and Peter Van Dommelen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–6; Tamar Hodos, "Colonisations and Cultural Developments in the Central Mediterranean," in *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze & Iron Age Mediterranean*, eds. A. Bernard Knapp and Peter Van Dommelen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 215–29.

28 Hodos, "Colonisations and Cultural Developments," 215.

29 Killebrew, "Introduction to the Levant," 596–606.

30 Avraham Faust and Shawn Zelig Aster, "The Southern Levant under Assyrian Domination: An Introduction," in *The Southern Levant Under Assyrian Domination*, eds. Shawn Zelig Aster and Avraham Faust (University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 1–19; Margreet L. Steiner, "Introduction to the Levant in the Iron Age II Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant, c. 8000-323BCE*, eds. Margreet L. Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 677–82.

31 Steiner, "Levant in the Iron Age II," 678; Cf. Tammi J. Schneider, "Mesopotamia (Assyrians and Babylonians) and the Levant," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant, c. 8000-323BCE*, eds. Margreet L. Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 98–106.

32 Schneider, "Mesopotamia (Assyrians and Babylonians) and the Levant," 104–5.

33 https://migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock_abs_&t=2020

34 See the various chapters in Natalia Ribas-Mateos, ed., *Migration and Mobilities and the Arab Spring: Spaces of Refugee Flight in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016). See also Belachew Gebrewold and Tendayi Bloom, "Understanding Migrant Decisions: From Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean Region," in *Understanding Migrant Decisions: From Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean Region* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–16.

35 Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, "Challenging the Discourse on Religion, Secularism, and Displacement," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security, and Hospitality in Question*, eds. Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 37–51; Isabella Buber-Ennser et al., "Multi-Layered Roles of Religion among Refugees Arriving in Austria around 2015," *Religions* 9 (2018): doi:10.3390/rel9050154; Stephen M. Cherry, "Exploring the Contours of Transnational Religious Spaces and Networks," in *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads,* eds. Jennifer B. Saunders et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 195–224; John Coffey and Alister

Chapman, "Introduction: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion," in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, eds. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 1–23; Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 269–88; Alex Stepick, "God is Apparently Not Dead: The Obvious, the Emergent, and the Still Unknown in Immigration and Religion," in *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*, eds. Karen Isaksen Leonard et al. (Walnut Creek: Altamira, 2005), 11–37.

36 Samadia Sadouni, "'God Is Not Unemployed': Journeys of Somali Refugees in Johannesburg," *African Studies* 68 (2009): 235–49.

2 Conceptual Frameworks for Studying Mobility, Migration, and Religion in the Ancient Past

Movement, Mobility, Motility, and Migration

Throughout the final quarter of the 20th century, social scientists worked to answer difficult but necessary questions raised by postmodernist critiques of positivist empiricism.[1] Their investigations rightly brought to light methodological and epistemological deficiencies in the fields of religious studies and geography, among others, which led to several theoretical transitions broadly referred to as the *turn to the subject*. In geography, these shifts took the form of the *spatial turn* – seen prominently in the work of those like David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja – and the more recent *new mobilities turn*, as visible in the work of scholars such as Peter Adey, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry. Through these transitions, there developed an acute awareness across fields of the power dynamics of space, place, and movement. Accordingly, focus shifted from traditionally defined modes of mapping and discussions of space as a static reality to those in which all space is understood as being shot through with meaning that depends on, and generates, power differentials. It is this negotiated quality of space that necessitates an explanation of the differences between the terms – *movement*, *mobility*, *motility,* and *migration*.

Movement is the most expansive term for expressing transitions in material and locational statuses over time. People, things, and ideas move. Movement is a fundamental aspect of social life. Competition and cooperation are foundational to the social experience of many animals as groups capitalize on limited material (food, water, and land) and immaterial (power and status) resources through effective strategies of movement. Movement occurs within the body and by means of the body. It may take place in a small area or result in the crossing of large distances. It can be lineal or cyclical, rapid or slow, undertaken as an unassisted body or with the aid of bodily extensions, prosthetics, animals, or machines. Regardless of the combination of these variables, movement is shaped by social networks and varying degrees of agency.

