

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Land, the Economy and Migration in the Book of Ezra Nehemiah: Implications for the 2000-2002 Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Program in Zimbabwe

By

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Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Academic Requirements
for the Degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

In the Subject of

Biblical Studies
at the

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg
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March 2026

DECLARATION

I Ladious Chambalama hereby declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

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As the supervisor of the above-named PhD candidate, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

Signed [redacted] 24 March 2026

Prof Gerald O. West (Supervisor) **Date**

Dedication

To my father; Arajo Foromoz Chambalama a very strong-willed migrant farm worker who gave it all so that I and all his children could succeed even in lands far from the hills of home. A strong man who braved the path from Mozambique to the Large-Scale Commercial Farms of Goromonzi Zimbabwe.

Acknowledgements

While the world has many unfair and unkind people, there are some individuals that are cut from a different clothe. To Prof Gerald West, words fail me to express my gratitude for your commitment to naturing upcoming scholars. In this project, it has been my privilege to be one of these. You were willing to take me up and train me though you had retired. At some point I recall that you fell sick but you still sacrificed the little strength you had at that time to guide, support and mentor me through my project. Your name is renowned in academia, just being known to be one of your students makes me a scholar at a different level.

I would not have done well if I did not acknowledge the other scholars who helped in reading my work and making corrections, Prof Ezra Chitando, Prof Blessing Nyahuma, Dr Robert Matikiti; thank you for your kindness and willingness to assist.

I wish to also acknowledge my wife Clara Akua Ya Norman for the support and the patience to allow me to be out at the library late at night as I pursued this study. Finally, to my son Joao Chambalama, who reminds me of my father who died while I was still in the process of doing this study. Thank you very much.

Abstract

In this work I present a unique contribution to both African Biblical Scholarship (ABS) and to current academia. Mine here is a study that interrogates the dynamic resemblance between the 'people of the land' in the book of Ezra–Nehemiah and the farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000 to 2002 Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (FTLRRP). The 'people of the land' of Ezra-Nehemiah suffered exclusion from land, loss of an economy they had built during the years of the exile (586-538 B.C.E.) and faced traumatic migration complications at the hands of the groups returning from exile.

As the reader will discover in this work, the land, economic and migration challenges that accompanied the people who were in Judea at the return of the exiles in 538 B.C.E., share some resonances with the land, economic and migration scenario at the turn of the new millennium in Zimbabwe. It is such resemblance between the two scenes that this work will unpack and expose in greater detail.

The methods I used to carry out this task include the social-historical method, which is mainly concerned with the history and social setting of the text, and autobiographical analysis which is a tool that allowed me read the study of the 'people of the land' in a more personal way and infusing my personal experiences in the process.

Since Ezra-Nehemiah is a series of narrative events, it becomes a natural undertaking to examine how the narrated events correspond to what actually happened in history according to Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2001, p. 305-307). Social-historical biblical criticism becomes the best model because as an enterprise, it assists in reconstructing events lying behind the text, as observed by Norman K Gottwald (1993 p10) and Marvin Chaney (1991 p. 127-39).

The reader will note that in this work I subscribes to the argument that Judah was not left completely desolate after Babylonian raids in the 6th century B.C.E. I base such an argument on the results of studies carried out by several authorities including Charles C Torrey (1910 p. 288). Those that were in Judah during the time of the exile are the ones that I here refer to as 'people of the land'.

To discern the similarities between the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemia and those in Zimbabwe (farm workers), I used the tripolar theory. A tool by Gerald West (2018 p.248) which allows not only comparison but also makes use of a third dimension that connects or entangles the text and the context. Ultimately, the study I am carrying out must contribute to the transformation of the African continent. For that reason, in this work I appeal to the comparison of the biblical context to the African context referred to above.

In both the biblical and the social contextual texts of this study, the Land Question is central. As the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah suffer exclusion from their land, so did the farm workers in Zimbabwe during the Land Reform Programme. This loss of land led to other challenges such as the loss of an economy as well as migration complications on the part of the people of the land.

Abstrato

Neste trabalho, apresento um contributo singular tanto para os Estudos Bíblicos Africanos (EBA) como para o meio académico contemporâneo. Trata-se de um estudo que investiga a semelhança dinâmica entre o 'povo da terra' no livro de Esdras-Neemias e os trabalhadores rurais no Zimbabué durante o Programa Acelerado de Reforma Agrária e Reassentamento (FTLRRP) de 2000 a 2002. O "povo da terra" de Esdras-Neemias sofreu exclusão da terra, perda da economia que tinha construído durante os anos do exílio (586-538 a.C.) e enfrentou complicações migratórias traumáticas por parte dos grupos que regressavam do exílio.

Como o leitor descobrirá neste trabalho, os desafios fundiários, económicos e migratórios que acompanharam o povo que se encontrava na Judeia no regresso dos exilados em 538 a.C. partilham algumas ressonâncias com o cenário fundiário, económico e migratório na viragem do milénio no Zimbabué. É esta semelhança entre as duas cenas que este trabalho irá desvendar e expor com maior detalhe.

Os métodos que utilizei para realizar esta tarefa incluem o método sócio-histórico, que se preocupa principalmente com a história e o contexto social do texto, e a análise autobiográfica, uma ferramenta que me permitiu ler o estudo do 'povo da terra' de uma forma mais pessoal e infundir as minhas experiências pessoais no processo.

Sendo Esdras-Neemias uma série de acontecimentos narrativos, torna-se uma tarefa natural examinar como os acontecimentos narrados correspondem ao que realmente aconteceu na história, de acordo com Israel Finkelstein e Neil Asher Silberman (2001, p. 305-307). A crítica bíblica sócio-histórica torna-se o melhor modelo porque, enquanto empreendimento, auxilia na reconstrução dos acontecimentos subjacentes ao texto, como referem Norman K. Gottwald (1993, p. 10) e Marvin Chaney (1991, p. 127-39).

O leitor notará que, nesta obra, defendo o argumento de que Judá não ficou completamente desolada após as incursões babilónicas no século VI a.C. Baseio tal argumento nos resultados de estudos realizados por diversas autoridades, entre as quais Charles C. Torrey (1910, p. 288). Os que estavam em Judá durante o período do exílio são os que aqui denomino 'povo da terra'.

Para discernir as semelhanças entre o 'povo da terra' em Esdras-Neemias e os habitantes do Zimbabué (trabalhadores rurais), utilizei a teoria tripolar. Uma ferramenta de Gerald West (2018, p. 248) que permite não só a comparação, mas também utiliza uma terceira dimensão que liga ou entrelaça o texto e o contexto. Em última análise, o estudo que realizo deverá contribuir para a transformação do continente africano. Por esta razão, neste trabalho, recorro à comparação do contexto bíblico com o contexto africano acima referido.

Tanto nos textos bíblicos como nos textos do contexto social deste estudo, a questão da terra é central. Tal como o "povo da terra" em Esdras-Neemias sofreu exclusão das suas terras, o mesmo aconteceu com os trabalhadores rurais do Zimbabué durante o Programa de Reforma Agrária. Esta perda de terras levou a outros desafios, como a perda da economia e complicações migratórias para o povo da terra.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

A2 JV	Medium to Commercial Joint venture Farms
A2	Medium to Commercial Farms
ABS	African Biblical Studies
B.C. E.	Before Common Era
BASOR	Bulleting of American Society of Overseas Research
BCG	Bacillus Calmette–Guérin
CA	Communal Areas
CAF	Central African Federation
CCAWT	Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CUSAS	Cornel University Studies in Assyriology and Sumeriology
DIDR	Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
ESS	Ecumenical Support Services
FCTZ	Farm Community Trust Zimbabwe
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front)
GAPWUZ	General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IDRG	International Development Relief Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRR	Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction
JCAS	Journal of Contemporary African Studies
JSTA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
LAA	Land Acquisition Act
LHA	Lancaster House Agreement
LHC	Lancaster House Constitution
LRRPII	Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase II
LSCF	Large Scale Commercial Farms
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NABIS	Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLP	National Land Policy
PCJP	Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, lit (Mozambican National Resistance)
RNLB	Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau
RNLSC	Rhodesian Native Labour Supply Commission
SADAC	Southern African Development Community
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SMP	Southern African Migration Programme
TA	Tete Agreement
TLA	Tripartite Labour Agreement
TMP	Tributary Mode of Production
TTL	Tribal Trust Lands
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCM	Westminster Constitutional Model

ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

This study interrogates the dynamic resemblance between the 'people of the land' in the book of Ezra–Nehemiah and the farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000 to 2002 Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (FTLRRP). The 'people of the land' of Ezra-Nehemiah suffered exclusion from land (Grabbe 2004 p. 134-154), loss of an economy they had built during the years of the exile (586-538 B.C.E.) and faced traumatic migration complications at the hands of the groups returning from exile according to Leticia Rovira (2014 p.25).

This situation is mirrored on the farm workers in Zimbabwe. These also experienced exclusion from land at the hands of government sponsored groups that implemented the FTLRRP. This exclusion came with the loss of an economy that had sustained the farm workers in their day-to-day farm life. The farm workers also had to vacate the farms to make way for the new occupants. This resulted in serious migration complications as the farm workers sought alternative abord. This work seeks to unpack and expose resemblance between the two scenes I have just described.

The land, economic and migration challenges that accompanied the people who were in Judea at the return of the exiles in 538 B.C.E. share some resonances with the land, economic and migration scenario at the turn of the new millennium in Zimbabwe. The groups that were in the land at the time of the return from exile in Babylon (538 B.C.E.) included those that moved into Judah during its years of desolation (586-538 B.C.E.) and various Canaanite groups and those from Samaria. These joined the poor peasantry that had been left in the land in 586 B.C.E. at the consummation of the conquest.

In my view, the dominant argument in Theology and Religious Studies in relation to the post exilic period (539-350 B.C.E.) was land. Amanda Hammar and Brian Raftopoulos observed in 2003 that, traumatic land issues also choked post 2000 Zimbabwe (p.24). This study seeks to find out similarities between the Biblical post-exilic Land Question and the post 2000 Land Question in Zimbabwe. As the reader will discover in the process of going through this work, there are many such similarities. Although the two scenes are of completely different epochs of time, their stories play out in almost similar fashion.

For example, in both cases the major contestation is between 'indigenes' (meaning those returning from exile in the biblical case and state sponsored black groups in the case of the post 2000 land reform program in Zimbabwe) and 'settlers,' (meaning the people of the land mentioned in Ezar-Nehemiah found in Judea in 538 B.C.E. and also meaning farm workers and their white employers on commercial farms in post 2000 Zimbabwe). In the Zimbabwean case, the violence and trauma were meted on the White farmers and farm workers. The Land Question has been and is still topical in Zimbabwe and this has provided one of my motivations for choosing this topic.

The focus group of this study on the Zimbabwean scene shall be the farm workers who suffered not just as collateral damage but also as a target group 'promoting foreign interests.' These farm workers included those that were Zimbabwean citizens and those farm workers that migrated from neighboring countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique to work on White-run commercial farms. My Father Arajo Foromoz Chambalama was one of these.

He migrated from Mozambique in the 1970s as a teenage refuge fleeing for his life. After months of traversing, dangerous terrain, he found himself in Goromonzi Zimbabwe. Here he was employed as a general farm worker. The only work that he did all his working life. On this farm, he joined a group of other migrant farm workers from Mozambique as well other Southern African countries such as Malawi and Zambia.

Together they would form a community, part of the larger community of farm workers of foreign origin that were present in large numbers in the country at that time. Some of them at this farm like my father were young. They had the option working for a while then try to migrate back home. Circumstances forced most of them to settle for a long stay. Arajo would be one of these. He decided to marry and start a family. Through this decision, he met and married my mother, a fellow young farm worker but of native origins. Through this marriage I together with six other siblings would be born. My birth contributed to a new crop of individuals; children who had at least one parent being foreign.

This had problems of its own as we sometime could not identify as either Mozambicans or Zimbabweans. People in this category were in large numbers, not just at our farm, but I assume in other farms also. The FTLRRP found us in this situation. The struggles that farm workers particularly those of foreign origins and their families faced were untold. I witnessed the difficulties that my father, Arajo Foromoz, endured as he fought for our survival. I owe him a lot for this fight. This work is part of my attempts at giving back to him for the bravery, the fortitude and the sacrifice on behalf of us, his family. To bring out the story of my family more clearly, as the reader will notice; I will in addition to the other method employed also make use of autobiographical criticism in this work.

The Biblical narrative of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah shares very close resonances to the experiences described above. This study therefore offers me an opportunity to interpret the Bible for relevance in the present day, its meaning to me today (here again Autobiographical criticism will come in handy). Thus, I advise the reader in advance that in a few areas of the study I privilege the final form (the canonical narrative) of the Biblical narrative in this study. Andrew Mbuvi's views will help me here to explain what I mean by final form.

Mbuvi (2022 p.109) says, The Bible was laden with encumbrances of the colonial project so much that it could never be simply relegated to its ancient status. It is Mbuvi's view that for the African Biblical Scholar, the Bible is not simply and ancient text, but one that essentially finds full expression in the reader's present. The need to understand how it applies to the contemporary realities precludes (but does not ignore) its historical provenance.

Mbuvi suggests that for relevance to the African, the Bible must be able to address current concerns, hence my preference in this study of the final form, Andrew Mbuvi (2022 p.109-110). The final form of the text thus, provides a sufficient starting point for the Biblical interpretive process without necessarily denigrating historical analysis. The focus of the final form of the Biblical narrative is less on 'what the biblical text meant for its ancient settings', and more on 'what the text means for the current reader'.

As I engage with the final form in this work, I wish to have the Bible make sense to me today without reducing the value of its meaning to the audience that it directly addressed in the ancient times when it was written. As the reader has already noted, I take time in this study to discuss a portion of the Bible that describes the situation of the ancient 'people of the land' in post exilic Judah.

I mention the above to advise the reader in advance of the privileges that the canonical form tends to enjoy in portions of this study, however my main method of study in this work is the socio-historical method. In my process of using this method, I dig around the canonical narrative to recover voices that are not directly expressed in the plain reading of the canonical narrative. My central foci in this recovery are the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah. These are not given much attention in the canonical narrative. I attempt in this study to recover the socio-historical reality of their circumstances; thus, I go beyond what is reported about them in the Hebrew cannon.

I however do not end there, I also bring in a contemporary scene of farm workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe and as part of that, my father's story for present day relevance. My theory in interrogating this aspect of the study is post-colonial. I engage these two different scenes using the Tripolar Theory promulgated by Gerald West (2018 p.240).

What is the implication Zimbabwe can draw from the experience of the post-exilic community in the people's quest for redress on land related challenges?

1.2 Key Research Question

What parallels can be drawn between the land reoccupation in Ezra-Nehemiah at the time of the return from exile and the expanded phase of the Land Reform and Resettlement Program 11 (2000-2002) in Zimbabwe?

1.2.1 Research Sub-Questions

1. Who were the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah, and to what extent did the return of the exiles lead to their loss of land and an economy they had built, leading to migration complications?
2. Who were the farm workers during Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme of the years 2000–2002, and to what extent did these events impact them in the area of land allocation, economy and lead to a migration crisis?

1.3 Objectives

1. To establish which people groups were in Yehud by the time of the return from exile.
2. To investigate what ways, they were affected by land re-occupations effected at the return from exile.
3. To find out in what ways the effect of land re-occupations in Ezra-Nehemiah on the people of the land mirrors the impact of land reoccupations on farm workers between 2000-2002 in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Theoretical Framework - The Tripolar Theory

This thesis uses African Biblical scholarship for its engagement with the issue of land in Zimbabwe. This study uses the tri-polar approach to discern similarities and occasionally dissimilarities between the biblical book of Ezra-Nehemiah and the post-colonial Zimbabwe land problem. This work is anchored in the Tripolar Theory, a contribution by Gerald West and others to African Biblical Studies, to analyze the theme of 'The Land' which is central to the understanding of the Old Testament.

The thesis constructs an analogical conversation between the ancient sacred text of post exilic Judah and the contemporary social context of Zimbabwe, laying bare the land, economic and migration concerns of the people group described in both texts as the ‘people of the land’. Land influenced narratives from creation throughout the history of Israel. This thesis explores the evolution of this theme, particularly in the context of Israel's return from exile.

The focus is on similarities between the ‘people of the land’ in Ezra-Nehemiah and farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000-2002 land re-occupations. The tripolar theory is an important exegetical resource in this quest. This theory is an important resource in African biblical scholarship that provides a significant resource in the comparative study of post-exilic Judah and the Land Reform exercise of 2000 to 2002 in Zimbabwe.

My use of the tripolar approach here begins with an analysis of biblical book of Ezra-Nehemiah and exploring the land, economics and migration struggles of the ‘people of the land’ within the setting of post-exilic Judah. It then moves to explore the interconnectedness between land, economic and migration complications faced during the Fast ‘Track Land Reform’ and Resettlement exercise in post-colonial Zimbabwe, completing the process through a mediation between these two contexts.

West (2018 p. 240) argues that the parameters of Biblical Studies, in general, have been established by the Euro-American guild. This assertion implies that all other later developments in Biblical Studies were built on this foundation. Be that as it may, African Biblical Studies seems to have some unique features. As Andrew Mbuvi says, there is a distinctive interpretive approach that characterizes African Biblical Scholarship (Mbuvi 2017 p.168).

This distinctiveness builds on the work of generations of African theologians and biblical scholars such as Justin Ukpong, whose contributions date to even pre-liberation times. According to Gerald West, African Biblical Studies has a militant stance and praxis (this we shall see as we explore the subject further).

He further suggests that African Biblical Studies is historically post-colonial, theoretically tripolar, and ideologically a site of struggle (West 2018 p.240). The tripolar aspect of African Biblical Studies articulated by Gerald West informs the theoretical framework of this study. I will go into that in detail, but before that, I will share more on African Biblical Studies in general. This I will do in an attempt to justify my choice for this approach and to provide a background that will act as a launch pad to my discussion on the tripolar theoretical framework.

According to Mbuvi (2017 p.149), the first complete work on African Biblical Studies is found in the 1971 contribution made by the Kenyan Biblical Scholar John S. Mbiti in his work, *The New Testament Eschatology in African Background.* This work, Mbuvi says, set the framework for what would later be known as African Biblical Studies. While I will not here go into the details of the work of John Mbiti, I will go on to point out that African Biblical Studies can be characterized as innovative, because it charts a way that is interested in biblical interpretation relevant to present realities, and because its driving force is partly a critique of the inadequacy of Western biblical studies in providing meaningful responses to concerns that are pertinent to African communities, according (Mbuvi 2017 p.149).

Tinyiko S. Maluleke (2000 p. 94-95) aptly shares an argument that resonates with the thoughts above. In his view, African Biblical Studies is not simply a copy of Western biblical interpretation, but is one that is born of an African biblical scholar engaging the Bible free of any European hermeneutical trappings, presuppositions and interests. Thus, African Biblical Studies takes both African and biblical realities as equal partners in dialogue, resulting in a distinctive juxtaposition of questions, approaches and interpretations.

Gerald West agrees, adding that African Biblical Studies remains integral to the larger discipline of African Theology. He says, the 'separation of Biblical studies from other theological studies cannot be allowed to happen in an African Biblical Studies' (West 1997 p.101). According to him, this is necessary because Western theological education remains fairly sterile in addressing African concerns (1997 p.102). His views echo perspectives proposed by earlier African theologians, probably best articulated by Kwesi Dickson of Ghana (1984 p.47).

African Biblical Studies is an attempt to relate the Bible to the present world realties of the readers. It is a method for addressing prevailing concerns and interests as opposed to the ancient and historical realities (Le Marquand 2004 p. 4-6). As a method of study, it places significant emphasis on the 'scriptural' reality of the Bible in Africa, (where most Biblical Studies scholars being ordained clergy consider the Bible, an authoritative text addressing all affairs of life).

It is different from Western academic institutions in that western academic institutions increasingly perceive the Bible as an ancient document that is largely mined for historical and moral value with implications for the present remaining implicit while in African Biblical Studies the implications are explicit according to Grant LeMarquand (2004 p.5-6).

While in this work I reflect on ordinary readers, I should mention that; African Biblical Studies is a reading 'with' the ordinary reader, and not a reading 'on behalf' of the ordinary reader (Loba Mkole and Wendland 2005 p. 12-13). Reading with the ordinary reader is a significant approach in African Biblical Studies, championed by Gerald West, Musa Dube and Justin Ukpong, according to David Tuesday Adamo (2015 p.68). This method of reading is one that is undertaken by reading the Bible with ordinary people. I identify the 'people of the land' in both the Ezra-Nehemiah text and the Zimbabwean context as ordinary people. Thus, my choice of a theoretical framework becomes quite befitting. Ordinary here refers to the poor, the oppressed, the under privileged and includes all who are not trained in the art of biblical interpretation.

