

# Multi-Levelled Identity Negotiation in the Second Temple Period

Edited by  
ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG,  
and BENJAMIN D. GIFFONE

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament  
192*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Forschungen zum Alten Testament

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192





# Multi-Levelled Identity Negotiation in the Second Temple Period

Essays in Honor of Louis C. Jonker

Edited by

Angelika Berlejung and  
Benjamin D. Giffone

Mohr Siebeck

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## Abbreviations

- ABD** *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- ANEP<sup>2</sup>** *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by James B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- ANET** *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- BDB** Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.
- BHH** *Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch: Landeskunde, Geschichte, Religion, Kultur*. Edited by Bo Reicke and Leonhard Rost. 4 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962–1966. Republished electronically, Berlin: Directmedia, 2003.
- DCH** *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Edited by David J.A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2014.
- DUL** del Olmo Lete, Gregorio and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Ges<sup>18</sup>** Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, ed. Rudolf Meyer and Herbert Donner. 18<sup>th</sup> ed. Heidelberg: Springer, 1987–2010.
- GKC** *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arther E. Cowley. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
- HAE** Renz, Johannes and Wolfgang Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995–2003.
- HAL** *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Leiden: Brill, 1995, 2004.
- HALOT** *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999.
- IPN** Noth, Martin. *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, BWANT III 10. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928.
- NBL** *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*, ed. Manfred Görg and Bernhard Lang. Zurich: Benziger, 1995.
- PNTU** Gröndahl, Frauke. *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*, Studia Pohl 1. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967.
- RIA** *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1928–.
- TDOT** *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.

- THAT* *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Edited by Ernst Jenni, with assistance from Claus Westermann. 2 vols. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971–1976.
- ThWAT* *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970–.

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## The Significance of Louis Jonker's *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles* to Studies of Identity Formation

Angelika Berlejung and Benjamin D. Giffone

The concept of *identity* has seen increased significance in the field of biblical studies in recent decades. Many published studies have explored the ways in which individuals and communities formed their identities through the composition, editing, and promulgation of biblical texts.<sup>1</sup>

A significant recent contribution to this conversation has been made by Louis C. Jonker: *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud* (FAT 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). Jonker proposes a comprehensive model of “multi-levelled identity negotiation,” that successfully describes the dynamic ability of Yehudian scribes to move within four different domains – within the Persian imperium; Yehud among its provincial neighbours; the tribal relationships within “All Israel”; and within the Jerusalem cult – and to emphasise (or deemphasise) different aspects of identity, depending on the needs of the community.

Jonker's approach helps to provide a greater appreciation of the complex, and even ambiguous, literary materials of the book of Chronicles – but this approach could also be applied fruitfully to other biblical corpora of the Second Temple period.

In the concluding chapter of *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles*, Jonker calls for this more sophisticated, multi-levelled analysis of identity negotiation to be applied to other biblical literature besides Chronicles:

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<sup>1</sup> A far-from-exhaustive listing of a few important English works in the fields of biblical and ancient Judaic studies gives one the sense of the scope of this topic: Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*; Wettstein, ed., *Diasporas and Exiles*; Lidonnici and Lieber, eds., *Heavenly Tablets*; Garcia Martinez and Popovic, eds., *Defining Identities*; Frey, Schwartz, and Gripenrog, eds., *Jewish Identity*; Levine and Schwartz, eds., *Jewish Identities in Antiquity*; Knoppers and Ristau, eds., *Community Identity in Judean Historiography*; Becking, Ezra, Nehemiah; Lipschits, Knoppers, and Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans*; Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*; Albertz and Wöhrle, eds., *Between Cooperation and Hostility*; Ben Zvi and Edelman, eds., *Imagining the Other*; Irudayaraj, *Violence, Otherness and Identity in Isaiah 63:1–6*; Hensel, Nocquet and Adamczewski, eds., *Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible*; Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism*; Hensel, Adamczewski and Nocquet, eds., *Social Groups behind Biblical Traditions*.