In a broad sense, the adjective *mobile* characterizes someone already on the move in one way or another. For example, mobile pastoralists are mobile in this most basic sense since they participate in a variety of geographically,

climatically, and socially informed physical movements in particular regions. The term can also refer to the latent capacity or suitability that a person or object has for movement. In this regard, a mobile phone is not always on the move, nor is it capable of movement by its own volition but can be taken along when necessary.[2] By themselves, the statuses of being mobile or immobile are neither intrinsically positive or negative, but always tied to larger contexts of agency and access.[3] Tensions between potential and actualized mobility are apparent in experiences of contrasting physical and social mobility. It is possible to be socially mobile but physically sedentary or, highly physically mobile, but socially immobile. The same nomads who are physically mobile may experience fluctuations in social or economic mobility given their context.

Mobility is to movement as place is to location; social construction lies at the core.[4] Societies cultivate and perpetuate *cultures of mobility* that set the acceptable physical and social boundaries of movement. Different bodies are expected to have and are granted different spectrums of movement. Certain modes of movement are privileged while others are stigmatized or labeled deviant. Complex explicit and implicit pressures govern personal and corporate choices for when, how, and how far one can move. To study mobility is to study the experience of movement as it is defined according to power relationships; it is to study meanings. *Mobilities* is the term used to specify collective phenomena of movement, as well as their attendant structures and infrastructures that enable flows of people, things, and ideas. It is in cataloguing such patterns and means of movement that one can elucidate cultures of mobility.

Tensions between mobility and social control are an ever-present reality.[5] If determined to be imbued with legitimate purpose and taking place within socially acceptable chronological, geographical, or economic limits, mobility can be prized by a social group or institution, but boundless or meaningless transience is subject to suspicion, or even impediment. In the case of modern nation states, the ultra-transient person, whether labeled a gypsy, nomad, vagabond, pastoralist, over-lander, hobo, vagrant, or elsewise, can raise serious concerns by straining state structures of observation, accountability, and control.[6] Such individuals are often negatively viewed in terms of their lack of contributions to "established" society, an assumption rooted in the worldview that, while movement and migration are undertakings that aid in society's flourishment, the essence of society is sedentariness.[7] Often in a modern Western perspective, a mobile person (typically white and male) is considered to enjoy a particular kind of freedom or empowerment derived from the unboundedness of their range of movement. In this sense, mobility is a marker of privilege and an indicator of opportunities unrealized by the immobile.[8] Such associations appear through the inherent promise of success, adventure, and freedom embedded in a phrase like "Go West, young man!" or, in the growing openness toward the ultra-mobile remote work, overlanding, and vagabond cultures of the 21st century.

The power dynamics that govern mobility can be more adequately understood through the adjacent concept of *motility*. Motility was originally applied in anatomical and biological sciences to refer to an organism's capacity for movement.[9] The greater range of options that an organism or limb has for movement, the greater its degree of motility. In geography, the term allows for distinctions between potential and actualized movement and provides a means to speak of one's capacity for movement as a form of social capital that changes across geographic and social contexts.[10] Beyond biological capabilities or physical intentions, environment, culture, and social location also determine one's ability to move. Each person draws differently on a unique repertoire of resources when calculating opportunities for movement. In doing so, they assess not only causational phenomena but also their limits of access and the skills required to enact latent capacities to move. Motility should not, however, be reduced to access or agency. Both access and agency are constituent elements of mobilization, but other social and physical frameworks are required to actualize movement.[11] Furthermore, motility is not simply synonymous with aspiration or freedom. Self-determination and a lack of constraints each play a part in catalyzing movement, but movement can be encouraged or limited by contingencies beyond personal desire or independence.