While Ukpong (2001 p.18-21) refers to it as this inculturation, West (2001 p.73) calls it Contextual Bible Reading. African Biblical Studies thus, over all, refuses to deal with the Bible simply as an ancient text but demands that it be read to address present concerns that resonate with African realities. In the case of this study the land, economic, and migration related concerns of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah and local as well as migrant farm workers in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2002.

The hermeneutical analysis of African Biblical Studies (ABS) can lead to the transformation of Africa. According to David Tuesday Adamo (2015 p.62), Eurocentric methods of interpretation are the ones that include a wide variety of approaches engaging with the Biblical text. However good these may have been, they have not addressed the abject poverty on the African continent. Among others, they have not addressed the question of land domination on the African continent as this study seeks to discuss.

Ukpong (1995 p. 9-10) delineates elements that, in contrast to western world view, should undergird this form of African Biblical interpretation (which he calls Inculturation Hermeneutics):

1. A worldview of the unified cosmos - no distinction between the physical and the spiritual.
2. The divine origin of the universe - a creator God is central in African religion as in the Bible.
3. The important role of 'communality' in defining both individuals and the society
4. Emphasis on the 'concrete' rather than the 'theoretical'.
5. Recognition of the supernatural as 'given' in African cosmology.
6. Direct relevance of the interpretation to the community as a primary question of the interpretive process.

The earliest forms of African Biblical Studies are located by Justin Ukpong in the 1930s (Ukpong 2000a p. 12). In this early attempt at African Biblical Studies, Ukpong characterizes African Biblical interpretation as an encounter between the biblical text and the African context that is not hesitant to address the past, the present and the future in light of the Biblical text (Dube and West 2000 p. 11). According to him, the development of biblical interpretation in Africa can be divided into three phases.

These are (1) The reactive phase (1930s-70s), whose immediate focus was to legitimize the African religion and culture; (2) The reactive-proactive phase (1970s-90s), in which the African context became a resource for biblical interpretation; and (3) The proactive phase during which the African context became the subject of biblical interpretation (Ukpong 2000a p.12).

West advises that while these phases are distinct, it is important to note that they intersect and overlap. The coming of a new phase did not completely do away with the others (West 2018 p.240). As is succinctly put across by Achille Mbembe, the time of African existence is neither a linear time nor a simple sequence in which each moment effaces, annuls, and replaces those that preceded it, to the point where a single age exists within society (Mbembe 2001 p. 16). This time is not a series but an interlocking of presents, pasts and futures, each age 'bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones' (Mbembe 001 p. 16).

Putting everything together however, it becomes clear that African Biblical Studies is post-colonial. This shall be important a little later on in my discussion on the tripolar theoretical framework. Taking up this periodization by Ukpong, my study here falls in the last of the phases he described. In this phase the African context becomes the subject of Biblical interpretation, as Ukpong has already put across.

Ukpong says Western Biblical studies was ill-equipped to serve the needs of an emerging African biblical scholarship, so that the discipline of comparative religion became the preferred post-colonial resource for analyzing the kindred atmosphere of the Old Testament and African Contexts (Ukpong 200a p.13 citing the phrase used by Kwesi Dickson in Dickson 1973 p.36).

Ukpong (1999 p.2) has rightly maintained that the incorporation of African elements into historical and literary readings of the Bible is what allows for African Biblical interpretation to arrive at distinct conclusions from those made by western counterparts on the same text. Almost similar thoughts are expressed by (Holter 2000c p.55).

The best theoretical tools to employ for the task of making an analogical conversation between the ancient sacred text of post exilic Judah and the contemporary social context of Zimbabwe are, in my view, those that appeal to African Biblical Hermeneutics (hereafter ABH). ABH is a form of biblical interpretation that makes 'African social cultural context a subject of interpretation' (Adamo, 2001, p.60). This is because African biblical hermeneutics is for the transformation of Africa. It has a commitment to interpret the biblical text for contextual transformation. Read appropriately, ABH allows Africans a chance to repair Africa. ABS sees the need to regularly reflect on its post-colonial appropriateness (Holter 2002 p. 6-7) and this makes it a reliable tool for the African post-colonial task.

Before post-colonial theory travelled from its subaltern sites of struggle to the metropoles of Euro-America (West 2018 p. 247), ABH (also referred to in this study as African post-colonial biblical interpretation) was post-colonial. The language used at that time was inculturation, but the import was post-colonial. This form of African biblical interpretation revitalized the African culture, according to Lamin Sanneh (1989 p.53.)

African inculturation biblical interpretation, as the first phase of African post-colonial biblical interpretation, lays a comparative ground work that characterizes most African biblical scholarship. It takes many forms, but all seem to be defined by a dialogical interaction between the biblical text and the African context. According to Adamo (2015 p. 68), on many occasions in Eurocentric studies, comparison is usually between ancient Israel and Mesopotamia, Assyrians and Babylonia, without much comparison between ancient Israel and Africa. Such kind of a dialogical interaction is what African Biblical studies is directly concerned about.

This comparative approach in African biblical studies engages in the comparison of the Old and the New Testament with African culture and religion, as opposed to the dominant trait of Western comparative approach which focuses on the comparison of the Bible with other religions and or the cultures of the Ancient Near East. During this comparative process, the African context and the Bible interpret each other, according to Berekiah Olugemiro Olusegun (2017 p.74).

West (2018 p. 247) says that while most models of African Biblical hermeneutics tend to portray a bipolar approach, referring, for example, to 'the comparative method' (Anum 2000 p. 468; Ukpong 2000a p. 12; Holter 2002 p. 88-89) in which the biblical text and the African context interpret each other, it would be more appropriate to describe African biblical hermeneutics as tri-polar.

The nature of my study necessitates the adoption of a tripolar approach, proposed by West. Thus, of the many theories available for selection, this study will appeal to the tripolar theory, a contribution to biblical scholarship by West and others. The tri-polar theory is a theory that, while agreeing with the bi-polar view of many African biblical hermeneutic approaches (Anum 2000:468, Ukpong 2000a:12, Holter 2002:88-89), suggests a third pole (West 2018:247), referred to as the pole of appropriation. The third pole is necessary because it provides a platform upon which the biblical text and the African context can engage each other, Jonathan A Draper (2015); Knut Holter (2002 p.88).

The third pole offers an important analytical guide to the range of emphases in African Biblical Hermeneutics. The other two poles, the biblical text and the African context are no less important, but an examination of a third pole clarifies how these two fundamental poles are brought into dialogue (West 2018 p.248). The dialogical dimension of biblical hermeneutics has always been an explicit feature of ABH.

In ABH, interpretation of the biblical text is always for the transformation of the African context, as I mentioned earlier on. Ukpong refers overtly to the goal of comparative interpretation as the 'actualization of the theological meaning of the text in today's context so as to forge integration between faith and life, and engender a commitment to personal and societal transformation' (Ukpong 2000a p. 24). From this view, I submit that the tripolar theory will be particularly useful in providing a mediatory platform in the study between the 'people of the land' in post-exilic Judah and the land concerns of farm workers during the 2000 - 2002 Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement exercise in Zimbabwe.

I view the Tripolar model as a three-legged stool; one leg being the biblical text, the second being the African context, and the third being the pole that mediates between the African context and the biblical text. In this study, one leg will be the book of Ezra-Nehemiah; the second leg will be Zimbabwe (2000-2002); and the third will be the post-colonial theory. My choice for this third pole is motivated by the following observation made by West.

West observed in 2018 (p.248) that what entangles text and context is a form of dialogical appropriation that has theological and praxiological dimensions. This ideo-theological third pole can take many different forms, resulting, according to West, in at least six intersecting yet different emphases in African biblical interpretation. These are: Inculturation, Liberation, Feminist, Psychological, Post-colonial and Queer Biblical Hermeneutics.

Here, I will note though that a slightly different set of African methods of Biblical interpretation are proposed by David Tuesday Adamo in his inaugural lecture. While I will not focus on what Adamo proposes, I will duplicate here the list he proposes before going back to my views on the contribution West makes. Apart from the ones already listed by West, which are inculturation, liberation, and feminist hermeneutics, Adamo mentions also Contextual Hermeneutics, Africentric Hermeneutics, and Vernacular Hermeneutics (Adamo 2004 7th Lecture).

My preferred third pole for this study is African post-colonial biblical hermeneutics for reasons I have already stated, and shall continue to give. I will however take time to briefly discuss Inculturation, Liberation and Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics. I believe that discussing these samples, even briefly, helps in exposing their differences with the one that I have selected as my choice for this study. Thus, contrasted with these, African post-colonial hermeneutics will be able to come out clearly to the reader.

Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutics is the historically earliest and most common African form of ideo-theological orientation (Ukpong 1995 p.4). Inculturation hermeneutics has come to be almost, if not always, linked to the late Nigerian New Testament Professor, Justin S. Ukpong. While Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole also notes that J. B. Matand had also embraced the same methodology in 1998, without recourse to Ukpong, and noting further that inculturation hermeneutics came into full bloom with the works of Cilumba in 2001 (Manus 2003) followed by Manus in 2003 (Loba-Mkole 2005), he generally argues that inculturation hermeneutics as a new tool was launched in 1996 by Ukpong (Loba-Mkole 2008 p. 1347-1364).

According to him, the past of the biblical text is not supposed to be studied as an end in itself but as a means to an end (Ukpong 2002 p.18). Madipoane Masenya (2016 p.1) documents that Ukpong (2002p.18) could thus argue that in inculturation hermeneutics, the past collapses into the present, and exegesis fuses with hermeneutics.

Ukpong (2002 p.12) defines inculturation hermeneutics as a contextual hermeneutic methodology that seeks to make any community of ordinary people and their social-cultural context the subject of interpretation of the Bible through the use of the conceptual frame of reference of the people and involvement of the ordinary people in the interpretation process. It is an approach that is very important to the African biblical scholar in that it pays attention to the African socio-cultural context and questions arising there from (Ukpong 1995 p.4).

Inculturation hermeneutics designates an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to make the African context the subject of interpretation. Thus, every dimension of the interpretive process is consciously informed by the world view of, and the life experience within the African culture, according to Ukpong (1995 p.5). In its quest of an African contextual biblical interpretation, the concentration is on the cultural and religious dimensions of African life.

With an emphasis on African religious and cultural life, inculturation biblical hermeneutics seeks to bring out the theological meaning of the text within the contemporary context, recognizing that the Bible is a significant sacred text within African socio-cultural contexts.

Its processes include an interactive engagement between the biblical text and a particular socio-cultural issue such that the gospel message engages with contemporary culture or cultural perspectives and enriches the understanding of the text (Ukpong 1995 p.6). This approach to biblical interpretation fosters a hermeneutics of trust towards the Bible.

According to Olusegun (2017 p.75), Ukpong considers inculturation hermeneutics as a derivative of the methodologies of Inculturation Theology. He describes it as an application of the inculturation paradigm to biblical interpretation. Samuel Oyinloye Abogunrin (2003 p. 1-13) further points out that inculturation hermeneutics resides in its explicit interest in interpreting the biblical text from the present socio-cultural perspectives and makes them the subject of interpretation.

Quoting Ukpong, he described inculturation hermeneutics as a dynamic, on-going process by which people consciously and critically appropriate the Bible and its message from their own perspective and with the resources of their own cultures. His view is that this methodology employs insights from the historical analysis of the text to re-read the text against the contextual background of the contemporary audience or reader (Olusegun 2017 p.75).

Ukpong's was not just a finding of similarities between the African cosmological conception and the Bible, but recognizing through inculturation hermeneutics the African reality as an authentic beginning in the Bible's interpretive process (Ukpong 1995 p.5).

Following after inculturation hermeneutics, in historical terms, is liberation hermeneutics. This type of hermeneutics has its starting point with the experience of the African masses. According to Itumeleng J Mosala (1989 p.67), the focus of inculturation is the social and material life of the black struggle for liberation. Unlike inculturation hermeneutics however, its main emphasis is on the economic and political dimension of African life. Race and class, not religion and culture, are the critical categories of its focus, according to West (2018 p. 256).

Liberation hermeneutics has a clear oppositional stance to the colonial missionary project. While its sociological categories of contestation are mostly economically oriented, its most defining feature is that it raises questions about the Bible itself. While it acknowledges the Bible as a potential source of liberation, it also views the Bible as a potential source of oppression and domination, not just in the way it has been used in the missionary project but also itself being intrinsically in part oppressive (Mofekeng 1988 p.34).

Unlike Inculturation which is a hermeneutics of trust, liberation has a hermeneutics of suspicion toward the Bible. It argues for a more systematic analysis of both the biblical text and the African context, using historical-materialist forms of analysis (West 2018 p. 250).

Liberation hermeneutics shares the same concerns as liberation theology. Both are basically movements with a philosophy and praxis of emancipation. In liberation hermeneutics, the Bible is viewed as tool for creating a just society, through the Christian faith. Thus, liberation hermeneutics becomes the appropriation of liberation theology in biblical interpretation, according to Olusegun (2017 p.75).

According to Mbuvi (2017 p.161), liberation hermeneutics had its origin in South America during the same time when Black liberation was developing in America, sometime between the 1960s and 1980s. This method of reading has its largest following in Southern Africa, especially in South Africa. It is possible that in South Africa it was motivated by the need to fight against apartheid. Mosala (1989 p. 67,164) argues that this reading demands social justice that the oppressed are denied by dominant political powers.

The third mediating theory is African feminist hermeneutics. This method of reading the biblical and contemporary text shares resonances with inculturation as well as liberation hermeneutics. Within it, one meets a dominant focus on religio-cultural concerns. It can almost be referred to as African feminist inculturation hermeneutics because of its religio-cultural focus. What is distinct about it however, is its use of literary exegetical modes of analysis of the biblical text. It makes use of these literary exegetical tools to study, be it the biblical text or the African context from lenses of feminism (Elam 2019 p.1-3).

Feminist/ Womanist biblical interpretations arise from the practice of what is termed Feminist /Womanist Biblical Criticism (Olusegun 2017 p. 76). While this hermeneutic is significantly domiciled in the USA and Europe, according to Olusegun (2017 p. 76), feminist criticism is at home in Africa. Abogunrin (2003 p. 1-13) makes the observation that feminism comes as the response of women to a male dominated society which has largely been unjust to women. This is despite the fact that feminist biblical hermeneutics is practiced not just by women but also by men.

Abogunrin further observes that it is preoccupied with addressing and correcting the phenomenon of marginalization of the female gender in the political, economic and social realms, making use of Christian and biblical resources. It may be positive, highlighting the positive imagery of women in the Bible or negative, pointing out and criticizing gyno-sadistic or misogynist tendencies in the biblical texts (Abogunrin 2003 p. 1-13).

Feminist biblical criticism is practiced by African and other women of color. This is despite the idea that it has been dominated by educated white European middle-class women. This hermeneutic is not only sensitive to gender but is also actively engaged in a homiletic concerning issue relating to ethnicity, color and racial discrimination, and seeks to address specific injustices confronting women of color (Masenya 2014 p.27-30).

Mercy Amber Oduyoye was a significant contributor to this reading, especially during the time she was the leader of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT) established in Legon Ghana in 1989.

Having looked at the three above, I believe it is now appropriate to discuss and analyze the third pole of my choice, African Post-colonial Biblical Hermeneutics. Discussing it in comparison to the three above will make my choice much easier to understand.

African philosophers, Valentine Yves Mudimbe and Susan Kilonzo (2012 p. 42), suggested that the process of Africanization is a post-colonial phenomenon concerned with adapting modalities of belief and rethinking of rituals. According to them, these beliefs and rituals faced an interruption during colonial times. The impact of colonialism was however not limited to these beliefs and rituals only, but spread across all major aspects of African life-politics, religion, language, economics, culture, etc. Its continuing impact on society today has led to African Post-colonial Studies whose aim is to expose the colonial project in all its forms and then to decolonize those under colonialism (Mbuvi 2017 p. 164).

Dube (2000 p. 23) suggests that at the heart of African post-colonial studies is the exposition of centers of control and power in contrast to the peripheries. It is a reading of the Bible in which imperialist strategies are confronted, exposed, and arrested by post-colonial subjects. African post-colonial biblical interpretation thus sees itself as going beyond liberation readings by postulating that not only were the political systems of colonialism complicit in the oppression of African subjects, but the Bible itself helped create and sustain the framework and existence of such systems. Building on the works of post-colonial luminaries such as Edward Said (1978), Ngugi Wathiongo (1986), Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and R.S. Sugirtharajah (2006) this hermeneutic of suspicion maintains that there was a use of the Bible as a tool of oppression.

Post-colonial theory in general refers to a critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries, among other things. It also critically examines the political, cultural, aesthetic, economic, linguistic, historical, and social impacts of (generally European) colonial rule, according to Elam (2019 p.1-3). African post-colonial hermeneutics is specific to Africa. Biblical studies as an academic discipline is itself a post-colonial or, more accurately, a neo-colonial import into Africa from Euro-American contexts (Mbuvi 2017 p.153).

My third pole, like I mentioned earlier, is African Post-colonial Hermeneutics. Needless to say, all three methods of reading I have described above are post-colonial readings because they share distinctive features of the post colony. However, African post-colonial hermeneutics can be treated as an independent theory.

It is an important pole of appropriation because it has its beginning in the realities of ordinary Africans for whom the Bible has become an African book (Dube 2000 p. 3). It views the Bible as an important book that has however aided imperialism. This thought is explicit and central in the ideo-theological orientation of African post-colonial biblical interpretation.

It offers biblical scholars an opportunity to engage the question on why the biblical text, its readers, and its institutions are instruments of imperialism (Dube 2000 p. 6). Like the other methods before it, it is deeply suspicious of the Bible's own imperial charter (Dune 2000 p. 10). It equates the kinds of imperial attitudes and practices performed by missionaries and colonial forces to the tendances of the biblical text itself. In the case of this study, there are definite resonances between the biblical text of Ezra Nehemhiah and how the Land Reform story unfolds in Zimbabwe, particularly in the phase that runs from the years 2000 to 2002.

This kind of hermeneutics calls for a rereading for decolonization. Making African post-colonial contexts the subject of biblical interpretation, Musa Dube argues that African post-colonial hermeneutics begins with analyzing imperialism, and then the biblical text, understanding its grammar, and then goes on to carry out a deconstructive re-reading of the both the biblical text and the African context for decolonization (Dube 2000 p. 16-21).

African post-colonial hermeneutics recognizes that the vast literature born from the encounter with imperialistic forces is itself partly shaped by the textual forms of their imperial counterparts (Dube 2000 p. 50-51), but critically uses such resources, recognizing that they partake in a form of hybridity (Dube 2000 p. 122), in which something new and vital is born from the encounter with colonialism (Sugirtharajah 2003 p.126).

One of its most key contributions to biblical interpretation is its recognition that it is itself partly constituted by colonialism. In this study it will be vital in my reading of the Zimbabwean post-colonial reality. It embraces the multiplicity of identities and differences that constitute the entangled post-colonial African context. It shares much in common with the ideo-theological orientations of liberation and feminist hermeneutics, but also shares a concern for culture related notions of identity found in inculturation hermeneutics (West 2018 p. 249).

Its overall preference, however, is with socio-historical methods of textual analysis. This preference is part of what has motivated me to choose it as a third pole. This makes it a befitting third pole for my study, because I am pursuing in this study, a socio-historical methodology of reading the biblical text.

Why the post-colonial approach? Because the Bible is implicated in the colonial history of Africa, and Zimbabwe is not spared. It is imperative that one reads it differently for the transformation of Africa and in my case, Zimbabwe. It is possible that what was handed down to us is a colonial reading of the scriptures. This reading may be implicated as being complicit in Europe's colonial history of Africa. As Europe's desire for resources escalated across Africa, the western reading of the Bible moved with it.

Appealing to West (2018 p. 249), my preference for the word post-colonial here refers to that sense of the post-colonial which is more local and particular, rather than the more familiar Euro-American commodified forms of post-colonial theory.

I conclude this section by pointing out that in the two texts that I will analyze (biblical and Zimbabwean), the study comes in to fill this gap in existing scholarly work by proposing a comparative approach between ancient Israel and modern Zimbabwe. I am mostly interested having a conversation on similarities between the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah and farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000-2002 land re-occupations. My focus will be on those similarities that result from responses to land reoccupation. The tripolar theory becomes an effective tool in this task. It allows me to compare the text of Ezra-Nehemiah to the land expropriation projects in Zimbabwe, while using African post-colonial hermeneutics as a tool of mediation.

The conclusion of the study suggests that when colonial forces moved into the interior, missionaries carrying a western reading of the Bible moved in with them. This western reading of the Bible married, buried, baptized and generated myths that sustained European conquest (West 2016d p. 1984). Doing biblical scholarship in African post-colonies is by definition to do post-colonial interpretation, and it is needful, hence this study makes use of post-colonial tools. I conclude this section of the chapter by giving a brief overview of all the chapters and helping the reader understand how each chapter participates in the Tripolar theory.