Comparative studies on literature from the Persian period can potentially enrich our understanding of the multi-faceted processes of textual composition that took place in this era. This can also facilitate a more sophisticated understanding of the socio-historical processes at work and the processes of socio-political and socio-religious change that took place in the period, which was most influential in the formation of biblical literature.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired by this statement, the aim of this volume is twofold: 1) to advance scholarship on the Second Temple period through the lens of “multi-levelled identity formation/negotiation,” and 2) to honour the unique contributions of Louis Jonker to many subfields, and to scholarly conversations across decades and continents.

### 1. Louis C. Jonker: A Multi-Dimensional Scholar

It is appropriate that the subject of multi-levelled identity negotiation be explored in conversation with Louis C. Jonker. Jonker himself, by his own description, embodies the complexities of identity: a native South African of European descent; a mother-tongue speaker of Afrikaans who has written most of his over one-hundred publications in English; an African who spends a great deal of time in Europe:

When I have the privilege of interacting with ‘typical’ European biblical scholars (especially in Germany), I almost always become an advocate of reader reception and actualisation of the Bible. I argue that one cannot do exegesis without actualisation in a specific context. I always have many good examples ready, stemming from my continent, Africa, as well as from my experience of being a minister in a congregation of ordinary readers of the Bible. But when I am back on African soil, I change into an advocate of thorough exegesis in which the scholarly analysis of biblical texts, their genres, and their history of origin has a prominent place. ... When I am exposed to the work of many biblical scholars on the African continent, I feel the need to call for more rigorous exegesis because such scholarship resonates with my cultural make-up, with my upbringing in a more Western-orientated environment.

Why? Am I a hermeneutical schizophrenic? This situation puzzled me for a long time until I started viewing my reactions against the backdrop of who I am. I have come to realise that I live in different worlds simultaneously. ... My identity as a biblical scholar and reader of the Bible is a quilt of different – sometimes harmonious and sometimes conflicting – dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Jonker writes of the transformation of South African society within his own lifetime. He began his studies in apartheid South Africa; by the time of his own appointment to the faculty at Stellenbosch (2003), the political and social

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<sup>2</sup> Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles*, 284.

<sup>3</sup> Jonker, *From Adequate Biblical Interpretation*, 78.

situation had been dramatically transformed, with tremendous implications for biblical interpretation and Christian ethics.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2021 Louis C. Jonker is distinguished professor at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He has been a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (Bonn) since 2000, and has received numerous fellowships and grants to conduct research and lectures in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada. Worth mentioning is the Georg Forster-Forschungspreis of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation which enables him to spend research leave of 12 months during 2024–2026 in Germany. He was furthermore successfully nominated 2024 as Global Fellow of the MF School of Theology and Religion in Oslo, Norway. In addition to active participation and leadership in OTSSA/OTWSA, SASNES, SBL and EABS, Jonker was invited to participate as a member of the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies – a perhaps unexpected association for a South African scholar, but a tribute to his scholarship as well as the collegial spirit that characterizes that organization. Many of the contributors to this volume have been Jonker's dialogue partners through these many fruitful associations.

Jonker has coedited numerous highly-regarded international collections of essays.<sup>5</sup> He served as Secretary of the Triennial Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, spearheading the planning for the 2016 meeting – only the second such meeting to occur outside Europe, and the first on African soil. As a truly international scholar, Jonker continues to be at the forefront of conversations and collaborations between scholars in Africa, Europe, North America, and beyond.

## 2. The Conversation

Jonker's book *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles* can be recognized as a synthesis or culmination of more than two decades of research. *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles* was recognized with the Andrew Murray–Desmond Tutu Prize for the best theological publication in South Africa in the period 2016–2017. Yet in nearly a decade since its publication, there is still a great deal left unexplored using the breakthrough syntheses and methodologies that Jonker has brought to the study of Chronicles and the Persian period.

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<sup>4</sup> Jonker, *From Adequate Biblical Interpretation*, 225–38.