Migration is a category of movement that can be differentiated by its forces of causation, chronological scope, and geographical scale. It is recognizable by elements of long-term re-locative intention that can be linear or cyclical. As a culturally patterned practice, migration is a "rational and rationalizing act," but it is not only or primarily the outcome of macro-level pull factors or even of personal choice.[12] Migration is a strategic choice that is operationalized as one of many responsive functions to life challenges.[13] Migration is undertaken in relationship to social units and systems of meaning that are themselves informed and limited by other environments, systems, and agents. As planned, patterned, and socially contextualized movement, migration takes place within larger matrices of migratory culture and cultures of mobility.[14] For this reason, migration is best understood using processual terminology. The complexities of movement rarely follow a single line of relocation from point A to point B. Even when movers follow patterned transit routes, individual experience leads to variations in where one decides to stop, where one stays, when one keeps moving, and whether one intends to return to previous sites. Thus, migration is shaped by movers' varying personal and corporate capacities but also by external limits. The power differentials that catalyze, perpetuate, or constrain migration are expressible using the frameworks of mobility and motility.

Past and Present Terminology for Movement and Migration

As it does today, human movement in the world of ancient Israel took on many different forms, including various modes of travel, work, pilgrimage,

migration/resettlement, and pastoral/subsistence nomadism. Yet, translating ancient terms for movement or types of movers and correlating those terms with modern categories presents several difficulties. The root of the English term migration can be traced to the Latin *migrare,* which initially implied simple movement and only later took on the additional meaning of more indefinite relocation. The semantic trail is, however, more complicated to follow across Semitic languages.

Like the Akkadian *alāku,* the Hebrew *hlk* (הלך) functions as a common verb for movement and includes the meanings of walking, following, and dispersion. *Hlk* also maintains a secondary aspect of ethical disposition or religious orientation, as when Israel is chided for following foreign deities (1 Kgs 18:21; Jer 2:2; Hos 2:7) and celebrated for walking after Yahweh (Mic 4:5). The Akkadian *ebēru/ebāru* denotes the act of crossing over a land feature or boundary. In Hebrew, we find the cognate, *ʿbr*/עבר denotes human transience (Jdgs 11:29) and border crossing (Num 32:7). The term *yrd* (ירד) broadly means "to go down," either from an elevated place (Exod 19:14) or to move geographically southward (Gen. 12:10). When humans die, they travel down to *Sheol* (Gen 37:35). The same word is sometimes used to describe theophanic descent from the heavens (Gen 11:5; Exod 3:8). The verb *bwʾ* (בוא) signals arrival or entry (Jdgs 6:11), but occasionally also means to depart (Josh 2:22). In the Hiphil, *bwʾ* captures the activity of bringing something or someone to be in a specific time or place (Gen 4:4). Movement away from a place is typically described using *yṣʾ* (יצא). In the Hiphil, *yṣʾ* is one of the primary terms employed to describe Yahweh's salvific activity, particularly as he leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt (Exod 6:6; Deut 5:15, 26:8; Ps 136:11; Jer 32:21). An additional term of departure, *nsʿ* (נסע) is used to denote the repetitious movement of starting again after one has stopped. The term's underlying connotation of "tearing/pulling out" relates to the act of removing tent stakes from the ground before journeying onward (Gen 33:12).

Beyond these general terms for movement, others describe more qualitatively intensive forms of movement. The Hebrew *nwd* (נוד) and *nwʿ* (נוע) denote the act of wandering characterized by great insecurity as transient movement is often associated with brevity of existence. Thus, after murdering his brother, Cain's fear of banishment is predicated on the fact that his ceaseless wandering as a *nāʿ* (נע), or fugitive, will make him a target of violence (Gen 4:14); although, he eventually comes to dwell under divine protection in the "land of wandering" (בארץ־נוד) (Gen 4:16). Similarly, the claim, ארמי אבד אבי, commonly translated, "My father was a wandering Aramean," (Deut 26:5) captures the ephemeral nature of endlessly mobile existence. Unfortunately, enraptured with romanticized ideals of nomadism, many Western interpreters have understood this claim as a statement of ancestral wanderlust. However, the term, *ovēd* (אבד), which typically means "to perish" or "be destroyed," should be more accurately translated to demonstrate the perilous register of movement. Another verb of flight, *brḥ* (ברח), indicates sudden movement in the face of danger or escape from

punishment. Thus, Jacob is told by Rebekkah to flee (*brḥ*) to Haran to avoid Esau's retribution (Gen 27:43). Like the nominal form of (נוד נע), the substantive *bāriaḥ* (בריח) typically denotes a fugitive.