All the chapters of this study are fully immersed in the tripolar theory. The first chapter introduces the reader to this theory, helping the reader to have a basic understanding of the theory and how it operates. The second and third chapters describe the situation of the people of the land in Judah. They start by telling us who the people of the land were and then sharing details of how they got affected by the return of those that had gone into exile. These two chapters are the first pole/leg of the tripolar theory, their task is to give detail of the biblical section of the study.

The fourth chapter of this study is on 'the people of the land' in Zimbabwe during the days of the FTLRRP. This chapter is the second pole/leg of the Tripolar theory. It gives details of the social text of the study, the Zimbabwean section. In this chapter one meets the story of the farm workers within the large-scale commercial farming sector of Zimbabwe during the years 2000-2002. It however gives brief details of farm workers in earlier periods just as a background.

The fifth chapter is critical, it is the third pole/leg of the Tripolar theory, it is the pole of appropriation. Its main function is to mediate between the chapters covering the biblical section and those chapters covering the Zimbabwean section. The participation of this chapter in the Tripolar theory is very important because it creates an opportunity for dialogue between the chapters focusing on the biblical scenes and the chapter that gives attention to farm workers within Zimbabwe's commercial farming space between the years 2000 and 2002.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study will utilize several complementary methods. These methods include a combination of descriptive, comparative and evaluative methods such as the social-historical method and the autobiographical method. The socio-historical method is a critical tool for studying land in the Old Testament. It involves analyzing the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of ancient Israel to understand the role of land. It is primarily concerned with the history and social setting of the text more than the contents of the text itself.

The autobiographical method on the other hand, is a genre of academic writing which draws on and interprets the lived experiences and connects the researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules and resources (Ellis 2004 p.14). It involves examining how the reader's personal experiences, background, and biases shape their interpretation of a passage.

This methodological analysis is informed by the necessity to shift the geography of reason, that is, the methodological choices being done from the standpoint of the African subject. The socio-historical method as its major tool for biblical criticism is methodologically unique in that it gives primacy to the lived experiences of the African subject. In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the socio-historical method then move on to the autobiographical method.

Since Ezra-Nehemiah is a series of narrative events, it is a natural undertaking to examine how the narrated events correspond to what actually happened in history (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, p. 305-307). The socio-historical biblical criticism becomes the best model because as an enterprise, it assists in reconstructing events lying behind the text, when and how they are expressed, ignored or suppressed in order to give a convincing social context to the diversities of biblical texts and religious developments (Gottwald 1993, p10; Chaney 1991, p. 127-39). Its primary focus therefore is not the text but the events and socio-historical processes surrounding the production of the text (Barton 1984).

As a methodological approach, the socio-historical method 'coalesces the aims, philosophies, and methodologies of historiography with those of the social and cultural sciences, meaning it analyzes the interpretation and practice of religion through the lens of social/historical contexts, scientific discovery, and from within each faith tradition', as observed by Dareen M Slade (2019 p.3). The goal is to examine how different aspects of a community (in this case the post exilic inhabitants of Judea) function in the broader socio-political and cultural milieu of their time. The most fundamental postulation of the socio-historical methodology is that the social history of a religious community affects how it interprets and practices their faith, according to (Slade 2019 p.3).

Slade (2020 p.3) views the socio-historical method as an electric methodology that focuses on describing and analyzing the social and historical contexts from which the interpretation and practice of scripture occurs. His definition falls short of the one by Wayne A Meeks (1983p.2-7) who defines socio-historical study as an interpretive approach that takes seriously the social world of ancient biblical texts, in order to 'construct interpretation and to criticize constructions.'

Through focusing on the social, economic, legal, cultural and religious factors of the narrative audience or characters, Meeks (1983 p. 2-7) suggests that socio-historical biblical criticism explores how such factors influence the understanding and meaning of a specific biblical text. In the case of this study, the social world of the 'people of the land' in the narrative of post exilic Judah is explored in the search for meaning and appropriation.

A close comparison of the two definitions proposed above brings out at least one thing in common; they both suggest that the socio-historical method focuses on the world behind the text to bring out voices that a plain reading of the text may not be able to reveal. To make it clearer to the reader, I will attempt to break this method down and explain each of the words that make up the method. In this task, I will turn to the writings of Slade (2020p.3), among others.

The prefix 'socio' has both a generalized and a narrow meaning, according to Slade (2020 p.3). With the former, he says it suggests the study of society at large, including those aspects known to affect the practice of religion such as ethnicity and gender, economic stability, class identification, urban versus rural upbringing, political affiliation, educational achievement, income level and access to health care (Slade 2020 p. 3). The prefix can be broadened to the discussion of agrarian societies, ancient West-Semitic societies as well as patriarchal, collectivist and preindustrial societies.

In a more nuanced sense, Slade (2020 p.3) argues that 'socio' indicates the utilization of the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, and psychology) and humanities (such as law, linguistics, literary criticism, and philosophy) in biblical or religious studies to share details on people's situation in life. In the case of this study, the prefix 'socio' was used in the broader sense described above.

According to Carolyn M Murphy (2020 p.1), 'socio', as part of socio-historical methodology, refers to an exegetical method which attempts to explore the original social and cultural setting of a text through the clues in the text's rhetoric and through the analysis of other ancient evidence. What Murphy proposes here is important because the world in which the text was written is very different from our contemporary and modern world. For this researcher therefore, one cannot simply make claims about the text without understanding the social conversions and assumptions of the world of the author. As we will later on this chapter hear Paul Faller (2025 p.1) saying, 'To read the Bible is to enter a foreign world, a world not only removed in space and time, but a world of great social, political and intellectual difference'.

Emphasis in this aspect of the study is more on the social community within which the author lived and communicated, because meaning is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon (Murphy 2020 p. 1). In other words, what the authors of the Bible wrote, and how they wrote it was significantly influenced by where they wrote from. Thus, the 'socio' component of the socio-historical method is key to unlocking the way of life of ancient communities that were present and influenced the times the biblical texts were written.

The task of the 'socio' in the socio-historical method is clearly variously understood. As the reader can already tell, there exists a spectrum of opinion regarding what this aspect of the method should entail. Some scholars such as Murphy (2020 p.1) see it as the exploration of social aspects of biblical issues. Yet for others it refers to appropriate models from sociology and anthropology and they attempt to explain ancient Israelite developments using those tools (Faller 2025 p.10). Despite this general lack of consensus, I believe that disciplines like sociology can provide useful perspectives and methods for getting to that meaning of the biblical text which is not directly communicated in the way it was written.

Norman K Gottwald (1987 p.26) frames a guiding question for social science approaches to biblical criticism as follows: 'what social structures and social processes are explicit or implicit in the biblical literature, in the catered socio-economic data it contains, in the overtly political history it recounts, and in the religious beliefs and practices it attests?' This question guides my analysis as I read through the history of post-exilic Judah. Apart from guidance offered by Norman K Gotwald, John H Elliot (2011 p.1) provided another reliable source of light on the 'socio' component of the socio-historical method.

Elliot (2011 p. 1), an authority on social-scientific criticism, suggests that in biblical studies, social sciences assist with studying (1) not just the social aspects of the form and content of the texts but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process, (2) the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions, and (3) the manner in which the textual communication was both a reflection of and response to a specific and cultural context; in other words, how a text was designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction, and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.

In this work, I will only make use of those aspects of social sciences that assist the socio-historical method communicate well the social aspects of the world behind the post exilic biblical text. Such social aspects that allow the story of the marginalized 'people of the land' to be told more clearly and effectively.

As observed by Elliot (2011 p. 1), each biblical writing is not merely a literary composition, but also a social and rhetorical product with literary, theological, or social aims. Each is designed as a means of communication and interaction to prompt social action on the part of the targeted audience. Biblical texts, Elliot argues (2011 p.1), like all texts, are embedded, encoded and presumed elements of social and cultural systems in which they are produced.

Which means that the genre content, structure, and meaning of these texts are all socially and culturally determined. Although some of the social and cultural information are stated explicitly in the text, much, if not most of it, is presumed known by the readers and is therefore left unexplained. Hence, the need of such methods as Social-Historical to aid in mining the world behind the text and bring to the fore such information as is assumed known by the reader.

Determining the meaning of biblical texts requires extensive knowledge of the social and cultural systems they presume, that is, on the one hand how these systems are constituted, how they work, how they shape the perspectives, values, interests and aims of the authors, on the other hand, how these texts may present counter cultural positions (Elliot 2011 p. 1-2).

The social sciences assist also in exploring and explaining the relations and patterns of sociality, the structure and components of social systems, the dynamics of social relations, core cultural values, typical attitudes and perspectives, and prominent social-cultural behavioral scripts (Elliot 2011 p.2). It is through the study of such aspects in this research that the social systems of post exilic Judah such as household farming communities of the countryside can clearly be understood.

Elliot's (2011 p.2) views on these systems are seminal; hence I will give him significant attention in this portion of the study. He suggests that the task of interpretation is to provide adequate reading scenarios that are culturally appropriate to the texts under consideration. The socio-historical Method rightly directs attention to these reading scenarios, proposing scenarios whose details are consistent with the cultural and social world of antiquity while criticizing scenarios that include details that are alien to the place and time of the text.

The socio-historical method seeks to be a method that that provides a platform for understanding relations amongst the social phenomena, and how they interact. The unusual and singular becomes apparent only once the regularities and recurrences of behavior and social interaction have been identified (Elliot 2011 p.2). The socio-historical methodology seeks to identify these regularities and recurrences and in the process of doing the same, provide clarity on those aspects of the text that can be referred to as unusual or singular. For example, in the story of post exilic Judah, several scholars quoted subscribe to the view of a completely desolate Judah during the exile, but a closer look through the lenses of other scholars, reveal in this study that the land of Judah was not desolate at all.

Elliot (2011 p. 2-3) proposes that exegetes, while noting socio-historical information in texts, have tended to limit attention to ideas and the realm of theological concepts and thought. In his view, what is needed is also a method that considers the relationship between behaviors and beliefs, the relationship between beliefs and their economic and social *mutterboden,* the relationship between ideas and group interests and the nexus of ideas, interests and ideology. The socio-aspect of the socio-historical Method attempts to address these issues. Through this method, the relationship between two groups (the 'people of the land' and the elite returning from exile) was brought to the fore.

In doing this study, I was reminded, through the socio-historical method, to remain conscious of the gaps separating myself as a modern scholar from the world of literary productions of the ancient cultures under examination. As other scholars would admit to, there is a huge gap between the modern scholar and the literary productions of the ancient cultures. If this gap is not taken into consideration, modern research may produce misleading results.

The suffix ‘historical’ describes the method’s use of histography as well as generalized knowledge about persons, places, institutions and artifacts in an area (Slade 2020 p.3). The socio-historical Method thus takes the insights of the social sciences and humanities and then adds numismatic or epigraphic discoveries (to name a few) in order to construct a complete picture of the biblical text’s social context (Slade 2020 p.3).

In this study, the reader will note that apart from consulting the Old Testament on the story of the ‘people of the land’ in Ezra-Nehemiah, other sources have also been consulted as I sought to reconstruct the story of their circumstances and to uncover certain voices that may not have been given audience in the way the story is told in the Old Testament. One key aid to the historical reconstruction of this story has been the work of archaeologists and the submissions they made, thus my use of ‘historical’ in the socio-historical methodology has been a product of support from other sources as well.

To examine a text as a socio-historical critic would, first one has to assume the posture of a ‘respectful traveler’ visiting a foreign country as I have said earlier on. Paul Faller (2025 p.1) holds a related view. He suggests that to read the Bible is to enter a foreign world. A world not only removed in space and time, but a world of great social, political and intellectual difference. He argues further that, ‘not to acknowledge this is to condemn oneself to isolation in reading the Bible, which simply echoes one’s narrow perspective’. I believe that the historical analysis I carry out in this work sets out to inform the reader as much as possible about the meaning of the text in its socio-historical setting in order to make a sound interpretation possible.

I will prepare myself to suspend judgment until l have observed new phenomenon and tried to understand it in its own social context. In my social-historical reading of this study, I look at various institutions within post exilic Judah. Examples would include: kinship, economics and politics. I also looked at how certain social dynamics were at play. Such dynamics impacting my study included how identity (individual or group) was understood.

I labor to expose in this study how one group (those Jews returning from captivity in Persia) treated itself as the rightful owner of the land of Judah and considered another group as just ‘people of the land’, not fully belonging to the land of Judah (Murphy 2020 p. 1). The group returning from exile asserted the antiquity of their origins, identifying themselves as a purified group and discerning the hand of God in their past life in exile. They defended themselves against what they felt were slurs of the those that had not gone to exile.

Other social dynamics such as social status also come into play in the comparison between those that had gone into exile and those that had not. In antiquity, social status was defined by where one fell in the social hierarchy (Murphy 2020 p. 1-2). In the case of this study, it will be revealed that the ‘people of the land’ were not considered as sharing in status with the Jewish elites who were returning from exile. Thus, in postexilic Judah, it was not very easy for the ‘people of the land’ to equate themselves to those that were returning from exile.

Yet another dynamic exposed through the socio-historical reading carried out here is that of purity and pollution. It appears that society was constructed rather rigidly in a particular order. According to Murphy (2020 p.3) compromise in the established order was considered impurity or pollution. A typical example of such was the marriage between Jews and non-Jews. As the socio-historical study of Ezra-Nehemiah I carry out here will reveal, the leadership of the returning community were not willing to tolerate the marriage of Jews to non-Jews. They viewed this as impurity.

It would usually obtain that in the event of such pollution; ways were devised to restore order through purification. In the case of this study, the reader will encounter a scenario where women and children from foreign lands were expelled from Judah in an attempt to restore purity in the land.

In antiquity, as is observed by C M Murphy (2020 p. 4), one could be polluted by exposure to disease or a diseased person and from occasions of natural bodily emissions; one could become defiled by sin and by the sin of others; one could pollute themselves and the nation by marriage to a foreigner or by exile in a foreign land. The boundaries being violated could be bodily (disease, emission), social (marriage), or geographical (exile, the temple as the preeminent sacred space).

It is interesting how this study reveals that only the 'people of the land' were considered polluted, yet it should have followed that the returnees were also polluted by the exile. This was however not the case. For reasons of their own, the returnees considered themselves pure and the 'people of the land' impure. A divide was created on the basis of this. Apart from the question of purity or impurity, another critical component of post exilic Judah brought to light by a socio-historical reading of Ezra Nehemiah are class variations. To understand class differences in antiquity, I here consult the work of Norman Gottwald.

In studies on the socio-historical method, the writings of Norman K Gottwald are seminal. In his work on social class, Gottwald (1993 p. 4-5) once observed that differentials in wealth and power figure prominently in biblical texts and traditions. It was his view that social classes may be said to exist whenever one social group is able to appropriate a part of the surplus labor product of another. In such situations, according to Gottwald (1993 p.4-5), wealth and power accrue disproportionately to those who are able to claim and dispose what others produce. Those who have this power of economic disposal, Gottwald observes, tend to also have political predominance and ideological hegemony (p.5).

These observations by Gottwald play out almost verbatim in this study. They help will me identify the key players in the narrative, the power play and how history actually played out against what was inferred in the narrative. It is observable in this study that the Jews returning from exile had power enough to appropriate the surplus labor product of the 'people of the land'. In that situation, power and consequently wealth, accrued disproportionately as the returnees accrued land as well as agricultural and other produce of the 'people of the land'. The situation described in the commentary on Nehemiah chapter 5 in this study certainly spoke to an accumulation of land and general wealth skewed toward those that had returned from exile.

The commentary in this work on the reforms detailed in Nehemiah chapters 10-13 spoke to the idea that the returnees had political predominance (through support from the government of Persia) and ideological hegemony (as they appealed to a Deuteronomic heritage). It was only through a socio-historical reading of this portion of scripture that the voice of the cry of the 'people of the land' could be made loud enough to be heard in the way it was.

Gottwald (1993 p.4) also pointed out that when social class is operative, there are two classes conjoined together in distinctive ways. According to him there is the exploiters and there is the exploited, the dominators and the dominated, the ideologically superior and the ideologically inferior. In this study, the tripolar theory will make it is fairly easier to pick out these two groups.

The returnees from exile will be exposed through the tripolar theory in this study as exploiters, dominators, and ideologically 'superior'. On the other hand, the class of the dominated will be represented by the 'people of the land'. I believe the reader will observe these distinctions when going through this work.

On the Zimbabwean scene as shown in this study, it is not difficult to pick out these two groups either. Again, even here the tripolar theory will be handy in showing that government sponsored groups that took over land in the 2000s were the exploiters, dominators and were exposed in this study to have been ideologically superior. Ideologically, they are the ones that will be identified as *Mwana Wevhu* (Son of the Soil) and these label others (especially migrant workers and white farmers) as *Mabvakure* (Foreigners), giving themselves exclusive rights to appropriation of land.

On the other, as ne will see, was the class of the exploited, dominated and ideologically inferior; the farm workers. This will expose the reader to a dynamic relational realm which could only be clearly brought out when studied through the lenses of the socio-historical method.

Gottwald (1993 p.5) observed that social class analysis is compatible with and can be better understood if twinned with the historical method, to produce the socio-historical method. Applying this method on the Hebrew narratives as this study will do, Gottwald noted that the productive processes that generated wealth were precapitalist and were centered on land (p.5).

It is his view that in the Hebrew narratives the vast majority of people produced food and other necessities of life from the earth, working in household or village teams. The route to concentrating wealth and power under such circumstances were through gaining control of agrarian and pastoral products which the appropriators could consume or convert to other valuables through trade (Gottwald 1993 p.5).

This study recovers the idea that the controversies on both the biblical text and the Zimbabwean portion centered on land. The study reveals that during the time of the exile (597-538 B.C.E.) the 'people of the land' in Judah produced the necessities of life through working the earth. Control of this important resource would be lost in (538 B.C.E.) when those that had gone into exile returned. The same was the case with the 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe.

They equally produced the necessities of life from land since the beginning of the commercial farming period (early 1950s) but would lose this opportunity between the years 2000-2002 at the height of the FTLRRP. In both cases, that the 'people of the land' produced the necessities of life from working the earth. Those that controlled the land consequently had control of agrarian and pastoral products and were able to trade these off for other valuables apart from their personal consumption. This story of how controversies over land played out at the time periods during which they peaked, will come out the way it will because of the social-historical method employed in this study.

In his socio-historical characterization of the dominated tribute-bearing class society within the Hebrew narratives, Gottwald (1993 p. 6), points out that this group is comprised of native and or foreign peasants, pastoralists, artisans, priests, slaves and unskilled workers who were structurally subjected to their surplus being taken by members of the dominant class, or who were themselves dependent wage laborers.

In this study, the migrant peasants (those of foreign origin) are brought out to be a critical component of the conversation. They are of particular interest to me. This is because, as I have indicated, I was born of such a family. The struggles of the migrant worker community in Ezra-Nehemiah at the hands of the returnees resonate well with the struggles that my father endured as a Mozambican migrant worker in Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP as he tried to take care of us. It is this portion of the study that necessitated my decision to add the auto-biographical method to this study. I shall discuss the auto-biographical method later on in this chapter.

This study reveals that in the second temple period (530s B.C.E. and onwards) religious and ethnic identities became important ways of viewing and articulating social class divisions. Consequently, native Jewish elites were able to exploit other groups that were assumed not to share the same religious understanding. Thus, the temple complex of economic, political, and religious institutions served both to give a solidarity identity to the Jews returning from exile and also as a conduit for the extraction of the surpluses of the 'people of the land' (Gottwald 1993 p. 9).

In this study, the reader will meet a scenario where the 'people of land' were forced to migrate from the land of Judah because the Jewish elite returning from exile did not consider them natives. On the grounds of ethnicity, they were expelled from the land. Women and children of foreign origin were forced to migrate beyond the jurisdiction of the returning elite.

Similarly, as the reader will see, farm workers of foreign origin on the Zimbabwean scene were equally forced to vacate farms by groups sponsored by the government of Zimbabwe. The migrations of these two social groups could in my view only be brought to clear view if studied using the socio-historical method.

Another important service of the socio-historical reading of the Bible is to plot the contours of class consciousness and class strategy. The historical aspect of this method is particularly valuable for providing illumination on when and how they are expressed, suppressed or ignored in order to give a convincing context on how the biblical record of the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah played out. The story comes out clearly because a fair amount of socio-historical data is given (Gottwald 1993 p. 13).

The previously disgraced and discredited exiled Jewish leaders returned from exile to rule over those that remained in Judea. According to Gottwald, (1993 p.14) these were believed by prophets such as Deutro-Isaiah (Isaiah 40 vs.1-28) to have been purified by the exile and were expected to rule with justice and fairness. A socio-historical reading of their narrative exposes a different story as will be shown in this study. The pervasive assumption of the prophet is that those that ruled Judah would rule it again. However, the aspect of them ruling fairly is what will be exposed by a socio-historical reading of the narrative to not have played out in that way, particularly on the contentious subject of land and in that of having the voices of the marginalized 'people of the land' being heard.