<sup>5</sup> Including: De Wit, Jonker, Kool, and Schipani, eds., *Through the Eyes of Another*; Jonker, Lubs, Ruwe, and Weise, eds., *Behutsames Lesen*; Jonker and Cornelius, eds., *From Ebla to Stellenbosch*; Jonker, ed., *Historiography and Identity (Re)formation*; Jonker and Holter, eds., *Global Hermeneutics?*; Jonker, ed., *Texts, Contexts and Readings*; Jonker, Kotzé and Maier, eds., *Congress Volume Stellenbosch 2016*; Jonker, Berlejung and Cornelius, eds., *Multilingualism in Ancient Contexts*; Jeon and Jonker, eds., *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature*.

The essays in this volume respond in various ways to Jonker's invitation to analysis of "identity formation/negotiation" in the context of the Second Temple Period, especially the nuance of "negotiation on multiple levels." Most are primarily textual in nature; others engage with material culture or images.

The essays in Part I focus on aspects of or passages from the book of Chronicles, building on and responding to Jonker's analysis in various ways. In "Samaria and Edom as Complementary 'Proximate Others' in the Early Second Temple Period," Ehud Ben Zvi examines the portraits of two of Yehud's neighbors through the heuristic of the *proximate other* (PO). Building on the work of, among others, Jonathan Z. Smith and Pierre Bourdieu, Ben Zvi argues that for the Chronicler the presentation of two POs – Esau/Edom as "Israel's brother" and Samaria/Northern Israel as the out-group that was formerly part of the in-group – allows for a more nuanced and complex construction of Yehudian identity. Moving beyond Chronicles, the literati of late Achaemenid/early Hellenistic Yehud could use varying portraits of these two groups to emphasize different features of their own idealized community.

In "(Mis)Representing Cush in the Chronicler's Historiography: Implications for Identity Formation," Kevin Burrell builds on his doctoral research conducted under Jonker, in ongoing conversation with his supervisor. Burrell draws particular attention to the conspicuous absence of Cush-Egypt in the Chronicler's re-presentation of the Sennacherib invasion. Burrell demonstrates how this omission fits the Chronicler's ideology of reliance on foreign nations and also shapes the identity of the Chronicler's community vis-à-vis foreign imperial forces.

In "Building Theologies: A Comparative Analysis of the Susa Foundation Charter (DSf) and 2 Chr 1:18–2:17," Gideon Kotzé follows Jonker's suggestion that engaging with Achaemenid royal inscriptions, such as DSf, can provide insight into the Chronicler's project of "reforming history."<sup>6</sup> Kotzé draws on insights from several strands of Jonker's research, including multidimensional exegesis, and the relationship between social transformation and reinterpretations of existing traditions. Kotzé contends that though there are similarities between the portraits of Ahura Mazda and YHWH, respectively, the texts differ with respect to the deities' elect leaders and buildings as embodiment of divine-human relationships.

The next two essays consist of Jonker's students, now well-established colleagues, offering respectful reexamination of Jonker's own research<sup>7</sup> on the relationship between Chronicles and the so-called Priestly literature (broadly understood). In "The Consecration of the Levites in the פסח Narratives: Inspired

<sup>6</sup> Jonker, *Reforming History*, 21–44.

<sup>7</sup> Jonker, 1 & 2 Chronicles; Jonker, *Holiness and the Levites*, 457–74; Jonker, *Melting Pots and Rejoinders?* 42–54; Jonker, *Levites, Holiness*, 391–416.

by H?,” Esias Meyer asks whether Jonker is correct that the Chronicler was inspired by the democratisation of holiness in Leviticus. Even though recent studies by Rhyder and others have disputed that the call to holiness in H elevates ordinary Israelites closer to the level of priests, Meyer agrees with Jonker that the Levites do receive a “holiness promotion” in the course of Chronicles (as evident in the Passover narratives), and that this represents a complex identity negotiation between the priests, the Levites and the people. In “Chronicles and Exodus: An Exploration of 2 Chr 35:1–19,” Ntozakhe Simon Cezula reconsiders Jonker’s claim that no general conclusion can be drawn about the Chronicler’s usage of the Exodus tradition. In discussion with Jonker (along with Japhet, Avioz and Ben Zvi), Cezula instead contends that the Chronicler aims to undermine the Exodus tradition as an essential element of Israel’s history, in service of the Chronicler’s larger advocacy of the Davidic covenant and its ideological constructs.