The terms *galah* (גלה), *galut* (גלות), and *golah* (גולה) have been translated as captivity, exile, deportation, and more recently, as forced or involuntary migration. Each of these glosses is an attempt to indicate the coercive nature of the experience. Although Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, and modern Hebrew cognates of *galah* are associated with acts of migration or wandering, some of which may have been understood as uncoerced, the semantic domain of the biblical Hebrew lexeme does not contain a great deal of room for experiences of personally instigated movement. Using the verb *galah* reflexively as an expression of bodily exposure, self-revelation, or disclosure is possible (Gen 35:7; Lev 18:6). Likewise, one can, in effect, *galah* another as an act of re-moving them or causing them to move, although this use is typically reserved to describe divinely initiated movement or that inspired by an agent acting on behalf of the divine (2 Kgs 18:11, 25:11; Jer 29:7). The verb can also be used in a stative sense to describe something or someone that has been removed from a particular location (Jer 29:4). Occasionally, in infinitive construct form with verbs such as *hlk* (הלך) or *yṣ'* (יצא), *galah* denotes the active sense of one being taken into exile. In all of this, however, one does not *galah* themselves as a means of personal movement (cf. Lev 18:6-19; 1 Sam 2:27, 14:8). The same can be said of the coerced movement implied by *šḇh* (שבה), to take or be taken captive, of *'qr* (עקר), to uproot, and of *gerash* (גרש), which generally indicates the experience of a person or people being driven out of a particular place (Gen 3:25, 12:39; Exod 34:11; Lev 21:7; Job 30:5). Similar verbs of transloca-tion, removal, banishment, or scattering include *ḇzr* (בזר), *dḥh* (דחה), *zrh* (זרה), *npṣ* (נפץ), and *pwṣ* (פוץ).

The Akkadian *ubāru(m)/ubārtu(m)* (*ubru/wabru*) signals a person's identity as a foreigner or resident alien and is frequently used to describe travelers or those seeking to establish themselves as foreign workers. Someone whose movement is characterized by flight, whether as a fugitive or a refugee, is commonly described in Akkadian as *munabtu*. The Akkadian *tamkārum* is more commonly used to specify merchants and traders, movers who bring with them goods or who facilitate the exchange of goods rather than pro-viding labor.[15] Hebrew terms for persons residing for an indefinite time in a land that is not their homeland include *gēr* (גר), the nominal form of *gwr* (גור) "to dwell/take up residence" and *tôšāḇ* (תושב), the nominal form of the verb *yašaḇ* (ישב), which generally means, "to sit/dwell," but can also include the domains of inhabiting or passing through a particular place. *Gwr* is not itself a verb of movement, but instead captures the activity of settling down as a resident in a foreign land. Traditional glosses for *gēr* include sojourner, stranger, resident alien, and even refugee. Status as a *gēr* might entail geo-graphic movement but the term conveys social marginalization more than the explicit experience of translocation, though movement and margin-alization are certainly interconnected. The Hebrew *nekār* (נכר)/*nokri* (נכרי)

denotes an additional category of person – sometimes a mover – who is recognizable as a foreigner, sometimes specifically as a foreign enemy (Gen 17:12; Lev 22:25; Deut 14:21; Judg 19:12).[16] In certain instances, one who is identified as a *nekār* appears to have comparatively greater economic means and social mobility than a *gēr* (Gen 17:12, 27). Employing the terminology of mobility studies, we might say that these types of movers are distinguished according to their relative levels of motility. The term *zār* (זר) is used frequently to describe another class of person who lies beyond the bounds of immediate kinship (Num 1:51; 3:38; Deut 25:5). At other times, the term connotes any non-Levitical person (Lev 22:10, 12; Num 16:40).

Having outlined these various expressions for movement and movers, the warning that follows is that we must tread carefully when applying modern terms for migrational phenomena to those we seek to illuminate in the ancient world. Performing social science informed readings requires more than appropriating terminology from fields beyond biblical or ancient Near Eastern studies. At the least, it requires conveying to readers how specific terms function in their original disciplinary contexts. But more than this, it requires bringing specific evidence from social science research to the text while at the same time articulating the limits of the terms and theories to describe or interpret phenomena beyond the original fields of study.