The views expressed by Gerald West are also critical in this section. According to West (2000 p.181-182), recent developments in biblical studies enables us to speak of the Bible as having two major socio-historical biblical perspectives. Each of which has its associated value systems, though these may change as they find expression in different socio-historical perspectives. It is West's view (p.181) that the Bible does not speak with one voice, but rather that it expresses more than one value system. It is his belief that each of these trajectories is rooted each in its specific socio-historical experience.

West (2000 181-182) reviews a proposition of two major trajectories made by Walter Brueggemann (1993 p. 202) and discerns the 'Mosaic liberation; trajectory and the 'Royal consolidation trajectory'. According to the information documented by West, each of these trajectories can be traced through the socio-historical periods of Israel.

He documents that the Mosaic liberation trajectory emerges as the theological response of peasants to the theology of Canaanite city states. It is the founding faith of early pre-monarchic, Israel (1250-100 B.C.E.). The Mushite priesthood of Shiloh and Nob during the united monarchy (1000-922 B.C.E.), the prophets during the divided monarchy (922-587 B.C.E.), the Deuteronomist during the exile before their theology became hardened and harsh (587-537 B.C.E.), the visionaries from the displaced Levitical priesthood during the post exilic period, and a variety of other voices that cry out on behalf of the poor and marginalized. All these were consistent with this theological factor, giving it new articulations as context was changing, (West 2000 p.182).

In the same work, West details that the royal consolidation trajectory finds its first articulation during the united monarchy of David and Solomon. It includes the theology underlying transition from a communal tribal society to a centralized city state system, the Aaronid Priestly system of Hebron and Jerusalem and the institutions of the monarchy.

This trajectory continues in the sectors of the privileged and powerful, wherever the dominant concern is to consolidate and to control (p.182).

West (200 p.182) summaries the submissions by Brueggemann (1993 p.202) as follows: the Mosaic trajectory tends to be a movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings. In tension, contending with this trajectory, the Davidic tradition tends to be a movement of consolidation which is situated among the established and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering.

In this study, the reader will engage these two trajectories. The elites returning from exile represent a perpetuation of the established and secure who were out to seek consolidation without much input from the 'people of the land'. The 'people of the land' on the other hand are a movement of protest, representing the disinherited, especially of land and the economy and many among them forced to migrate. Their families were broken and they were forced to operate on the terms of the elite, dominant, powerful and privileged whose dominant concern was control.

It is interesting also how the use of the tripolar theory makes a system relatable to the two trajectories above also discernable on the African contextual social scene of this study. The government sponsored group that spearheaded and executed the FTLRRP in Zimbabwe represents the interests of the elite, powerful and dominant. They comprise and represent the group whose main concern is consolidation and control. On the other hand, there are the farm workers, foreign and local. These, I take to represent the marginalized and disinherited, those who protested over the land take overs but had very limited power to change anything.

I am a son to one of these farm workers. My father and other farm workers lacked the power to resist the government sponsored groups that took overland. These groups were carrying out the interests of the dominant and powerful. One could not report them to the police, army or any other security apparatus. They had power over these also and over any other body to which my father and other farm workers could appeal.

Important to note also is the idea that the social science aspect of the socio-historical method is a combination of various sociological theories. To make best use of this method in this study, I have to be very clear of the theoretical suppositions and implications of this method and limit myself to that which could present the picture detailed in this study in the clearest light possible. An important question which arises when making use of this method is, how can a methodology created by a modern scholar in a modern setting interpret the writings of an ancient author who wrote in an ancient surrounding? It cannot be denied that modern methods such as socio-historical methodology contain modern presuppositions which may make it hard to understand antiquity if not rightly applied.

Another complication is that, in studying biblical texts, the researcher is dealing with literature that is not only social but also theological, not only historical but also canonical, that is authoritative in some way, according to Carolyn Oseik (1992 p. 5). Since the socio-historical method developed around a study of contemporary societies, one can anticipate difficulties when applying it to historical societies belonging to the distant past. Additionally, the text at my disposal as the researcher does not always provide enough material for a comprehensive picture of the society in the different biblical times. Despite these limitations however, the socio-historical method remains the most valuable tool for this study. Now I turn the reader's attention to my other primary method of analysis, autobiographical criticism.

1.6 Autobiographical Criticism

This is a method in research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis 2004 p.14; Holman 2005 p. 763-791). According to Fiona Black (2006 p.4), autobiographical criticism was initially developed as a theoretical apparatus to account for and elucidate that genre of literature first named, in the 1800s, *autobiography.* In the 1960s, Roy Pascal (the founder of autobiography as a genre according to Fiona Black (2006 p.4) wrote that autobiography involves reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived (Pascal 1960 p.12).

From then until the 1980s, according to Black (2006 p.4), autobiographical criticism operated on the idea that the writing of autobiography and subsequent study of this genre could recover from a focus on historically verifiable material to the people who interacted with the events that are reported.

The first *Semeia* on autobiographical readings of the Bible was in 1995. Black (2006 p.2) says that among other intentions, it aimed to move in a particular direction by investigating the intersection between autobiographical and cultural studies. The result of this *Semeia* was a huge volume jointly edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Jeffery Staley (1995b).

In this volume, autobiography was fully integrated into biblical studies. According to these editors, 'autobiographical biblical critics struggle to understand how the disciplinary questions, methodological preferences, and the resultant interpretations with individual and communal experiences and commitments interact with those fluid lives we lead as we read biblical texts' (1995a. p.14).

In autobiographical biblical criticism, writers have found a unique way to infuse their personal stories into their work. In this work for example, the reader will meet the story of my father as a migrant farm worker and of mine as a son to a migrant farm worker. While in this work I have presented both the origins of autobiography, briefly, as a genre, and its use in biblical studies, Fiona Black (2006p. 4-5) notes that there 'is some distance between the theoretical beginnings of the approach and its present-day incarnations in biblical studies, in what so far is an engagement by most with some of the central issues of autobiographical theory, such as the constitution of writing the subject or the indeterminacy of life-history'.

I will begin my account of the method by appealing to an observation made by Flip Schutte in 2005. Schutte observed that scholarship and life are always connected. This is despite the fact that the natural course in academia has been to disguise one's person and life with the third person pronoun and with constructions in the passive voice. He suggested that autobiographical criticism creates an opportunity for one to write about their personal lives, economic situations, and prejudices that affect their interpretation of the Bible, in the process revealing the tenuousness and interested nature of their exegetical moves (Schutte 2005 p. 404).

Autobiographical criticism is part of my preferred methods because it provided a platform on which to share my father's story as a migrant farm worker. The best tool to bring this story out vividly, is in my view, autobiographical biblical criticism. This is because, as observed by Schutte above, this method provides an opportunity for the writer to share their own story while doing biblical studies.

From the perspective of the tripolar theory, I compare in this study the story of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah to that of farm workers during the years 2000-2002 in Zimbabwe. My father being one of these, autobiographical criticism becomes pivotal in bringing out the story of his life as he sought to lead us out the difficult experiences imposed on us by the FTLRRP. It also augments in the tripolar theory in performing the much-needed comparative work with the Biblical portions of this study.

Flip Schutte (2005 p. 401) differentiates autobiographical biblical criticism from other criticisms by stating that, for a long time, scholarly writing has been defined by the absence of the 'I' or any reference to the personal situation of the writer to the writing process, while autobiographical criticism is defined by or as a personal criticism. He quotes S D Moore (1995 p. 19) who suggests that autobiographical criticism is not only a personal criticism but also a confessional criticism, an autobiography. Autobiographical criticism extends an invitation for the potential reader to participate in the interweaving and construction of an ongoing conversation, but ensures that the biblical text remains a text (J C Anderson and J L Staley 1995 p.10).

On the biblical front, autobiographical criticism implements personal criticism as a form of self-disclosure, wittingly, while reading a text as a critical exegete. It thus has to do with willing outspoken involvement on the part of the critic with the subject matter (T. Pippin 1995 p.157). Fowler (1995 p.232) has noted a surge in autobiographical criticism and he attributed such a surge to a widespread acceptance of responsibility to and for one's reading experience.

His argument is that scholars must acknowledge that reading is never disinterested, whether it be pre-modern, modern or postmodern reading. He believes that reading is always interested in the space in which the individual reader fits in whatever passage being read. Thus, autobiographical criticism allows the reader to seek an opportunity for 'self'. In this work, the reader encounters how I related the story of my origins by sharing my father's experience as a migrant farm worker.

I particularly chose the biblical portion investigated in this study because in it is found the story whose experiences resonate with not only the farm workers during the FTLRRP in general but the story of my father's experiences in particular. A socio-historical reading of portion of the bible that I considered in this study brings out the circumstances of the disinherited 'people of the land', some of them of foreign origin, who had to grapple for a living after land had been re-occupied by elites and redistributed mostly among the elite too.

Though separated by centuries, my father's and the story of other farm workers of his time follow an almost similar script. I thus grew up leading a very difficult life because of the challenges that my father experienced during the time land was taken over by the elite and redistributed mostly among the elite also.

The thought of sharing this personal story arose from seeing the experience of the marginalized 'people of the land' in post exilic Judah as recounted in Ezra-Nehemiah. It was my realization that there are very close resonances between our story as members of the farm worker community within Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP and that of the 'people of the land'. Autobiographical criticism allowed the chance for my personal story to be told and the tripolar theory facilitated for this story to be told side by side with that of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah with a dialogical interaction between the two stories.

The value of autobiographical criticism is that it allows for a preservation of personal experience. Any levels of such experience, if they are there, can easily be brought to the fore. Autobiographical criticism underlines multiple perspectives, because it highlights the individual as well as some shared experiences that play a role in a reading. Its rhetoric often openly avows the interconnections between the personal and the social (Anderson and Staley 1995 p.12).

Autobiographical criticism enables the reader to interpret a subject upon which he has a preunderstanding. Interpretation can only commence on the basis of a prior understanding of the subject matter. Any text must be interpreted in light of some preunderstanding on the subject matter says Fergusson (1992 p.255). This becomes particularly interesting to me as I read the challenges of the 'people of the land' in post-exilic Judah. Being an individual who has a migrant farm worker background. My background is relatable to the story of some of the 'people of the land' described in the narrative. This helped to act as a preunderstanding of the struggles of the marginalized.

Key stories from the biblical text can be retold from the personal experience of the autobiographical critic. In this study, the reader encounters my story as a son to a migrant farm worker told through the story of my father, who himself was a migrant farm worker. This story could be retold as it has been because of the resonant experiences of the 'people of the land' in post-exilic Judah.

In telling my story side by side with the biblical text, autobiographical criticism allows for careful creativity and innovation. It acts both as a means for me to incorporate my story and as a response to the more traditional methods of biblical criticism which do not usually allow a story to be told in the first person.

In facilitating the above, autobiographical criticism allows for rich, creative and innovative means of uncovering one of the Bible's untold stories – the voice of the 'people of the land' in post-exilic Judah. It also allowed for the breaking down barriers erected by traditional forms of biblical scholarship (Black 2006 p.7).

Autobiographical criticism has responded to and benefited from the challenges of marginalized groups. In so many ways an autobiographical critic should reasonably involve matters of race, nationality, class, gender as well as the expected literary and historical discourses according to Black (2006 p.8). The nature of the study I undertake necessitates the appropriateness of autobiographical criticism to the task.

It is an ideal tool for studying the 'people of the land', whether via biblical or social texts. This is because my target group in this study, the 'people of the land', stand out as a people of a disputed nationality, of a lower stratum of societal class, and with gender concerns, as, for example, when women were expelled from Judah and when Zimbabwean women farm workers were excluded from land allocation.

It can be a dangerous and bewildering enterprise for scholars to explore how their personal experiences and social locations relate to their professional discourse on the Bible. This task is not easy at all and it requires the writer to be very careful. Where due care has not been exercised there is the risk that either the biblical text or the reader's story becomes embellished. However, one can choose to look at it differently as I show below.

Autobiography is a rereading of experience, a kind of second reading of experience. It can be an opportunity for self-reflection. It can cause the reader to relive experiences of the past and help to preserve important personal memories. It has the effect of 'presentifying' the past, bridging the gap between what has been and what is. In the case of this study, autobiographical biblical criticism has given me the opportunity to document the story of my father's sacrifice on my behalf. A memory I would want to preserve for my own posterity.

The interpreter and the interpreted are deeply imbedded in each other. It has the risk that it makes the writer say something about himself. Autobiographical biblical criticism does not claim to uncover absolute truth and or to practice pure science. Instead, the critical text provides an opportunity to introduce a flesh and blood scholar, highlighting the idea that no academic writing takes place in a vacuum. In the process of doing this, it opens up space for contextualization, culture, and experience (Moore 1995 p.26), which is an advantage.

My research attempts to balance the contributions of both socio-historical resources and autobiographical resources.

Chapter 2: The People of the Land in Ezra-Nehemiah

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter has drawn attention to the area of investigation of the study, and its stimuli, theoretical framework and methodology. My journey with the tripolar theory significantly begins here. This chapter (as well as the next) forms the pole/leg of the biblical text; it reviews the literature that has been produced in the biblical area probed by this thesis. This chapter explores the controversy concerning the people who remained in Israel after the deportees went into Babylonian captivity. The aim of the chapter is to establish the people who can be characterized as the 'people of the land'. Identification of the 'people of the land' is critical to establish the land architecture in Judea, and the tripolar theory is very critical in this pursuit.

These 'people of the land' in this chapter are identified as those Jews who did not go into exile, the Samaritans who drifted from the north into Judea, people groups who drifted into Judea from the south such as Arabs and Idumeans as well as some people groups who were deported and resettled near Judea by various Assyrian Kings including Esarhaddon.

These people are mentioned in various portions of Ezra-Nehemiah (cf. 4vs.1-3; Neh. 2vs.20;10vs.28-39;13vs.1-9, 15-29). The extent to which these people were present in Judea has been a subject of great debate. With this debate has come another argument as to whether there was a total exile which left the land desolate or only a partial exile which took mostly the elite and left a functioning economy. These debates are necessary in order to prove the existence, origins and extent of the presence of the 'people of the land' in Judea when Jews that went to exile returned.

The idea of people remaining in Judah after the Babylonian conquest of the 6th century B.C.E. has received a lot of discussion among scholars. For many scholars, the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E., cf. Jeremiah 10vs.29) marks the end of the Monarchy in Judah, the end of the Iron age, as well as the beginning of the of the exilic period according Avraham Faust (2005, p.158). In all debates on the subject that I have been exposed to so far, two major schools of thought emerge. Again, here I should remind the reader that these two schools of thought are exposed as I follow the tripolar theory. The pole in which these two schools of thought are exposed is the biblical pole.

The first school of thought, which is supported by scholars such as Martin North (1960 p.269) and John Bright (1972, p.343-344) among others, views the 6th century B.C.E. as generally a period of great demographic and cultural decline, and states further that the land of Judah was almost completely desolate during the exile and if there were any people that remained, they were few, sparsely spread and very insignificant. Proponents and supporters of this line of thought justify the apparent lack of material culture from the Babylonian period by assuming that the kingdom of Judah was only sparsely inhabited and therefore the remains could only but be scant (Stern 1997; 1998; 2000). Sharing the same view also are William Albright (1960, p.140-2), Amihai Mazar (1990, p.458-60) and Ephraim Stern (2004, p.273-7).

The second school which strongly criticizes the first, observes that only a small percentage, comprised mostly of nobles and elites, were the ones taken to exile and for most of the population life went on just as it had before 586 B.C.E. (Caroll, 1992, p.79-93; Bastard 2002, p.37-8; Blenkinsop, 2002, p.169-87; Finkelstein and Silberman 2000, p.305-307).

These base part of their argument on the fact that most of the Judaean population lived in rural settings which were not harmed by war or the exiles that followed 586 B.C.E. The canonical narrative of the conquest seems to be close to the first view. It gives the impression that there are some who remained in the land after Babylonian conquests, but these were however few, poor and not very significant, (cf.2 Kgs 24vs.14; 2 Kgs 25vs.12; Jer. 39vs.vs.3-10). While the Bible and the first view suggested above seem to share resonances, l shall attempt to give a different perspective as to why the narrative of the Bible comes out this way.

My reading from Ehud Ben Zvi (2010, pp. 155-166) suggests that, the Bible narrative and this first view are not the same at all, although some scholars of this first thought attempt to buttress their propositions using the canonical narrative. Both views are not supported after a closer look. My argument concerning the biblical narrative does not attempt to make it a third view, but seeks to prove that it is not very different from the second view described below.

I subscribe to the second view. This thesis research therefore argues in favor of the second view. I believe that the 'people of the land' encountered by the returnees were part of these groups that did not go into exile. In my attempt to bring to view these 'people of the land' mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 4vs.4, Nehemiah 4vs.7,8,11 etc.) at the time of the return from exile, I believe my arguments will come out more clearly when the second view is studied in comparison with the first school of thought. In this chapter I shall therefore take that approach, however, I shall pay more attention to the second view.

2.1 The People of the Land

Finkelstein and Silberman (2000, p. 305-307) suggest that both archaeology and text contradict the notion that between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. E and the beginning of the return of the exiles after the proclamation of Cyrus in 538 B. C. E., Judah was in total ruin and uninhabited. They conclude that only about a quarter of the population of Judah was deported, leaving at least three quarters behind. To arrive at this conclusion, they compared the numbers mentioned in scripture to have been deported and archaeological findings on the population of Judah in the late 7th century before the destruction of Judah. Their analysis is as follows:

The first campaign by Nebuchadnezzar (r.605/604-562 B.C.E.) King of Babylon on Judah in 597 B.C.E. in the days of King Jehoiachin (r.598-597 B.C.E.) the son of Jehoiakim is mentioned to have taken away ten thousand individuals in 2 Kings 24vs.10-15 and eight thousand in verse sixteen of the same chapter. Although the account in Kings does not state the exact number of exiles when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C.E., by Nebuzaradan, who served as Nebuchadnezzar's body guard (2 Kgs 25vs.8), in the days of Zedekiah (r.597-586 B.C.E.) the son of Josiah, it does state that after the murder of Gedaliah in Mizpah, all the people fled to Egypt (2 Kgs 25vs.26) likely leaving the countryside virtually deserted.

These numbers are very different from the ones recorded by Jeremiah, an eye witness to some of the events. Jeremiah reports that the total number of deported people amounted to forty-six hundred, (Jeremiah 52 vs.28-30).

It is not clear in both Kings and Jeremiah whether this number represents all the people or just the number of male heads of families (In the ancient world, they sometimes just counted male heads during important occasions, cf. Numbers 1vs.2, 43-54).

Comparing the differences in the two sets of texts, Finkelstein and Silberman (2000, p.305-307) concluded that the number of exiles could range from a few thousand to at most twenty thousand. A quick comparison between what Finkelstein and Silberman said and what was suggested by others who also estimated the population of Jerusalem can be helpful in proving a point here.

Different scholars have suggested different estimates of numbers of the population in Jerusalem at the end of the first temple period. The higher estimates by scholars such as Magen Broshi (1974, p.23) and Faust (2005, p.112) span from twenty to twenty-five thousand. Wilkinson (1974, p.50) and others have suggested possible low population estimates ranging between six and ten thousand. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2006, p.122) therefore give a more balanced estimate. I suggest, because their estimates flank the highs and lows suggested above.

Of importance is also the fact that to arrive at these numbers, among other things, Finkelstein and Silberman differentiated between the settled areas in the city, farming (rural areas) and areas that were occupied with cultic, administrative and royal buildings (Finkelstein 2001, p.243). They also, in my view, paid more careful attention to the agricultural areas around Jerusalem, especially the Rephaim Valley to the south, the area of Benjamin to the north and the areas between Binyaney Ha'ummah and Mozah to the west. Which areas, Nissen (2012, p.147) says, formed part of the hinterlands which had an important population. These areas were important because they supplied the agricultural needs of the large population in the capital of the kingdom.

Having noted the above, Finkelstein ad Silberman went on to then make quite an illuminating comparison of these numbers with the population of Judah in the late seventh century before the destruction of Jerusalem. They suggested that from data collected during intensive excavations and surveys, Judah's population can be estimated at about seventy-five thousand, with 20 percent of these being resident in Jerusalem (about fifteen thousand) and another fifteen thousand inhabiting its agricultural hinterland. Charles E Carter (1999, p.201-2) suggests it at between sixty-and sixty-eight thousand five hundred people for the same period.

Lipschits in Faust (2007, p.34) puts the 7th century population estimate at one hundred and eight thousand people). These numbers would then suggest that, (going by the Finkelstein and Silberman views) at least 75 percent of the Judahite state stayed outside Jerusalem and were not exiled. They remained in the land and form part of the people groups that the returnees of Ezra-Nehemiah meet as they begin to return from exile.