The essays in Part II respond to Jonker’s call to analyze portions of the Hebrew canon other than Chronicles. Three essays pertain to the Pentateuch; three essays focus on the book of Kings; and two address poetic texts.

In “Defining All-Israel in Genesis: The List of the Israelites who had come to Egypt (Gen 46:8–27),” Christoph Levin answers Jonker’s call for closer examination of the role of genealogies, beyond those found in Chronicles, for identity formation. Levin offers a detailed exegetical examination of the list of Jacob’s descendants in Gen 46, which was fundamental to the development of the twelve-tribe system (with Gen 35:22b–26 and Exod 1:1–5) and served as the model for lists in Exod 6, Num 26, and 1 Chr 2–8.

In “Defining All-Israel in Numbers,” Christian Frevel compares the Jerusalem-centered Judean “all-Israel” of Chronicles with the more open and egalitarian model of the twelve tribes of Israel in Numbers. He notes the differences between the two books in their portraits of the tribe of Benjamin, the role of the high priest versus the king as the main administrator of the sanctuary, and the relative importance of the priests versus the Levites. Contra Jonker, Frevel argues that Num 16 does not reflect a lowering of the status of the Levites in response to their elevation in Chronicles.

Stepping back and taking a larger view is Konrad Schmid, who asks, “When Was the Torah Considered a Normative Text?” Schmid takes a close look at not only current models for the Pentateuch’s literary formation, but the nuance of the notion of “normativity”: the ways in which the Torah functioned authoritatively. Schmid concludes that the function of the Pentateuch began as more symbolic and generally shaping of practice, but transformed within the context of Hellenistic Judaism into practical normative law that shaped the identity of Jewish communities.

Turning to the book of Kings, three essays examine the contributions of specific texts to the negotiation of identity. In “Defining YHWH’s ‘Israel’: YHWH’s

House and Land in Solomon's Prayer, in Kings and Chronicles," Benjamin Giffone observes that 1 Kgs 8 describes seven envisioned scenarios in which, if YHWH's people "turn and pray" in or toward the Jerusalem sanctuary, YHWH would intervene and rescue them. Remarkably, within the book of Kings, Northern Israelites are described as experiencing crisis moments that parallel those seven scenarios – none of which is resolved via any resort to Jerusalem or its temple. Giffone argues that competing definitions of YHWH's "Israel" exist within Kings: 1) YHWH's Israel (people and land) apart from Jerusalem and Davidides; and 2) YHWH connected to Israel through Jerusalem. Kings in its received form represents an attempt to negotiate in a single text the centrality of Jerusalem, but also YHWH's continuing connection to the people *and* the land of the North.

Giffone's essay mentions 2 Kgs 5 only as part of a larger constellation of texts – two other essays recognize the significance of this text for identity negotiation in the second-temple period. In "Naaman's Conversion to Israel," Hermann-Josef Stipp argues that the story contributes to the forming of Israel's self-understanding in a non-Yahwistic environment and Israel's place in a world dominated by foreign powers. For Stipp, the unrealistic quality and implausible elements of the composition are a feature of its rhetoric: if even a foreigner with such a skeptical profile as Naaman could be convinced of the YHWH's universality, then anyone could be. Stipp regards 2 Kgs 5 as a crucial text in the development of particularistic monotheism. Hans-Peter Mathys reaches some similar conclusions, but his analysis proceeds along quite different lines. In "The Story of Naaman the Aramean," Mathys focuses on how various remarkable elements of the story actually address postexilic concerns: power relations, the activities of "freelance" prophets, the relationship between Israelites and foreigners (Arameans in particular), practices for dealing with guilt and ritual impurity, and the uniqueness of YHWH even as he is now worshipped abroad. Stipp and Mathys, each in his own way, uses Jonker's categories in navigating questions of multi-levelled identity negotiation in the Persian period.