Modern classifications of movement and movers employed by the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Population Division, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are based on post-Westphalian nation-state systems of citizenship.[17] These terms are tailored to address specific situations of movement within the legislative frameworks of global diplomatic protocol and international human rights. Biblical scholars should avoid using them as heuristic categories because, more often than not, doing so skews readings of material culture and textual data. Migration scholars themselves have even raised warnings against limiting descriptions of movement to the terms set forth by modern nation-state bodies.[18] Such terms interpret migration primarily from the purview of the state, not from that of migrants themselves. Likewise, the terms artificially demarcate, and even erase, modes of human movement that states cannot or do not want to account for.

The pervasive tendency among some scholars to over-articulate biblical scenes of movement using modern terminology is readily apparent in readings that describe Adam and Eve as being "evicted by their landlord," that "Noah and his family flee climate change," or that the Hebrews "leave Egypt in search of religious freedom."[19] Such readings ultimately do violence to the biblical text and mislead non-specialist readers. There is no term in Hebrew to denote a native inhabitant who relocates within the borders of their own state, as is the case with the modern category of *internally displaced persons*. Nor is there a specific category of *stateless persons* in the ancient world. Even employing terms such as *asylum seeker* or *refugee* must be done with consideration for the ways their official definitions depend on governmental conventions of classification

and an honest concession to readers that these terms have no direct corre-spondence to ancient categories.[20] Likewise, using terms like *transnational(ism)* or fabricating others such as "externally displaced person" to discuss the an-cestral narratives and prophetic texts risks reducing mobility-informed readings to nonsense.[21] Even when the stated objective of such scholarship is to clarify the use of social science models and apply them appropriately to studies of ancient texts and context, such readings do not offer the intended inter-disciplinary migration-informed analyses but rather, superficial exegesis of migrational moments in the text. In a similar way, selectively mining biblical or ancient Near Eastern content to argue for or against modern mobility regimes is hugely problematic.[22]

Just as scholars of the ancient world should demonstrate responsibility in their usage of modern terms for movers, we must also approach discussions of means and processes of movement using proper terminology. Terms such as *human trafficking* and *smuggling* are increasingly present among biblical scholars generating migration-informed readings. Smuggling and trafficking are also often wrongly used as synonyms by biblical scholars even though they are distinct forms of movement, with trafficking referring to coerced forms of movement and smuggling referring to various forms of assisted movement – often entered into willingly by migrants themselves. While the use of these terms is not altogether unsatisfactory, scholars who employ them should be aware of their distinct applications in the realms of international migration law.

The term *forced migration* has also gained significant traction among biblical scholars looking to better understand and explain the complex realities of Israel and Judah's various experiences of exile.[23] Part of the difficulty in applying the concept to studies of the biblical text or the ancient Near East is that migration scholars have not resolved among themselves whether forced migration is even a legitimate descriptive category.[24] In lieu of its use, some have opted for the category of *involuntary migration*, although this solution does not sufficiently address the underlying questions of agency that attend all movement, even that which is characterized by coercion.[25] In general, the categories of forced or involuntary migration fail to capture the discursive and processual nature of migration by making it appear that movement takes place as a single externally catalyzed and often permanent act of relocation.[26] Richmond, and others following him, have opted to describe migrant agency along a continuum, a reality I deal with using the concept of motility. Richmond's work, which emerges from studies specific to populations officially classified as refugees, identifies how migrants' decision-making unfolds across a spectrum delimited by *proactive* and *reactive* movements.[27] Targeted application of the terminology of forced/involuntary migration can be helpful, but it should not be wielded as a catch-all. Nor should the term be used in a way that promotes the idea that forced/involuntary migration is the only or even the dominant form of mi-gration in the ancient world. Likewise, the use of contemporary categories such as *development induced forced migration*, *derivative forced migration*, *responsive forced migration*, and *purposive forced migration* does little to bring clarity to the