Hans M Bastard, in Lipschits and Blenkinsop eds. (2003, p.3-20), supports the views by Finklestein and Silberman and goes further to suggest, based on research by Lipschits and other archaeological evidence, that whereas sites such as Jerusalem, Tel Beit Mirsim (between the lowlands of Shefla and Mt Hebron), Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, and Ramat Rahel had clear evidence of destruction from Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns in the west, dwelling places in the northern part of Judah and Benjamin were not affected. Several cities in the Benjamin area were not destroyed at all. Therefore, it was mainly the hill country that was affected and the rest of the country was left more or less intact.

Bastard (2003p.3-20) pointed out some of the places that had evidence of continued existence after 586 B.C.E. These places include, Tell en-Nasbeth (identified as the biblical Mizpah), a place very close to Jerusalem, and Gibeon where tombs dated to the seventh and sixth century B.C.E. were found, indicating continued existence after 586 B.C.E. Evidence for the use of tombs for the same periods in Mizpah and Gibeon can also be drawn from the extensive research documented in Ran Barkai (1992, p.372;1994, p.164).

Apart from the afore mentioned, Bastard goes on to suggest that other places that had evidence of existence included the village of Moza (7km from Jerusalem), Bethel as well as Gibeah in the land of Benjamin, pointing to the conclusion that Judah was inhabited during the exile not by a few poor people left behind after Babylonian attacks, but by thousands of people. These people exposed by the biblical pole of my use of the tripolar theory are comparable to my father and other farm workers that shall later on be exposed by the Zimbabwean pole of the same theory.

These were the people characterized as the 'people around' the exiles when they arrived in Judah. Some of these people were identified by name in Ezra-Nehemiah. These included such names as Bisham, Midthredath, Tabeel, Rehum, Shimshai, (Ezra 4vs.7-9, 17,23). Some leaders among the 'people of the land' were also singled out by name, such as Tattanai-governor of Trans-Euphrates and Shether-Bezonai (Ezra 5vs.3,6; 6vs.6,13). These names according to Ralph Klein (1999 p.695) referred to some of the people who were in the land during the period of the exile.

Proponents of this second view are challenged by those who subscribe to the idea of a complete desolation. Among these are, Lipschits (2003, p.323-60), Faust (2007, p. 25-50) and Faust and Gan (2005, p.158-171). These do not agree with Finkelstein (and those scholars that share similar views) in terms of numbers of people that remained in the land after the exile. Putting archaeological evidence from surveys at the forefront of their discussion, they dismiss the idea of a deportation of only 25 percent as simply not acceptable.

They arrive at their conclusions using archaeological data. They use historical information only as complementary data. This approach differs from my method in this thesis. In this thesis I use mostly a socio-historical and autobiographical approaches read as directed by the tripolar theory I will however use evidence from their data for purposes of balancing and strengthening my arguments. I now return to their views.

The justifications that Lipschits and other scholars give for the positions they take are not uniform, for that reason I will discuss their views each in turn beginning with Lipschits (2003, pp.323-60). He and other like-minded scholars (Stern 2000; 2004; Oded 2003, Vanderhoof 2003; Faust 2003 etc.) thoroughly criticize the view posited by Finkelstein and Silbermann.

They advocate that only a small number remained in a few areas. In areas not included in those few, they propose the idea of a complete desolation. One of them, Faust (2007, p.25-50) for example, argued that almost all Iron Age rural sites in Judah were destroyed or deserted in the 6th century B.C.E. (a thought which Finkelstein and Silbermann as well as Bastard clearly refute).

In their analysis of post Iron Age Judah, they do a region-by-region approach. Although they write separately and give different reasons for the conclusions they arrive at, I find them all unintentionally proving the existence of the same situation that they accuse Finkelstein and Silberman of; that is, assuming that the land of Judah was not desolate during the years of the exile. What differs between them and Finkelstein and Silberman, as well as others of a like thinking, are the numbers. In principle however, I find them both speaking against the concept of an empty land during the exile, although Lipschits in his paper analyzed in this section, does not easily admit to the same. We turn now at this point to his understanding of the subject.

Lipschits (2003, p.323-26) suggests that since the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s, almost the whole of the territory of the Kingdom of Judah has been surveyed. Surveys of the Benjamin region, the Judean Hill Country and the Shephelah were conducted mostly during the 1980s. He posits that surveys have made it possible to draw settlement maps and determine which people groups were staying where and at what time.

He, like other scholars that share his views, argue that a combination of excavation data and surveys allows the examination of the history of a country from varied stand points. From this perspective, it is possible to compare the demographic situation of Judah at the end of the Iron Age (the second half of the 7th century B.C.E.) with that of the province of Yehud at the height of the Persian period (mid-5th century B.C.E.).

It is important that I point out that Lipschits believes more in excavations than surveys. On the grounds of his analysis of excavations, he makes a region-based argument as stated below. As I state his views, I shall be interrupting him by exposing the gaps that I feel he has left and by filling them both from my views and the views of other scholars.

2.2 Jerusalem and its Environs

My aim in this thesis is to expose the existence of the ‘people of the land’. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to compare the population of Judah before the exile with the changes that occur after the exile. For that reason, I have decided to present Lipschits arguments on the subject for the periods 8th and 7th centuries then compare the populations of the same areas with the situation in the 6th and 5th centuries, which periods cover the Babylonian and the Persian periods. Since this section discusses Jerusalem and its environs, it is needful that I also give a brief analysis of which areas are covered in this description.

Gabriel Barkay (1985 p.165) proposes that the 8th century B.C.E., Jerusalem covered a total area of 100 hectares at its peak. According to him, the city ran from the Southern Hill area, also known as the city of David, to the southwestern area known at that time as Mt Zion. It also went as far as the slope to the eastern side of the city of David. It stretched far north of the city of David with some unfortified neighborhoods located there according to Hillel Geva (2007 p.55). The boundaries of this area are encircled by tombs which acted as burial sites for those within and without the city, (Barkay 1985 p.472; 1991 p.103). These tombs are also discussed by Faust and Gan later on in this chapter.

The area largely known as the environs of the city of Jerusalem covered a large and complex set of agricultural settlement around the parameter described above. These included farms with agricultural installations, hamlets and very large villages in the remote circle between Moza in the west, about 5km from Jerusalem, Ai- 'Azariyah in the east, Anate in the north and Ramat - Rahel in the south. This, according to Lipschits (2005 p.209) was not a small or simple area. It was not easily accessible either.

Nahman Avigad says in the second half of the 8th century B.C.E., the built-up area of Jerusalem expanded from the city of David to the Western Hill and the city reached its maximum size in biblical times (1980 p.31-60). At the same time dozens of settlements from regional towns to small villages and tiny farm heads appeared in the hill country of Judah to the south of Jerusalem (Finkelstein 2001 p.105). The population of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas generally increased at this time.

There are several reasons for this sudden growth of population of Jerusalem and its environs. First, it appears that large groups of refugees escaping the horrors of Assyrian liquidation of the northern kingdom in 720 B.C.E., and the devastation of the Judahite Shephelah by Sennacherib (r.705-681 B.C. E.), in 701 during the days of King Hezekiah (r.715-686), settled in the highlands of Judah, some in the capital and others in the country side (2 Kgs 18vs.17-19vs.37). This was a major source of the Samaritans that would be found in Judah by the time of the return from exile. This would compare to how my father and other Mozambicans drifted to the west into Zimbabwe due to political instability in Mozambique as I will discuss later on.

The second reason might be that in the 730s, King Ahaz (r.732/731-716/715) of Judah made a bold decision to cooperate with the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kgs 15vs.29; 16 vs.7-9; cf. Isa 7vs.1-9), and his nation was integrated into the Assyrian economic sphere, playing an important role in the southern trade network.

This resulted in the Beer-Sheba valley going through significant change, from just a fringe area to a relatively densely populated and protected Judahite city. This becomes significant as we look at those that remained during the Babylonian conquests of the 6th century B.C.E.

Thirdly, as the northern Kingdom prospered, Judah remained a marginal entity - a sort of client state to its south. The fall of Israel (2 Kgs 14-20), during the days of King Hoshea (r.732-721 B.C.E.) and the establishment of a direct Assyrian rule to the north opened way to the rise of Judah as one of the major players in the affairs of the Levant (we shall look at this in more detail a little later on).

Based on the afore mentioned reasons, Finklestein and Silberman (2001 p.215-225) postulate that Judah reached full statehood in the late 8th to the early 7th centuries B.C.E., and around this period its population reached its peak.

Lipschits (2003 p.327) also observed that in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.E. Jerusalem expanded, its population grew and a large settlement block was created around the city. Unfortified neighborhoods were built north of the city walls and farms lay in the area around it. In areas around Jerusalem (its environs), land used for large agricultural projects dominated. It is interesting here how the most dominant land use was agriculture, the farms at which my father worked in Zimbabwe were mostly agro-communities. This I will discuss later, for now I will return the reader's attention to the argument at hand, continuing with views from Barkay.

Barkay (1985 p.165,487) who in some points shared the same views with Lipschits, hypothesized that Jerusalem and its environs had a population ranging from twenty-two thousand five hundred to twenty-five thousand people (based on the excavation finds that depicted the area as having 900-1000 dunams multiplied by an average 25 people per dunam. London (1995 p.75) says that scholars generally settled on an average 25 people per dunam).

With the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., Lipschits (2003 p.327-60) suggests that most of these people as well as those from other areas moved out of the land of Jerusalem and its environs. However, Lipschits (2003 p.329) says there is a possibility that at Ramat Rahel in Jerusalem, people groups continued to exist after the city had been laid to waste in the 6th century.

Settlements in the rest of the other areas in Jerusalem were only reestablished in the mid-5th century at the beginning of the Persian Period when the exiles in Ezra-Nehemiah returned. Lipschits estimates the total population of Jerusalem during the Persian period to have been one thousand five hundred for both adults and young people (60 dunams multiplied by 25) coming up to two thousand seven hundred and fifty when adding its environs (Lipschits 2003, p330). This was a large drop compared to the figures given by Barkay who estimates the population before the siege by the Babylonians as stated earlier.

These people, according to Lipschits, were concentrated in the historic city of David and in farms around the city. These farms, as noted earlier, were very important in providing various agricultural resources to the city. Apart from the farms, these people were also concentrated in the area south of the city around Ramat Rahel (which took over as center of government from Mizpah at the beginning of the Persian period in the 5th century B.C.E.) and in Bethlehem.

When one compares Lipschits' data for the Iron Age 7th century B.C.E. with that of the Persian period (5th century B.C.E.), a settlement decline of 83 percent is witnessed in Jerusalem. These data present what Lipschits here suggests as a very low level of human activity in Jerusalem and its environs around this period.

Lipschits concludes from these data that Jerusalem remained desolate throughout the period of Babylonian rule (Lipschits 1997a p.272-75). He adds that as long as the city had not recovered there was no economic basis for villages and farms that were maintained and located in the Benjamin Region, north of the city and in the Bethlehem District in the south.

This could therefore imply that these were desolate too. In this conclusion, Lipschits finds sympathizers in Faust (2004 p.159, and Stern 1997, 1998; 2000) who suggest that it is widely known that there was no material culture of the Babylonian period that was found in Jerusalem and this lack of material culture could be assumed to imply that the region was either desolate or sparsely populated, therefore leaving only scant remains. He however admits that the city recovered during the Persian Period.

I find a few problems with the conclusions that both Lipschits and Faust and other likeminded scholars make from their studies. First, depending on what definition Lipschits has decided to ascribe to the word 'desolation', I do not view an 83 percent decline to equal desolation; I view it as it is, 'a reduction in population after an attack by a foreign nation', in this case Babylon. His arguments to me do not absolutely satisfy the conclusion he makes.

My view is that while there was a reduction in population and there remained some people in the land after Babylonian attacks, and based on the major developments witnessed in certain parts of Judah during the exile (as was attested to earlier by Bastard), these people were not as few as purported by Lipschits.

Other scholars also conclude that these people groups were not an insignificant statistic as Lipschits attempts to prove (cf. Walton and et al 1997 p. 463), Kenneth Hoglund (1992 p.26-27) and Charles Fensham (1982 p.59). Fensham actually adds that apart from their numbers being significantly considerable, these people groups were a functioning society with its various socioeconomic institutions still intact, consisting of priests, scribes, artisans, tradesmen, and workmen. As a tripolar reading of this study would later assist in establishing, the farm worker community in Zimbabwe was also a well-functioning society by the time of the FTLRRP.

My second problem is the gap Lipschits opens when he suggests that there was a reestablishment of a population in Jerusalem during the Persian period (late 6^{th} to early 5^{th} centuries), which means he argues for a discontinuity of settlement between the Babylonian and the Persian periods. Lipschits in the current writing does not explain where the people that remained, at least the 17 percent, could have gone during this purported period of desolation, only to reappear when Persia takes over from Babylon.

On this note, I would rather agree with Finkelstein and Silberman (2000, p. 305-307) and Fensham (1982 p.59), who argue that while many people were taken to exile, a functional society remained in Judah, which people were encountered by the returnees when Cyrus first allowed them to go back to Judah in 539 B.C.E., under the leadership of Sheshbazzar (Ezra1vs.8). These people form part of the group that I am calling in this thesis, the 'people of the land', which people Ezra - Nehemiah calls by the same name (Ezra 4vs.8).

My third problem with him is based on the second reason Faust (2004 p.159) gives as a possible reason why there was a lack of material culture during the Babylonian period. Faust says the lack of material culture during the Babylonian period in Judah can also be attributed to the fact that we are dealing with a very short period of time which had no distinct characteristics. He goes on to suggest that this period's material culture should be viewed as a continuation of the late 7th and the early 6th centuries B.C.E., and as a predecessor of the Persian period. Thus, the Babylonian material culture becomes a continuation of the Iron Age.

Other people that have also shared this view include (Barkai 1992, a possibility which Lipschits 1997 does not rule out; Bastard 1996). These scholars expose a gap in Lipschits work in that they leave no room for discontinuity between the Iron age and the Persian periods. Barkai and Bastard then use this explanation to arrive at the conclusion that the 6th century was much more populated than is advocated for by scholars of the empty land theory such as Lipschits.

The lack of material culture gap during the Babylonian period cannot just be closed through the views expressed above but also through important arguments put forth by Nissen (2012 p.151-153). Nissen suggests that the lack of material culture or archaeological finds in Jerusalem during this time is no mere coincidence. He argues that this is the outcome of a portion in the history of a city when there was no king in the city to invest the means and the manpower in order to glorify and fortify it.

This period occurred during the middle of a long interlude between two periods of greatness in the history of Judah. These periods are the end of the first temple period on the one hand (8th and 7th centuries) and the late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods on the other (the second half of the second and first centuries B.C.E.). This is a period according to Finkelstein (2009 p.10-11) when one should not expect to find magnificent palaces, huge public buildings or strong fortifications.

It is also possible, that by the time of the excavations, the Persian period occupations had been severely damaged or covered by intensive building activities conducted in the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and later periods. Furthermore, the religious, cultic, and political status of Jerusalem likely motivated not only frequent political upheavals and destruction, but also the desire to remove previous political and religious structures to reshape the city (Lipschits 2009 p.6-9).

Thus, Persian period finds were usually uncovered in fills under structures constructed in later periods or in dumps down in the valleys to the east and west of the small ridge of the city of David. Therefore, one should not rely on the absence of archaeological finds and the scarcity of other finds as a reflection of the situation in the Neo-Babylonian period. (Nissen 2012 p.153).

My fourth problem with the views posited by Lipschits is that he left out significant hinterland Jerusalem towns such as Mozah which, according to Faust (2007, p.34), had an estimated population of two thousand five hundred people and El-Burj which had an estimated population of one thousand people.

He also left out hundreds of farmsteads which were pivotal in producing crops, oils and wines, which products, Amos Kloner (2001, p.83-9) says helped sustain the economy of Judah in general and Jerusalem in particular. Having left out these areas means the conclusions they arrive at in terms of numbers of those that remained in the land are an understatement of the reality that existed.

Just as with Jerusalem and its environs, Lipschits commented also on other regions of Judea. Every micro-region had its own history and a few comments on the other regions would be in order.

2.3 Southern Part of the Judean Hills and the Beer-Sheba-Arad Valleys

The Beer-Sheba valley witnessed a transformation from the late Iron age to the late Iron Age II. It clearly became an administrative area connected to the central government outside the valley, which government was Judah. This region, south of Judah, had a growing population in the 7th Century B.C.E. Lipschits estimates the region to have had a population of two thousand nine hundred to three thousand people by the end of the 7th Century. I arrived at this number by multiplying the number of dunams stated by Lipschits (2003 p.334-8) by 25 as in the previous section.

Appealing to archaeology, Lipschits suggests that there was evidence of destruction at the hands of Babylonians in several areas associated with this region, except at Tel 'Aroer situated 22 km southeast of modern Beer-Sheba (it was mentioned as one of the cities in the southern part of Judea in 1 Samuel 30vs.26,28) and at Tel Masos located approximately 12 km from modern day Beer-Sheba.

He suggests that the existence of the region was contingent upon the Kingdon of Judah's ability to defend it, and when Judah was not able to do so due to Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem, its capital city around 6th century B.C.E., the population in the area began to decline and only started to rise again in the 5th century B.C.E. Among the people that lived in this area, were Edomites whose main business, as shall be discussed in a little more detail later, was trade.

Outside the shock of Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem in the 6th century, Lipschits does not provide any other possible reasons why the population in this area may have begun to decline. What is logical to me is that if there was any population decline, it was likely due to migration as people searched for better places to trade with when trade with Jerusalem was interrupted by Babylonian attacks. What remains a fact though is that a population continued to maintain in this region during the exile before those in Persia returned, such that at their return, they did not encounter an empty land but a thriving farming and trading community consisting of mostly Edomites.

Lipschits himself admits that farmers and farm workers in southern parts, such as Ramat-Rahel, continued to sustain the area. Farms in Ramat Rahel must have been significant and productive because this city was able to take over as the center of government administration when Mizpah began to decline at around the 5th century B.C.E.

The Hebrew Bible mentions that the Beer-Sheba valley was first allotted to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15vs.20,28). Later on, in Joshua 19vs.1 and 1 Chron. 4vs.28, the Hebrew Bible narrates that this same area was given to the tribe Simeon; however, due to the very close ties with the tribe of Judah (Judges 1vs.3), they seem to have shared this area, such that in Joshua 15vs.28 (cf. vs. 21,32), these towns of Simeon, including Beer-Sheba, also appear among the towns in the Negev district of Judah.

In the pre-monarchic period, the Hebrew Bible suggests that Samuel had stationed his sons Joel and Abiah as Judges in the area, (1 Samuel 8vs.2). It is logical from this narration to conclude that the tribe of Simeon, the tribe of Judah and the descendants of Samuel where among the residents in this area that did not go into exile and were among the 'people of the land' by the time Ezra, Nehemiah and the other groups returned from exile.

Not only were these 'people of the land' members of important Jewish families, they also shared in the same faith as those that had been taken to exile. This is despite the fact that the Jewish prophet Amos suggests that there was also a shrine for a variant form of worship in this area than was practiced in Jerusalem (Amos 5vs.5; 8vs,14), thus strictly speaking, these people did not deserve of the treatment they received at the hands of Ezra and Nehemiah at the return from exile.

Control of this area was taken over by the returnees in the post exilic period. Nehemiah (11vs.27) mentions that some of the children of Judah still lived in this area after the exile. During this time, Judean occupation extended from Beer-Sheba to the valley of Hinnon (Neh. 11vs.30).

2.4 Idumea (Arab and Edomites in the Beer-Sheba and Arad Valleys)

This area, just like other parts of Judah, was not totally abandoned during the 6th Century B.C.E. Lipschits proposes an estimated population drop from three thousand to seven hundred between the 7th and 5th centuries B.C.E. While he is for a small population in the land during the 5th century, he does admit that the Beer-Sheba and Arad Valleys had a great diversity of population including Arabs, Idumeans, and according to him, a sparse Judean population which continued to maintain farms during the Babylonian and Persian periods (Lipschits 1997a p.272-75).

He made this proposition based on evidence for the presence of people bearing Judahite names found in the Aramaic ostraca from the Persian period, which showed the great diversity of the population in the region. These people that he talks of here were in this land when the returnees of Ezra-Nehemiah came back to Judah.

Faust and Gan (2005 p.165) have also argued for the continuity of Judahite life in the southern parts of Jerusalem; the evidence they provide is different from the one that Lipschits put forward. Thiers is from the perspective of the burial tombs known to be commonly used by inhabitants of Judah especially the nobility and elite.