Moving over to poetic texts, Andreas Schuele examines the role of Isaiah's Servant Songs in the shaping of postexilic identity. In "Isaiah as the Final Servant: The Servant Songs and the Issue of Prophetic Identity," Schuele proposes that the development of the identity of the servant across four songs as a literary character is linked to the authors' search for their own identity. In Isa 40–48, it is Cyrus and the exile group. In Isa 49–53, the second and third songs develop the identity into a self-designation: the Isaianic prophets. The fourth song is "a monument to their founding figure," Isaiah ben Amoz himself.

In "Psalms 135–136: Reinterpreting the Past, Reimagining the Future, Renegotiating Identity in Late Persian-Period Yehud," Gert Prinsloo offers a critical-spatial analysis of these *Zwillingspsalmen* in Book Five of the Psalter. Using Henri Lefebvre's "trialectic" approach to spatiality, Prinsloo argues that the

poets/redactors of these psalms sought to reframe the realities experienced by the literati of late Persian-Period Yehud and to imagine “another” (or “an other”) world where Israel and the world thrives under the dominion of YHWH, the universal divine sovereign. The reinterpretation of the past permits reimagination of the future, and renegotiation of identities in the context of a universal empire, a marginalised province of Yehud, and growing inner-Yehudite tensions regarding the nature and location of true Israel.

The essays in Part III take the quest to discover “multi-levelled identity negotiation” in a different direction: objects and tangible representations.

In “Decapitated Heads and Cherubim Thrones: The Books of Chronicles and the Iconography of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt,” Sakkie Cornelius and Renate van Dijk-Coombes illumine the socio-historical context of Chronicles by analyzing iconographic sources. They focus on three sorts of case studies: decapitation; shields and darics; and thrones, cherubim and chariots. These descriptions are part of the process by which the Chronicler renegotiated his community’s identity by situating it within the Persian imperial context.

In “The Footstool for the Feet of Our God” (1 Chr 28:2): The Ark of the Covenant According to the Chronicler,” Joshua Spoelstra specifically examines one object from Chronicles in comparative perspective. In reliefs from Persepolis, the Bisitun inscription, and even images from the tomb of Tutankhamun, pedestal and footstool imagery signal the sovereignty of a king. By construing the ark as God’s footstool and YHWH enthroned in the heavens, Israel’s deity is YHWH God of Heaven (2 Chr 36:23). Spoelstra argues that the Chronicler effectively scales-up P’s theological conceptualisation, from local to global, to emphasise the universal sovereignty of YHWH. The ark of the covenant as God’s footstool is a sacred object of two levels of identity negotiation for All-Israel: on an imperial level polemical, on a religious level inspirational.

Last but not least, Angelika Berlejung offers a study that moves across several biblical texts: “Defining Israel by a Wall: Jerusalem’s City Wall as Identity Construct.” Berlejung analyses the building and consecration of Jerusalem’s city wall in the book of Nehemiah not mainly as a building report, but rather as a multi-levelled identity construct concerned with defining the borderlines of the new post-exilic community. Within this discourse, the wall is the visible embodiment of YHWH’s reconciliation, Persia’s support, and Yehud’s recovery, as well as Yehud’s internal spatial, cultural, social, religious, legal, and social unity centered in Jerusalem, and of the programmatic exclusion of Judah’s and Benjamin’s neighbors.

### 3. Acknowledgements

It is our hope that this collection constitutes both a fitting tribute to Jonker's scholarship, and inspiration/impetus for others to develop and build on his ideas. We as fellow scholars and students have sought to embody the thoughtful humility he personifies. Louis is always generous and cheerful in his professional and personal interactions, elevating younger voices from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The essays in this volume have been reviewed by a team of internationally recognized scholars. In addition to the editors and the senior contributors (particularly Ehud Ben Zvi), we are indebted to the following reviewers who lent their particular expertise to improve these essays: Ulrich Berges, Jaeyoung Jeon, Herbert Niehr, and Nancy Rahn. Finally, we would like to thank Florian Patermo (Leipzig) for expertly proofreading the manuscript and preparing the indices of the volume.

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June 2025

Angelika Berlejung  
and Benjamin Giffone

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