They have suggested, based on the evidence they gathered from finds by Abraham Yazerski (1995 p.109, plate 1;1999 p.2 65), that houses and burial sites were found at Tel 'Ira in Bethsheba, indicating not just that there were people in this area during the Babylonian to the Persian periods, but also that some of those people were from classes that were rich and noble, as these were mostly the classes that could afford such burial sites.

It is possible that some of these people included people of other tribes apart from those of Judah. This is so because tribal elements that had previously resided in close proximity, consisting primarily of Arabian and Edomite tribes, began to make incursions into the vast and relatively empty space north of the Negev, to the southern part of the Shephelah and to the Hebron Hills just before and during the exile according to Lipschits (2003 p.334-38). These were mostly traders, settling in the land and trading mostly with the Beer- Sheba region.

Among the people encountered by Nehemiah in his work of rebuilding the temple are Sanballat the Horonite, Tobia the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian. Geshem was thought to have been in charge of the Arabia confederacy which covered northeast Egypt to north Arabia and southern Palestine. Geshem thus had very strong links with this region (Neh. 2vs.10, 19-20). His presence and leadership portfolio may have contributed to the coming in of more Arabs in the Beer-Sheba and Arad valleys.

Thus, when the groups from exile returned (Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah), the 'people of the land' they found in Judea did not just include those of Jewish origin but migrant populations from other places as well. Among the people groups that were found in this area during the 6th Century B.C.E., were an Arab and Edomite population. Toward Edomites, the book of Deuteronomy enjoined the Jews to be tolerant (Deuteronomy 23 vs.7).

2.5 Hebron and Bethlehem

The Hebrew Bible gives a lot of importance to Hebron and areas surrounding it. It narrates through the writer of the book of Joshua that this area was allocated to Caleb by Joshua when the Israelites took over Canaan (Josh 14vs.13). Among other things related to this area, the writers of the Hebrew Bible narrate that important Hebrew personalities such as Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were buried there at an important cultic burial cave at Machpelah (Genesis 25vs.10;47vs.29-30;49vs.30-32). The book of Joshua also states that this area was a city of refugee according to the Hebrew traditions of the time (Joshua 20vs.1-7).

The claims above make Hebron, Bethlehem and areas around them very important areas, at least from the perspective of the Deuteronomist. This means these people were as much a part of the Judean community as were those residing in Jerusalem. Several scholars have argued from survey and archaeology that this community did not go into exile. Ofer and Lipschits give very helpful views on the community in this region of Judea. Their views are as documented below.

Ofer (1993, p.131) gives information on the population trends of this area in the 8th and 7th centuries. This data allows us to compare the demographic dynamics of this period to that of the 6th and 5th centuries.

Having studied the survey from the highland of Judah, Ofer concludes that the data indicate a constant increase in population in the entire mountain region from the 11th to the 8 centuries B.C.E. He however notes that the area seems to have been dealt a heavy blow by Sennacherib in 702 B.C.E.

Ofer (1993, p.131) suggests that indications are that the region north of Hebron quickly recovered from these attacks, especially in areas around Bethlehem. In contrast to this rapid northern recovery, Ofer says the area south of Hebron recovered only partially during the 7th century B.C.E. Settlements in both the northern and the southern parts of Hebron and surrounding areas continued to exist as part of Judah during the Persian period and were located mostly along major roads.

The approximate population of the whole region during the 7th to the 6th centuries was seven thousand six hundred and twenty-five (305 dunams multiplied by 25 people per dunam). The characteristics of the settlement in this area show clear continuity in the Persian period.

Lipschits (2003, p.334-38) shares resonances with the thoughts Ofer expresses of this area. He made the suggestion that at Hebron (Tell er-Rumeida), evidence of destruction during Babylonian conquest of Judah could not be found. He added that, just like in the rest of the Beer-Sheba-Arad valleys, traces of fire could be found indicating evidence of life in his region.

The excavations done at places such as (Tell Rabud) associated with Debir, produced no tangible evidence of destruction during or before the Persian period according to Lipschits (2003, p.334-38). At the time of the return from exile, people of Hebron and those from nearby Judeah Highlands of the south where in the land. Lipschits suggests that there were a few traces of evacuations, but goes on to conclude that these may have been done for any other reason not directly related to Babylonian attacks (p.38).

Hebron and nearby areas contribute their quota to the Jews who did not go to exile and were among the people found in the land at the return from exile. This is so because according to the scholars consulted above, there was hardly any change in the settled area during the Iron Age and in the scope of the settled area during the Persian period. The stability in population reflects a prolonged period of quiet; a time when small settlement populations were able to grow. Stability generally prevailed in the land during the 7th to the 6th centuries B.C.E.

These people, as we shall see in the next chapter, faced domination as control of administration was reestablished at Jerusalem. The same domination shall also be visible in the section that discusses the story of my father and other farm workers. These however were dominated by government sponsored youths and war veterans.

2.6 The Jordan Valley, the Judean Desert, Areas West of the Dead Sea

This area was generally a business community whose strategic location gave Judah access to the minerals in and around the dead sea, mostly salt, sulphur and bitumen. It also allowed control over the date as well as palm plantations that were along the shores of the dead sea from the area of Ein Gedi to places beyond Qumran.

This region provided the main route that connected Jerusalem to places such as Moab through Hebron and Jericho. It indeed was an area of economic importance and we shall take a relook at it in the next chapter. Towards the end of the Iron Age (7Th century B.C.E), there was unprecedented flowering in the areas associated with this region. Jericho and Ein-gedi for example became great agricultural and industrial centers that supported a whole array of centers on the mountain ridge. This attracted people to the area and promoted population growth.

An industrial type of settlement was located in Ein-gedi. This site had buildings with uniform plan and industrial installations which attested to a special industry, most likely for the manufacture of perfume (Mazar, Dothan, Dunayevesky 193, p.23-58). The settlement at Jericho (Tel es Sultan), found in the same region, also gradually expanded in the second half of the 7th Century B.C.E. and extensive agricultural activity grew in this site and its environs with well-developed irrigation systems. This attracted a lot of people to this area. Residents in this area included farmers, farm workers and buyers of the farm produce.

The data from this area indicated an intensity of settlement activity in this area according to Lipschits (2003, p.334-38). There was a relatively densely populated settlement in the area between Jericho and Ein-gedi. Most of these settlements however were destroyed at the end of the Iron Age period likely due to the collapse of military and economic systems after Jerusalem was destroyed. Settlements at Jericho and Ein-gedi were renewed during the fifth century B.C.E.

The industrial sites established at the beginning of the 6th century B.C.E., at Tel Goren, which were found in Ein Gedi, which were believed to be part of the workshops for perfume manufacture, spread over the entire area of the Tel. The people in this area were renowned for their manufacture of expensive perfumes. This was an important trade commodity and was found in ranges suitable for all classes. The buildings they used for housing and as perfume manufacture sheds and halls over flowed down the slope and were well organized.

Lipschits assumes a discontinuity of occupation in the region, from the late Iron Age, with settlements only reappearing at around 6th century B.C.E. While he does not provide evidence of where the people could have migrated to in the space between the 7th and 6th centuries and while he also does not give reasons why some of the settlements collapsed before the 6th century because Babylonian attacks in Jerusalem did not come before the 6th Century, I find it unnecessary to probe him further. This is because my interest is on what happened in the 6th Century B.C.E.

He at least subconsciously attests to the fact that by the time of the return from exile, there was a flourishing settlement in this area, proving the idea that the exile was indeed not absolute and that many of the people which were labelled ‘people of the land’ and were not readmitted into the post exilic Jerusalem community were indeed Jewish. It is of importance that I note here that there were many natives who were treated as foreigners, even in the case of Zimbabwe as a tripolar reading of this study would reveal, many Zimbabweans were banished from land together with foreigners.

When the land was divided among the tribes, according to the Bible narrative, this land was given to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15vs.61-62). This implied that some descendants of Judah did not go into exile. They remained in the land during the period and were in the land when the exiles recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah returned. It is clear from Ezra-Nehemiah that those that did not go to exile were not fully accepted in the post exilic society and were treated as strangers together with non-Jewish communities from surrounding areas. This means the tribe of Judah were also viewed as the 'people of the land'.

2.7 The Shephelah

The Shephelah refers to a region that is located on the west and extending to the southwest of the city of Jerusalem. This region served as a geographical link connecting the Judean Hills to the Coastal plain. It is also known for the five east-west valleys that intersect in that area, these are: the Aijalon, Sorek, Elah, Guvrin, and Lachish.

The most key to consider of these is Lachish (Jer.34:7), which grew to be a strong and fortified city, but was later destroyed by Sennacherib at around 701 B.C.E. This part of Judah was strategically important for its routes going from the coastal plain to Jerusalem and Hebron and also its function as the southern sentinel to Egypt.

This area was largely known for its olive and sycamore trees (1 Ki. 10:27; 1 Chr. 27:28). Olive oil was an important trade item in this region. Individuals interested in this important oil from, Egypt, Gath and other parts of Judah found the Shephelah as a very active source. This is one of the reasons why settlements were drawn to this area and a favorable population grew.

The Judean settlement of this time was concentrated in large and medium sized villages, extending even to Beth-Shemesh. The total sum of people in this region was close to three thousand seven hundred and fifty (150 dunams multiplied by 25 people per dunam).

The valleys of the Shephelah also attracted a farming population. These valleys were mostly used for growing wheat (1 Sam. 6vs.13). It was also important because of its proximity to important Philistine cities such as Gath and Ekron according to Fillip Capek, (2012, p.5-6).

The northern region of this area was inhabited by the tribe of Dan (Josh 19vs.40-46) and the rest of the land was allocated by Joshua to the tribe of Judah. People of these two tribes composed the greatest component of the population of this area up to the destruction of part of the Shephelah by Sennacherib in 701.B.C.E. Of the fifteen fortified cities built by Rehoboam for defending Judah at least eight of them were located in the Shephelah, according to the testimony of the Hebrew Bible (2Chron 11vs.5-10).

The cities of Lachish and Azekah along with Jerusalem where the last to hold against the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. As part of their military activity, the Babylonians destroyed main cities and the fortress of Judah's western border in the Shephelah, probably as part of 'opening the doors' to the heart of the Kingdom to control the major supply routes that connected the coast with the mountain ridge, but the rest of the area as well as the population, they left intact, so says Yehuda Dagan (1992 p.259-262).

Excavations conducted in the Shephelah in 19th century coupled with archaeological surveys of the year 1979 have made it possible to establish a comprehensive history of settlements in this area. An important find is that around 701 B.C.E. Sennacherib dealt a heavy blow to this area which diminished its population significantly, leaving those that remained being concentrated mostly in the eastern city parts of the Shephelah. (Finkelstein 1994, p173), with most of the population being concentrated in the major cities.

Lipschits (1997, p.300-11;2003, p.341-46) says no conclusive archaeological connection can be drawn between the destruction of the cities of the Shephelah and the Babylonian campaign. An analysis of the finds in this area shows that there are remains dated to the 5th and 4th Centuries B.C.E. It shows that during the Persian period; an entirely new settlement pattern began in the region. Between the Iron Age and the Persian periods, new people group drifted into the area, these were Arab and Edomites from the south to the north of areas near Maresha. This movement of new people however was halted during the Persian period, with the reestablishment of the Judean settlement north eastern of the Shephelah.

It is not surprising that there was movement of new people into this land quite rapidly because this was an important trade center, as such trading nomads would always be found in the vicinity. The equally rapid halting of their spread during the Persian period is equally not surprising because at around this time exiles began to return.

Traditionally the Shephelah was owned by the tribes of Judah and Dan, which were very important tribes in the Judean economy. The settlers in the reestablished Judean settlement did not find it necessary for the new people who had drifted in the land to continue residing. It was not felt that they belonged there, especially in the southern part of the Shephelah where they had occupied the empty expanse of the Benjamin Highland in the northern part of the Judean Highland.

These people are very important in our conversation on the ‘people of the land’ encountered in Ezra-Nehemiah because they form part of the group that was in the land by the time of the return from exile.

2.8 Benjamin and the Northern parts of the Judean Highland

According to the Hebrew Bible, areas that fell in this region to the northern end of Judah were allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20 vs.1-3). Inhabitants of this area were thus descendants of Benjamin the last son of Jacob. Their proximity to the northern kingdom also attracted among them Samaritans, especially those escaping from Assyrian attacks, thus by the time of the return from exile, the groups comprised not only of the children of Benjamin but also of Samaritans from areas such as Bethel among others.

Faust (2007, p.23) has suggested that an in-depth analysis of the trends in this area also shows that northern Judah, just like other parts of the kingdom suffered a major blow by the Babylonians. According to him, the excavated cities were destroyed or abandoned and this seems to also include the rural sites.

Gradually though this region became the center of the Yehud province, leading to faster recovery, which attracted more population, and this escalated the process of demographic growth. This was probably not only a result of natural growth, but was accompanied by migration from the devastated areas in the south, east and even west, areas whose recovery was much slower.

A closer look at Faust's views shows that he agrees that inhabitants of this area were in the land by the time of the return from exile. He only attributes the presence of these people to a revival of a population that had been dispersed by Babylonian attacks.

Faust's advocacy for a destruction at the hands of the Babylonians seems not to have many that support it. It has largely been suggested by many scholars that the Benjamin Highland and the areas on the northern part of the Judean Highland were not destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6th century B.C.E. Scholars generally agree that life continued even beyond the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and other places. This was particularly true of four places such as Mizpah, Gibeah, Bethel and Gibeon (Lipschits 199-a, p.155-178; Carter 2003, p.307-10).

In at least two of his works, Lipschits confirms the continued existence of the population of Benjamin and surrounding areas. He says, unlike in the rest of Judah where there was a sharp decline in urban life after the Babylonian raids, there was a general continuity of settlement in the region of Benjamin and in the area between Bethlehem and Beth-Zur. This settlement pattern, he says, also continued throughout the Persian period (Lipschits 1997, p.190-95;2003, p.326-55).

He argues that for most parts of Judah after the 6th century, a marked change took place in the characteristics of settled areas. The settlement center of gravity moved from the core to the periphery and a new pattern of settlement was created, in which the center was depleted and the periphery continued to exist almost unchanged. This he says was not the case with Benjamin, where there was clear continuity from the Iron Age to the Persian period, especially around those centers that were used for economic and administrative purposes.

Lipschits however points out that Benjamin suffered greatly with the reestablishment of Jerusalem on the return from Persia. Mizpah went down as Jerusalem rose. The Benjamin economy was negatively affected, portions of land were lost and some people were forced to migrate (Lipschits 1998, pp.17-31;1999a, 182-85;2003, pp.350-51).

Other scholars also share the same thought. In different works, Jeffery R Zorn and Ephraim Stern postulate that there was migration from the inhabited areas of the region of Benjain at the reestablishment of Jerusalem as the exiles began to return. They suggest that this was particularly true of Mizpah which then went on to lose its capital status as well as Gibeah, Bethel and Gibeon. (Zorn J R 1993, p.184-85; 2003, p.413-47; Stern 2001, p.321-22). In what follows I continue to make an argument for the presence of a remaining population.

2.9 Mizpah

McCown 1947 (p.62-63) says this city did not show archaeological evidence of destruction. The settlements uncovered there show evidence of human settlement until the mid-5th Century B.C.E. Evidence showing continuation of life throughout the Persian period was also found. There was, however, proof of desertion and migration thereafter until the Hellenistic period (McCown 1947, p.62-63, p.185-86,202-27; Zorn 1993, p.184-85). Macowan says this was caused by the process of rebuilding which occurred in Jerusalem during the same period.

Based on the above, indications are that the people of Mizpah lived in the land from the 6th through the 5th centuries. They were found in the land when their Jewish brothers returned from exile. Thus, they were also counted among the people considered 'people of the land'.

Benjamin in general prospered and its population grew, largely due to the political centrality assigned to Mizpah and the economic importance of Mizpah and Mozah. The agricultural hinterland based itself on these areas. The transfer of the provincial center to Jerusalem reduced the status of Mizpah and also brought a change of economic and security conditions to the city in the Persian Period, Lipschits estimates an economic decline of almost 60 percent during this period. Following loss of economic status to Jerusalem, the people started to migrate in search for a better living (Lipschits 1998, p.17-31;1999 p.182-85).

2.10 Gibeah

There was also marked settlement continuity at Gibeah (Tel-el-Ful), as has been highlighted earlier. Lipschits has said there were no signs of settlement disturbances during the Persian period. In the first half of the 6th century B.C.E. the population of the area is recorded to have grown. The same was the case in Bethel (identified in the village of Beitin) where no evidence of Babylonian destruction was found.

The same conclusion as has been drawn for the places discussed earlier is drawn here too, that the people of Gibeah were among the groups labelled 'people of the land' when the exilic community returned.

2.11 Gibeon

Another site that was not destroyed in the Babylonian campaigns was Gibeon; analysis of finds in this area, according to Lipschits, shows that Gibeon even thrived and increased in prominence (Lipschits 1998, p.17-31;1999 p.182-85). There was no archaeological evidence of destruction of the city at the end of the 7th century. There were wine presses and a cemetery uncovered at and near the foot of the Tel that showed evidence of continued settlement in the 6th century B.C.E. These, just like their brothers mentioned earlier, were among the people that were viewed as the 'people of the land'. They were in Judea by the time of the return from exile.

2.12 Bethel

At Bethel, the remains from the Persian period were scant according to Lipschits. It seems however that the settlement in the area recovered in the 5th century B.C.E.

A possible source of the people who revived this city was the southern Kingdom, where at the reestablishment of Jerusalem, a lot of non-exiles were forced to migrate from a number of areas in the south. Evidence for this was found in the central section of Bethel. Some of the Samaritans that contended with the returnees during the construction of the altar, the temple and the walls of Jerusalem probably had their origins in the city of Bethel.

2.13 Tekoa

Tekoa was a settlement located in the West Bank, approximately 20 km northeast of Hebron and 16 km south of Jerusalem. The Hebrew Bible records it is as a city of Judah connected with the family of Hezron, the son of Perez (I Chron. 2:24; 4:5). It was mostly known as the hometown of a prophet called Amos (Amos 1vs.1). This city is also recorded in the Hebrew Bible to have been fortified by Rehoboam against outside attack.

In Tekoa, the settlement pattern reflected the economic and security situation that prevailed in the Iron Age, during which settlement expanded more effectively to the edge of the desert at Tekoa, especially along the road that leads from the mountain eastwards. This settlement collapsed in the 5th century and its collapse was due to economic, military and political factors.

Berift of security and possibilities for livelihood, the local community abandoned most of the settlements between the 6th and the 5th centuries B.C.E. However, during the Persian period this settlement saw a renewed pattern of settlement.

It was mostly located in the region of Tekoa where they found reliable water resources and more diversified modes of livelihood based on agriculture. The region is in the heart of Pelek Tekoa, which is known from the days of Nehemiah. South of Tekoa the total population is recorded to have increased from two thousand and twenty-five in the Iron age to two thousand six hundred during the Persian period.

During the Persian period this area saw renewed settlement activity mainly from migrants who were fleeing persecution in areas near Jerusalem. As these people settled in Tekoa, a totally different pattern of settlement was formed. The settlement in Tekoa moved westward and developed in a more densely packed concentrations near the watershed line south of the area.

According to Lipschits, the total number of sites increased from 16 in the Iron Age to 21 in the Persian period. The total settled area in this region increased from 81 at the end of the Iron Age to 104 dunams in the Persian period (Lipschits 1997, p.291-97). This increase was at the expense of its southern part towards Beth-Zur, whose importance shrank considerably. Despite the shifts in population dynamics, it is important to note that Tekoa had people living in it throughout the period of the exile. These people were part of the masses that are mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah as the ‘people of the land’.

2.14 Beth-Zur

Beth-Zur is reported by Faust (2007, p.23) to have had a good population at first and then gone on to decline during the early phases of the Persian period. The major reason for decline in population in this area was due to migration to areas such as Tekoa and others when the returnees came back from exile. It is however a fact that the people of Beth-Zur where among the 'people of the land' at the return from exile.

In the area between Beth-Zur and Jerusalem there was a remarkable settlement continuity, with an impressive increase in the number of small sites as evidence of prolonged periods of stability and security. This stable increase of population adds to the main argument of this chapter that there were thousands of people from different tribes and nations that remained in the land during the year of the exile.

Ofer (1993:132) reported that in the northern Judah (north of Beth-Zur) there were only minor changes in the transition from the Iron Age to the Persian period (and an even increase in settlement during this period). That Beth-Zur was smaller is not surprising, because Faust (2007, p.23) reports that settlements in the Persian period were relatively small, rural in nature and people relied mostly on agriculture. Surveys in this area according to Ofer (1993, p.131) indicate that the pattern of the rural sites at the end of the Iron Age and during the Persian Period is almost identical, a sign of continuity of human habitation between the two periods and through the 6th Century B.C.E.

Lipschits (2003, p.353) invested time in investigating the number of sites that were found in this area in different periods of time. His conclusion is that in each period there is almost approximately the same number of sites (63 in the iron age compared to 56 in the Persian Period) and settled dunams (305 in the iron age and 299 in the Persian period).

Full continuity appeared in the northern part of the area, in the region close to Bethlehem, where one can see a number of sites, the same number of settled areas, and the same settlement pattern at the end of the Iron Age and the Persian period. All this adds to the evidence of the presence of people in the land of Judea at the time that the exiles returned. It also helps in showing from which area the different people groups were either found or originated.

2.15 The Source of the Samaritans in Judea

Among the people that had confrontations with the returnees are Samaritans. It is important in this section of the chapter that I give a background to the origins of some of these Samaritans. In order to do justice to this attempt, a brief history of the activities of the northern Kingdom of Israel would be very helpful.

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p215). suggest that as the 9th century began, a very powerful dynasty emerged in Israel. This was a ruling dynasty founded by Omri and was known as the Omride dynasty (1 Kgs 16vs.21-34). Rulers in this dynasty were Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p215-225) have suggested that the Omride state was established on the solid foundations of a highly developed settlement and demographic system in the northern highlands, a system which was lacking in the area of Judah to the south.

History presents the Omrides as a very ambitious dynasty whose drive to grow their sphere saw them expand into the lowlands and beyond. This resulted in the creation of a large territorial and multi-ethnic state. This state took over the control of olive-oil producing lands of the highland and the fertile dry farming lands of the valleys. It dominated some important trade routes in the region and commanded a large and diverse human resource power which could be deployed in military buildup and building activities (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2000, p218).

They built a military and political cooperation with the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This was backed by the diplomatic marriage of Jehoram King of Judah (r851-843 B.C.E.) and Athaliah who was the daughter of king of King Ahab (an Omride) and Queen Jezebel, according to the Hebrew Bible (2Kgs 8vs.18,26; 2 Chr.22vs.10).

The Omride influence on Jerusalem and Judah did not just end with diplomatic and military domination but extended to economic and cultural dominance as well. The cultural influence from the north is felt in the description the writer of the Hebrew Bible makes of the reign of Jehoram (2 Kgs 8v.18,27): 'he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as did the house of Ahab'.

During this time, Jerusalem grew. Its economy played a very important role, with lucrative desert trading playing a major role in these processes. Apart from trading with the north, Israel's trade expanded to the coastal areas. This expansion of trade to the coastal areas allowed interaction with Philistine cities of Gath and Ekron through the Shephelah and also with the Edomites in the South. During this period, many people from the north were able to migrate to the south and reside there and vice versa (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2000, p.215-225).

This drifting of Samaritans to the south is quite synonymous to the movement of people from other Southern African states such as Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia in the 1960s and beyond. My father, Arajo Foromoz Chambalama would compare to some of these Samaritans, he migrated from Mozambique seeking refuge from war in his home land and seeking to earn a living in a more peaceful and stable environment.

The story recorded in 1 Kings 22 vs.48-49 of Jehoshaphat's attempt to engage the southern trade (routes which passed through the Beer-Sheba Valley) with the help of the northern kingdom adds detail to the picture of this period in the history of Judah. 2 Chronicles 20, vs. 35-36 gives clearer detail of this occurrence.

This was also the first time that Judah expanded into the Shephelah. Judah would later on control the agriculturally rich land of the Shephelah. Judah's influence in the Shephelah may help to explain why its king, Ahaziah (r 850-849) sent to enquire of Baal-Zebub the god of Ekron of the Philistine city of Ekron to see if he would recover from his injury (2 Kgs 1vs.2-17). As mentioned earlier, Ekron together with Gath were nearby Philistine cities.

The Omride dynasty was related with the Assyrians through conquest. The Assyrians from the time of Tiglat-Pilser (727-722 B.C.E.) deployed a policy that led to a migration of people to and from areas they conquered.

Among other reasons, they depopulated and repopulated conquered territories to terrorize, demoralize, and divide the population to prevent any future organized resistance. Their military framework was such that defeated people were conscripted into the imperial army where the new recruits could be carefully watched (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2000, p.215-225).

From an economic and industrial perspective, the forced resettlement of artisans in the centers of the Assyrian heartland boosted the trained human resources at the disposal of the Assyrian economy, and finally the resettling of new populations in empty and recently conquered territory intended to expand the overall agricultural output of the empire. This was true also of Israel when it was conquered by the Assyrians. As we shall see later, the Assyrian takeover of Israel led to many Samaritans migrating to the south to areas near and around Jerusalem.

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p.215-225) suggested that, Tiglath-Pileser is responsible for migrating almost thirteen thousand five hundred people from Israel after he conquered Samaria. A large population of lower Galilee and from the city of Megiddo is believed to have been moved to Assyria. In place of these Tiglath-Pileser brought in populations from other conquered areas and settled them there. These people together with the Samaritans that had migrated already to the south would make part of the 'people of the land' encountered in Ezra-Nehemiah at the return from exile.

It is important, as l shall attempt to show in the next chapter, that we take note that these people faced migration related complications. First, in their war induced migration from the north and in their banishment from Yehud by the returnees from Persia.

After the death of Tiglat-Pilser, Sagon II brought Samaria to its end after Samaria's last king, Hoshea (732-724 B.C.E) tried to partner Egypt to destroy Assyria. Sagon deported twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty people to Assyria (according to the testimony of his chronicles). The Bible makes mention of some the places where the Samaritan migrants of war were taken by Sagon, these cities included 'Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (2 Kgs 17vs.6).

He then repopulated Samaria with migrants from other countries he had conquered. He appointed a governor over them and counted them as Assyrians. These and those Israelites that survived deportation are also among the people that drifted south to Judah and were found in the land at the time that the Judahites returned from exile during the Persian Period.

The Hebrew Bible in 2 Kings 17vs.24, gives us a picture of the sources of some if these 'people of the land' who had been settled in the heartland of the Israelite highlands in place of deported Israelites: 'And the King of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria instead of Israel, and dwelt in its cities.'(2 Kgs 17 vs.24).

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p.215-225) suggest a possibility based on archaeological clues that some of these people taken from the rebellious cities of Mesopotamia might have been settled in areas around Bethel in the land of Benjamin on the northern border of the Kingdom of Judah.

It would then not be very difficult for such groups of people to drift south when parts of Judah became devastated by the Babylonian raids in the 6th century B.C.E. Joshua 18vs.23 includes Avim as one of the towns near Bethel around 7th century B.C.E. Finkelstein (2000, p.215-225) suggests that this same name relates to Avva, which I mentioned earlier as one of the areas of origin for some of the deportees according to the testimony of the writer of the Hebrew Bible.

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p.215-225) go further to suggest that a couple of 7th century cuneiform texts containing Babylonian names have been found in Gezer and its vicinity, thus providing evidence of these war migrants in the south western territory of the former kingdom of Israel as well as near the border of Israel and Judah which areas are between Bethel and Benjamin. An estimated forty thousand people are believed to have been deported into and near the land of Benjamin at this time.

A relook into the deportations, especially those by Tiglath Pileser III, shows that he mainly deported people from the villages of Galilee and main centers such as Megiddo, as he considered these troublesome. Sagon 11 on the other hand deported mainly the aristocracy of Samaria, plus possibly soldiers and artisans with skills that would be needed in Assyria. He also made a very minimal deportation of people in the hill country around Samaria. This was destined to serve as the hub of the new Assyrian province of Samerina (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2000, p.215-225).

These people of the hill country of Samariah are reported to have been invited to the southern Kingdom by the Judahite king Hezekiah (r.715-686 B.C.E.) for a Passover celebration in Jerusalem. It is reported that he, ‘sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, to keep the Passover of the Lord the God of Israel’ (2Chronicles 30vs.1-26). It is attested to in history that Ephraim and Manasseh refer to the highlands of Samaria to the north of Judah.

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2000, p.215-225) proposed that, A century and a half after the word of Hezekiah, the prophet Jeremiah reports that Israelites from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria came with offerings to the temple in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 41vs.5).

It would not have been economically logical for Tiglath Pileser III or other Assyrian kings to devastate this oil rich portion for Israel. A close analysis of the deportations shows that the Assyrians had destroyed mostly the administrative centers and left the rural and farming population unhurt. This, in the words of Finkelstein was basically ‘Canaanite, Phoenician, and Aramean in tradition’.

Destroying these rural and farm people would have devastated the agricultural output of their new province. Resultantly, as stated earlier, most of the surviving Samaritans were left in the land, and farmers from this population drifted south to occupy and develop land that had been left unoccupied especially in Jerusalem and parts of its hinterland after 586 B.C.E. They raised an economy they later would lose at the return of groups from Persia.

Esarhaddon (r680-669 B.C.E.), the second son of Sennacherib (who was the Assyrian king in the days of Hezekiah), also followed the tradition of deportation and repopulation begun by his fathers. Joseph Blenkinsopp (1989 p.107) opined that there was a deportation and migration of people under Esarhaddon from (681-119 BC). These people lived in the land of Judea for many years until the time of Ezra, (Ezra 4vs.2). Kidner (1979 p.49) indicates that these migrants had taken up fields and had developed an economy of their own in Judea. He suggests that they even had taken up the worship of the God of Israel, as is stated in the claim in Ezra 4vs.2 that some of them had taken to themselves Jewish wives. They had become part of the society.

The idea that they had taken up wives and essentially become part of the society is reflected in the Zimbabwean pole of this study. My father for example migrated from Mozambique as a bachelor. Upon settling in Zimbabwe, he found and married my mother and their union resulted in our birth. Just like the migrants into Judah currently under discussion, we all became part of the society in every respect.

In Judah, is observable that; prophets and priests from the north joined the flow of refugees to find shelter in the cities and towns of Judah. They lost their fertile lands, and their people, a very productive people, lost their inheritance and sought to carry out the same production in the southern kingdom. The surviving kingdom of Judah acted like the favored younger brother, like Isaac, Jacob or their ancestral king David – eager to snatch up a lost birth-right and redeem the land and the people of Israel (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2003p. 215-225).

2.16 Social and Cultural Changes as Evidence of the Presence of the People of the Land

One area that can assist one to appreciate the extent of the occupation of Judea during the exile is to study the social and cultural changes that took place in this area during the period of the exile. Faust and Gan (2005 p.157-171) invested time in arguing from the perspective of the social and cultural changes that took place in Judah in the 6th century B.C.E. Their findings in this regard can be very instructive.

Faust and Gan have suggested that there are several material traits that were of importance in late iron age Judahite society. They believe that an examination of the fate of these material traits in the 6th century B.C.E. can be very instructive to the search and identification of the 'people of the land' and also to the social and historical situation of their time. The traits that they find most important are the Judahite tomb, which they say was extremely important outside the settlements' walls, and the four roomed house which they suggest dominated the environment of Judah's urban and rural landscape (Faust and Gan 2005 p.157-171).

Faust and Gan admit that they are not the only ones that have documented the observations they discussed, they also openly gave credit to Mazar (1990, p.520-526). In agreement with Mazar, they define the Judahite tomb as a new type of burial that appears in Judah mostly in the 8th-7th centuries B.C.E. It was a typical Judahite tomb composed of a hewed burial cave, with a dromos. From the dromos one would then enter the cave by stepping down on rock steps. The cave had benches on which the deceased were laid until they decomposed.

On one of the inner corners, or below one of the benches, there was usually a repository, into which the bones of the deceased were collected for secondary burial. The bench was thus freed to accommodate a new body. This type of burial was used by extended families for many generations.

Faust and Gan have suggested that many such burials are known today throughout Judah. Basing on the finds by Yazerski (1995, p.109, plate 1; 1999, p.265) they pointed out that some 395 burial chambers in 278 tombs from at least 39 sites have been unearthed all over Judah, from Tel 'Ira in Bethsheba, Ein Gedi, Tell Beit Misrim, Tekoa, Bethlehem, Moza, Jerusalem, and Gibeon, to mention but a few.

Here, Faust and Gan make an admission that I think is very important to my argument of a good number of people being left in the land during the exile. Firstly, they state that the caves do not represent the burials of the entire population of Judah, but of the rich and the nobility. The majority of the urban poor disposed of their dead in simple inhumations in the ground.

They advise, secondly, that the tombs stress the generational continuity of and the permanent nature of the family as well as the possession of land**.** Those who could bury their deceased in caves had title to the land on which their caves were located. An example is of Abraham who bought the cave in Machpelah in Hebron for the burial of his wife Sarah (Gen 23 vs.1-23). Several other members of his family (Isaach, Jacob, Rebecca, and Leah), including himself, were also buried in the same cave thereafter.

Several scholars have documented that no such caves were found during the Persian period in a number of places (Stern 2001, p.470-479; Yazerski 1995, p.113-114, Wolf, 2002, 132, p.136). They propose that the absence of this kind of burial tomb can only mean that an important social institution had disappeared rather suddenly, thus indicating an unplanned and immediate migration. There are however possible reasons to explain this absence.

Faust and Gan admit that there is some evidence of continuous use of a few of these Iron Age tombs during the 6th century. This was observed at some sites in the land of Benjamin (Barkai 1992, p.372;1994, p.164; Carter 2003, p.307), and also in Kateph Hinnom, tomb 5 at Manilla, both of which are at Jerusalem (Carter 2003, p.307, Barkai 1992, p.372, Stern 2001, p.324), Beth-Shemesh (tomb 14; Barkai 1992, p.372). and in one of the tombs at Tel 'Ira (Beit Arieh et al.1999, p.162-166). While Faust and Gan are minimalistic in their comment on the caves that continued to be used, a survey by Barkay (1992 p.139-92) on katef Hinnon, a site popular for burial caves in Jerusalem, is to the contrary.

It showed vast evidence that several graves continued to be used even after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., prompting scholars such as Bastard (2003, p3-20) to conclude that some of the people who fled Jerusalem during the 586 B.C.E., siege were able to return at a later date. These continued with their normal life, including burying their loved ones in ancestral tombs. On the strength of the finds of these surveys, Bastard concluded that the reference in Ezekiel 33vs.24 of people 'who are living in ruins' is a reflection of this situation.

While it is true that some of these tombs indicated a cultural break, others could be found that exhibited continuity. Typical examples are of one tomb in Tel 'Ira, two in Jerusalem and one in Beth Shemesh and as discussed before, in the land of Benjamin (Yazerski 1995, p.114). While this may speak to the fact that continuity of the use of these tombs in the 6th century was limited, it does still speak to the fact that in some areas there was continued use.

Given the information shared earlier that these were burial sites of extended families in Israel, it may possibly mean that there were some whole families that survived the exile, or at least some people who were left behind who identified with the families that used to use those tombs. It therefore becomes surprising when Ezra and Nehemiah treat some of their relatives as strangers when these clearly were a part of the Judahite community who even continued known family traditions which had religious connotations.

Faust and Gan have argued that the number of caves was too small, indicating that only a small population existed in Judah during the 6th century and even these only used the tombs in the first generation. To them this is an indication that the majority of the Judahite population were taken to exile in the 6th century B.C.E., according to views expressed by Bustenay Oded (2003, p67).

It is notable however from what has been discussed so far on the subject that the poor did not use such tombs in the 8th-7th centuries. The disappearance of the tombs after this period therefore cannot be taken to indicate that the poorer of the population vanished or migrated too. Whether a large portion of the poor remained in the land or not cannot be determined by the mortuary evidence discussed above.

This same argument can be used to explain the change in demography, because as we know, at least from the biblical text, the poor of the land were left behind by the Babylonians during the siege; if any of the poor migrated, they probably did so because their lives revolved around the rich, where they got employment and different forms of social support such as schools for their children or health care facilities. The sustenance of such facilities may have depended on the presence of the rich.

It is not unusual even in modern day communities that, if or when an employer moves, the employees are left with no choice but to move to a place where a new employer can be found. Those who do not move, may decide to create an employer out of themselves. Many may have been in this situation during the exile. Due to limitedness of resources however, they may not have been able to build an economy significant enough to leave substantial material remains for the archaeologist to construct a case. Adding to the reasons already given, this may be another reason why Neo-Babylonian material culture was scant in certain areas.

Apart from the burial tomb, another dominant feature of the Israelite and Judahite social life during the Iron Age community is the four-room house (Faust 1999, p.190-206). This was arguably the most dominant type of house in the 8th-7th centuries B.C.E. This house had a superb functionality, suitable for the Israelite life and other needs.

According to Shilloh (1983 p.281), some rooms were used for storing animals, others for food preparation and others for sleeping. This same plan was used for both urban and rural settings, for the dwelling places of the rich, as well as for the poor. The facilities were self-contained, having the basics that a family needed for day-to-day sustenance. This reminds me of our own houses in the compounds at the farms. Though not at all modern, they also were self-contained, having the basic minimum that we needed to get by each day.

The construction of these houses in Ancient Judah ceased in the 6th century B.C.E., according to Holladay (1997, p.337). In light of the great importance of the house in the 8th-7th centuries, its disappearance in the 6th century is interesting. This is taken to explain a cultural break by scholars such as Fust and Gan in writings cited earlier.

A short-term use of this house in the 6th century however cannot altogether be dismissed. There is one that was uncovered at 'Alona not far from Jerusalem dated 6th century B.C.E. (Faust and Gan 2004, p165). This is indicative of continued use of such houses albeit on a small scale. Jeffery Zorn has attempted recently to date several large four roomed houses from Tell- en-Nasbeth to the 6th century (Zorn 1997). According to him, and several other scholars cited earlier, en-Nasbeth represents the city that became the capital of Judah in the early 6th century after the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. In this city, life continued as normal, therefore dating these houses to the 6th century is not outrageous.

Not many such houses, however, were found in Jerusalem dated to the same period. The apparent disappearance of the house is used by Faust and Gan (2004, p.168) as indicative of demographic decline in all classes during the Persian period. It is however possible that not all sites that could show such houses were excavated, or that the type of house used by the 'people of the land' during the Persian period was of a different nature. What is clear so far is that thousands of people remained in the land during the period of the exile; perhaps the type of houses they used shall be uncovered in the future.

That many houses have not been found in the excavations commented on by the scholars I have consulted cannot in itself be taken to indicate that there were no people in the land during the exile. I say so because even the most enthusiastic supporters of the 'empty land' and the 'Babylonian gap' thesis do not assume that Judah was truly vacant during this period. (Vanderhooft 1999, p.104-10, Stern 2000, p.51; 2001, p.321-26; Oded 2003:66-71).

From this perspective, the ultraconservative thesis presented by Faust and Gan carries many problems and does not stand the test of historical, archaeological, and biblical critiques. Even according to the Bible, there is no indication of an empty land. We also do not have examples from other areas in the Babylonian empire of complete and comprehensive deportation. As a matter of fact, Babylonians had a policy of destroying capital cities and deporting the elite, without causing internal destruction in all the territory. They also preserved rural settlements to get wine, olive oil, grain and other agricultural supplies as well as gain stability in the region, (Lipschits 199a;1999b, 481-82;2003, p.346-51).

What I have just done is to argue for presence of the 'people of the land' in Judah in the Persian period from the perspective of social and cultural changes. This study follows the tripolar theory, on the Zimbabwean pole I could as well carry out an autobiographical reading and argue that farm workers especially those of foreign origin were present in Zimbabwe due to observable social and cultural changes. The coming of foreign farm workers like my father did bring some social changes. For example, there was a dilution of the native languages with foreign languages.

A new flare of Shona emerged in Zimbabwe that had a touch of Nyanja, Chewa, Portugues or any of the languages spoken by migrant workers. Nick names such as *moscan, chikunda, nyasarande* were common among farm workers. My own name is not native, and after me, my two sons have Mozambican names. This is indicative of social and cultural changes that were brought about by the migrant farm worker community in Zimbabwe. I will comment on more evidence when I discuss the Zimbabwean pole of the study. For now, I return to discusions on Judah.

If the 'people of the land' were in large numbers and including very important families in the Judahite society, why does there seem to be a systematic preference of a desolate land over its alternatives in the Bible? Why is it that in the Hebrew Bible the images of the empty land and return stand so strong against the historical experience of the greater population that has been shown to have remained in the land during the exile (Neh vs.1-2)? Why is it that the Hebrew Bible seems to adopt a social memory that erases the experiences of those in the land during the exile (cf. Jer 41vs.17-18).

I would like to advance that the explanation to this approach in reading history may have much to do with discursive and ideological needs. The latter though does not exist in a vacuum, it is not only experienced but is also developed, and imagined within particular historical settings. I will now turn to this view.

2.17 The Biblical Account of the People of the Land and the Metanarrative of Continuity

Earlier on in the chapter, I advanced the idea that while the biblical understanding of those that remained in the land seems to share resonances with the thinking of a mass exile, leaving very few people in the land, it is much closer to the second view, which proposes that many people remained in the land. I will now share my reasons for this conclusion. Works by Ben Zvi will be very helpful in this explanation, but before turning to Ben Zvi, I will discuss the contestations in Ezra-Nehemiah which expose the presence of the 'people of the land'.

In Ezra-Nehemiah, the 'people of the land' mostly come to the fore in the contestations that occur between them and those that had gone into exile. The episodes that expose the presence of the 'people of the land' include the reconstruction of structural projects conducted first by Ezra and the associates of his time at the orders of king Cyrus (Ezr1vs.1-11), and later on those by Nehemiah at the orders of King Artaxerxes.

In the account of the Ezra section of Ezra-Nehemiah, the first project was the construction of the altar (Ezr. 3vs.1-6; cf. Ex 20vs.24-25;27vs.6-7). There is an allusion from this text that there was tension between the exiles that had returned and other people who were resident in the land of Judea over the reconstruction of the altar. The author/editor of Ezra suggests that the returned exiles built the altar amidst fear of the people around them (also identified as the 'people of the land').

The allusion to fear while reconstructing the altar suggests that the 'people of the land' were there and they were in numbers significant enough to cause the groups of the returnees to be worried. Breneman (1993, p.91-92) suggests that these people included those from Ashdod, Samaria, Ammon, Moab, Edom and Jews who had not gone into exile.

The second construction project during which the 'people of the land' were encountered was the temple construction (Ezr. 3vs.7-6 vs22). The returned exiles are recorded to have built the temple amidst mixed experiences between them and those that were in the land.

The author/editor of Ezra suggests that there was opposition to the reconstruction of the temple from various individuals, groups, enemies, kings or foreigners (Ezr. 4 vs.1-24). This opposition is recorded to have delayed the temple construction. That this opposition was strong enough to delay the reconstruction of the temple indicates that the 'people of the land' were not only in large numbers but also wielded significant power. This speaks against an earlier proposition that the 'people of the land' were few and very insignificant.

Apart from the reconstruction projects led by Ezra, the 'people of the land' are also encountered in the religious and cultural reforms by the returnees. Ezra vs.19-22, (cf. Ex 12vs.43-49 and 9vs.14) alludes to the idea that the returned community celebrated the Passover ceremony. In their celebration, some foreigners are mentioned to have taken part. These foreigners were part of the people encountered in the land during the return of the exiles. Thus, albeit from an inclusive perspective, this Passover meeting provides evidence of the presence of the 'people of the land'.

The Passover meeting was not the only religious episode in which we encounter the presence of the 'people of the land' in Ezra. Their presence is also mentioned in detail during the marriage reforms conducted by Ezra. In these reforms, Ezra is recorded as the leading figure in confrontation with the 'people of the land'. He led in this confrontation, armed with orders from the King of Persia to all people beyond the river Euphrates.

Ezra (8vs.24-36) records that Ezra had orders from the King of Persia for the leaders of the trans-Euphrates to cooperate with him in his work. That such orders were issued means that the land beyond the Euphrates, including Judea, had leaders, governors and people significant enough to be noted by the king, therefore the land was not vacant as some scholars labor to prove. Having looked at the above, I will now briefly comment on the marriage reforms implemented by Ezra.

The marriage reforms were brought about by a situation that Ezra viewed as an anomaly in which the returnees had married the 'people of the land'. Ezra 9vs.1-2 suggests that the returnees had joined the 'people of the land' in their abominations and also mingled the 'holy seed' with the 'people of the land' by marrying them.

Usue (2005, p.211) argues that it is evident that the 'people of the land' mentioned in this section of Ezra-Nehemiah are not Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, or Amorites. He argues that they are those Jews who had not gone into exile and were therefore not absorbed into the Golah community (cf. Klein 1999vs.733; Brenman 1993 vs.148). Usue goes on to suggest that by the time of Ezra, the Canaanite groups listed above did not exist anymore. If he is right, it further strengthens the argument that many among the Jews did not go into exile after the Babylonian of the 6th century on Judah.

This view also finds support in the research on the sociological classification of the strange women cited in Ezra 9-10 by Tamra C Eskenazi and Kent Richards (1994, p. 266-285). Their findings suggest that the women classified as strangers in this passage were likely Judahite or Israelite women who had not gone into either the Babylonian or the Assyrian exiles (cf. Grabbe 2000a, p.15).

It may have occurred that early Jewish returnees saw these women as appropriate for marriage when they met them in the land upon their return from exile. Ezra, probably informed by such Pentateuch passages as (Gen 15vs.19-21, Exodus 3vs.8,17;33vs.2;34vs.2; Deut. 7vs.1-6), viewed this intermarriage as a corruption of the 'holy seed' and also as unfaithfulness to their God. This contestation, like other episodes cited earlier, provides evidence of the presence of the 'people of the land' of a Jewish origin.

The exposition of the presence of the 'people of the land' in Judea is not complete without looking at their presence from the perspective of the Nehemiah section of Ezra-Nehemiah. Just as in the Ezra narrative, there are several contestations that bring about the presence of the 'people of the land'. The first one of these from the view point f Nehemiah is the construction of the city walls.

At the orders of and with the help of a foreign king, Artaxerxes, Nehemiah comes to Judah to take care of the challenges the returnees were facing in Jerusalem (cf. Neh 1vs.1-11; 2vs.1-9). One of his first works was to reconstruct the walls of Jerusalem, which still lay in ruins from the Babylonian raids of the previous century.

In the narrative, according to the author/editor of the book, Nehemiah encounters resistance in the reconstruction work from non-exiles (cf. Neh 2vs.10,19-20; 4vs.1-23;6vs.1-7vs.3). The non-exiles are recorded as having attempted to derail the work of reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem. Among those mentioned as leaders of these groups were Sanballat the Horonite, (his place of origin is mentioned in several portions of scripture. It was one of the regions surrounding the land of Judah that is, Hauran (cf. Eze 47vs.16-18), east of the sea of Galilee), Horonaim, in Moab (cf. Jer 43vs.8), or parts of Beth Horon 12 miles northwest of Jerusalem (Josh 10vs.10;16vs.3-5)), Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian.

Sanballat held the position of governor of Samariah (Neh 4vs.1-20) and Tobiah, who had very close ties to Jerusalem (cf. Neh 13vs.4-9), may have at some point held an administrative position over Judea (Brenman 1993, p.25-26, 31). The narrative details that in spite of the resistance, the work of constructing the walls was carried out to completion. In the process it also substantiates that the 'people of the land' were not just present in numbers but also had an organized leadership.

As in the Ezra narrative, the 'people of the land' are also mentioned during the religious and social reforms of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 9vs.1-38 records an account when those that had returned from exile came together for confession of their sins. The text clearly shows that those who took part in this religious ceremony had separated themselves from foreigners in order to qualify for this event (Neh 9vs.2).

The said separation from foreigners here mentioned is evidence of the presence of the 'people of the land', it is also possible that the 'people of the land' may have felt that they had a right to take part, either due to their Jewish origins or because there were certain Jewish religious ceremonies in which foreigners were allowed to take part (cf. 1 Kgs 8vs.41-43; 2 Chron 6 vs.32-33).

The returnees moved from the confession meeting to signing a resolution which they made on concluding their penitence. Those who were allowed to sign were those who are recorded in Nehemiah 10vs.28 to have separated themselves from 'the people of the in the land'. Here again we meet indications that the 'people of the land' had a significant presence.

The Nehemiah section of Ezra-Nehemiah concludes with the reading of the law of Moses, (Neh 13vs.1-9), which Nehemiah uses as the basis of his instruction in having the returnees separate themselves from the 'people of the land'. That Nehemiah saw it necessary to emphasize the reading of this law means to me that there was a constant possibility of mingling between those that had gone into exile and those that had not. This possibility suggests that those that had not gone into exile were present in numbers that could not be ignored by the leadership of those that had returned from exile.

Having highlighted the above, an important question becomes why we do not have significant mention of the activities of these 'people of the land' during the exile. The silence appears to indicate their non-existence. There are specific reasons however why the choice for a social memory in the Hebrew Bible did not seem to favor those that were resident in the land during the exile. We now turn to this thought.

Ben Zvi (p.163-68) has argued, that hinged on a Deuteronomist understanding, the concept of empty land was interwoven with a significant number of other central metaphors and metanarratives associated with the concept of 'Exile'. In other words, the biblical understanding of this concept does not just start with the collapse of monarchic Judah, but should be understood from the broader scope of Jewish life and history in general.

A result of these ideological and theological associations is that people could not easily reject the 'Empty land' motif without rejecting so many central motifs of thinking about the past binding the community together; after all Yehudite Israel was a text and memory centered community. It was built on the same textual understanding that informed Jewish life in general.

From the perspective of the Deuteronomist, the collapse of the monarchy, the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile were a result of the sins of Judah and its leaders, (cf. Isa 3vs.8; Lam 1vs.3; Micah 4vs.10, Hab 1vs.12-17, Jer 25vs.8-14). From this conclusion, people of Jewish origin felt that there was a need to rid Judah of the pollution caused by sinful activity during the monarchy. The logic thereof requires the land to pass through a period of purification, resting, replenishing and purging.

The ready metaphor of this is that of the fallow land (Lev. 26 vs.34-35, 43; 2 Chr.36 vs.31). Based on that understanding, Ben Zvi argues that a lack of people in the land would therefore be more consistent with that image than either their presence or their diminished presence (Lev. 18 vs.24-28;20 vs.22).

In any case, in the eyes of the Deuteronomist, any community living on the still 'populated' land, like those that did not go into exile, cannot fail to disappear. Within this logic, remaining in the land was either not an option or path to a dead end. After all, even the prophet of the time, Jeremiah, argued that it was necessary for Judah to surrender to the Babylonians because their coming to conquer Judah was the Lord's doing (Jer 38vs.17-19; cf. Isa 39vs.5-8). The returning community, as the Persian period Yehud would have imagined itself, would be more likely to be construed within this line of thought as re-established on a purified land.

Ben Zvi (p.163-68) suggested that a different consideration can be located with the post monarchic attributes accorded to the returning Judeans. As a nation they viewed themselves as the wife of the deity. Given the common hierarchical gender constructions and the 'maleness' of King/Shepherd or the deity it is only expected that Judah be construed in this discourse as God's wife. In this context, Judah's sin was imagined in terms of adultery, exile associated with divorce or at least the expulsion of Judah from God's space, and the hope for the future in terms of marital reconciliation (an example of the use of this metaphor is Hosea 1-3).

Now within the social and ideological logic of this image, Judah/ the wife could not have been imagined as half expelled from the matrimonial house, that is the land. Judah as a whole must be expelled from the land. Ben Zvi (p.163-68) suggests that it is from this perspective that those that remained in the land were not recognized.

This basic and common metaphor leads necessarily to a construction of the exile as full and complete, and to that of an empty land. Judah the female can also be construed in terms of Jerusalem (Eze 23), in which case, according to Ben Zvi, it has to be imagined as both fully destroyed and as rebuilt or about to be rebuilt. This is so because the metanarrative cannot conclude with the story of a final, irrevocable estrangement and permanent divorce between the wife and husband (Judah and God).

The language of the prayer that Nehemiah is narrated to have made seems to have such connotations as the views expressed above: 'Rember the instructions you gave your servant Moses, saying if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commandments, then even if your exiled people are at the furthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling place for my name' (Neh 1vs.8-9).

Ben Zvi went on to conclude that since both Jerusalem and the land of Judah symbolically represent the wife, then both Jerusalem and the land of Judea must be imagined as fully destroyed and the population of Judah as exiled in its entirety. This leaves no room for mention of those that remained in the land, but does not suggest that they were not in the land or that their numbers were insignificant.

In fact, Ben Zvi, (p.163-68) in the same book, argues that those that remained in the land were way more than those that were taken to exile. He goes to further, to suggest that those that returned from exile were few but had power due to the support rendered by the Persian government.

Those that remained were overshadowed by the preference of memory of the time. Due to the preferred memory, especially by those that documented and brought the Old Testament scriptures to their final form around this time, life is recorded to have shifted from monarchic Judah to provincial Yehud, from the monarchic temple to the Persian temple. Metanarratives of continuity between two different periods tend to de-emphasize the element and period of discontinuity. This explains why there is little narrative space allocated to any aspect of Neo-Babylonian or early Persian period that was not related to these dominant communities and metaphors.

In this light, the metanarratives centered on the primacy of Mizpah; the continuation and dominance of Neo-Babylonian Benjamin, areas such as the Shephelah, the presence of some people during the exile even in Jerusalem itself and other places is thus less and less evoked and becomes more absent from the main shared discourse.

In the metanarrative of Jerusalem to Jerusalem, Judah to Judah/ Yehud, the memories of the Benjaminites for example become more and more marginal, according to Ben Zvi (p.163-68). This of course, like I have highlighted earlier, does not mean that those who remained themselves became marginal. It means instead that their self-identity becomes subsumed under a more general one. Those living in Benjamin and others whose ancestors remained in the land in the various areas discussed in this chapter knew that the land was not empty after the destruction of the monarchic polity, and so did the few returnees and the literati in Jerusalem.

Preference was given to a social memory that was necessary to sustain numerous concepts and metaphors enabling the society to understand itself and maintain a sense of hope for the future expressed in terms of purified land, marriage with the Lord, permanent cultic divine presence and so on. The discourse had to bear a strong message of settlement discontinuity, exile, and empty land. Hence my argument that the biblical view is closer to the second view on the 'people of the land' than the first.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have been discussing the reality of the 'people of the land'. The 'people of the land' in this chapter referred to those of a Jewish origin who were not taken to exile, including the Samaritans who drifted into Judea from the north over a period of time, the people groups who gradually drifted into Judea from the south such as Arab groups and Idumeans, as well those groups who were deported and settled near Judea during the time the northern kingdom fell to Assyria. A particular example of this last group are those that came during the days of Esarhaddon as king in Assyria.

There are various schools of thought regarding these 'people of the land' and the extent to which they were spread by the time they encountered the returnees from exile. Of the varied schools of thought, two stand out: the first thought views the exile as near total and the land of Judah being desolate during the years of exile.

Scholars who subscribe to this belief base their arguments on the fact that there was a lack of material culture from the Neo Babylonian period in certain parts of Judah. To them, absence of material culture pointed to absence of life. These scholars view the 6th century as a period of general cultural and demographic decline. Their view is that if there are any people that remained, they were few, sparsely spread, and not very significant.

A closer look at submissions by these scholars, however, shows that their writings also provide evidence that there were people in the land and their numbers were not insignificant. Many among the scholars downplay the numbers, but admit that surveys do indicate the presence of life in Judah during the exile.

Opposing this view is a second school of thought. This view argues that only a small percentage, comprised mostly of nobles and elites, were the ones taken to exile, and for most of the population life went on just as normal as it had before 583 B.C.E. These base their arguments on the fact that most of the Judean population lived in rural Judah, and were hardly affected by Babylonian raids of the 6th century.

They argue that there is vast evidence of the presence of people in various parts of Judea during the 6th to the 5th centuries. These scholars suggest that for many areas very little demographic change can be witnessed between the 7th and the 6th centuries. Areas that are notable in this respect include such places as the Judean Hills, the Beer-Sheba-Arad Valleys, Hebron and Bethlehem, as well as the areas around Benjamin among others.

Apart from those of a Jewish background that remained in the land when Babylon raided, there are other people groups that were found in Judea when exiles returned. A significant source of some of these people was the former kingdom of Israel to the north of Judah. Due to Assyrian raids and influence, a lot of Samaritans drifted from the north and took up farming areas in Judea. Many of these remained in the land and formed part of the' people of the land' that the returnees in Ezra-Nehemiah would meet when they came from exile.

Apart from Assyrian raid induced movements, Samaritans were also found in the land because certain kings of Judah would make movement and interaction between the two places possible. Notable examples include Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, as well as Hezekiah. Hezekiah even sent invitations for inhabitants of the northern kingdom to attend religious ceremonies such as Passover feasts. Apart from the views expressed above, another perspective to consider is the account of the Hebrew Bible on the subject. At face value, biblical account appears to support the ideas of a desolation.

A closer look at it however shows that the Bible writers did not directly acknowledge the large numbers of those that remained because there was a preference for a social memory that was necessary to sustain numerous concepts and metaphors enabling/allowing the Jewish society to understand itself and maintain a sense of hope for the future, expressed in forms of a purified land, marriage with the Lord, permanent cultic divine presence, among others.

It is for this reason that the focus of the Bible writer was on those that left the land, who were expelled from the presence of their God, and their future reunion on the land with their God. Anything and anyone else outside this is not a center of focus. A summary of all schools of thought looked at above is that there were more people left in the land than those taken to exile. In the biblical account they were just not acknowledged.

Chapter 3: The Land, the Economy and Migration

3.0 Introduction

In the foregoing chapter, I acknowledged my use of the tripolar theory in this study. What I shared in that chapter, is part of the biblical pole. I am yet to share two other poles. The chapter that I introduce now does not bring about a new pole, but it rather is a second part of the first of my three poles. It is an extension/continuation of the biblical pole. I now invite the reader to this second part of the fist pole.

In the previous chapter I have sought to establish the view that the Babylonians did not bring Judah to total ruin. As a way of transitioning to the focus of this chapter, and in summary form, I will begin by presenting some of the scholarly views that motivated the conclusion in the previous chapter. The conclusion is that Judah was not left completely desolate after Babylonian raids in the 6th century B.C.E.

Charles C Torrey (1910 p. 288) postulated that when the Babylonians raided Judah, they carried into exile only those that they could capture and that these were relatively few in number. Torrey further suggested that the exile affected only a very small part of the population, and most inhabitants returned to their homes and continued to live their lives the same way they had lived before the Babylonian conquest.

Torrey's thesis greatly fueled conversation among scholars. Among the most prominent of these scholars was William Albright, who contrary to Torrey, suggested that the Babylonians destroyed many sites leading to great suffering of both the environment and people (Albright 1960 p.142). Albright's views suggested discontinuity of occupation in Judah during the exile. Torrey's views on the other hand argued for continuity. In the previous chapter my argument was in support of the thesis of continuity.

Among other scholars who support the same thought as shown in the previous chapter are the recent works by Bastard, who like Torrey argued that Judah was not devastated following the Babylonian campaign and life for most Judeans continued much as before. He further put across the view that the land of Judah could not have been empty because the Babylonians could not have deported the whole population (Bastard 2002, p.37-8).

On the same note, Joseph Blenkinsopp proposes that the destruction was partial: 'In both Judah and Philistia, Babylonian punitive expeditions were directed to the central foci of revolt, and it is difficult to see what point would have been served by wholesale devastation of the country' (Blenkinsopp (2002, p.87). An even more recent scholar, Lipschits (2013 p. 69), also rejects the idea that all the kingdom's territories were destroyed and that the population in its entirety was deported. He suggests rather that a total devastation of the entire region would have been contrary to Babylonian interests.

It is also noted in the previous chapter that although the scholars that argue for discontinuity emphasize that the Babylonian blow was catastrophic, they do not themselves believe that the land was completely empty. It is noteworthy that none of the scholars who believe that the 6th century was a period of great demographic decline in Judah attribute this decline solely or even primarily to a forced migration or deportation. Clearly, as I have shown in the evidence proposed in the previous chapter, the entire population was not exiled.

On the basis of the foregoing and other evidence, my argument in the previous chapter has been in support of the argument that Babylonian raids did not bring Judah to complete ruin. I proposed, on the strength of observations by several scholars, that a number of cities, villages and farms were inhabited during the period of the exile.

My observations were that the areas associated with Benjamin and the northern Judean Hills hosted the largest population of those that did not go to exile and that, though lower, a human population was found in several other areas. A typical example of such an area is Idumea (the southern and the southwestern boundary of Judah). Here, evidence of the presence of Arab and Edomite people could be encountered in excavations. This was particularly the case in the Beer-Sheba and Arad Valleys, parts of the southern Judean Highland, and the southern Shephelah (Lipschits 2005 p. 134).

The reasons why Babylon did not destroy the whole of Judea are several. Some of them, together with evidence of the existence of the 'people of the land' have already been given in the previous chapter. In this chapter I will comment on at least two of them. Elaborating the reasons is valuable for putting across the major argument that l seek to present in this chapter, that is, the view that, at the hands of those returning from exile, the 'people of the land' lost land, an economy they had built over the period of the exile and that they suffered the negative effects of migration when they had to move off the lands they occupied.

In the process of my putting this argument across, I will provide further evidence of the existence of the 'people of the land' in Judah. This is despite the fact that this area is already given attention in the previous chapter.

Literature reviewed in this chapter shows differentials in power between those Jews returning from exile such as Ezra and Nehemiah, and those groups that remained in Yehud during the exile. While the presence and influence of the powerful returnees – shadowed by the somewhat restless 'people of the land' is noted and commented on – the formative dynamics and far-reaching effects of land reoccupations by the returnees, loss of an economy on the part of the 'people of the land' and a consequent migration complication for those that had drifted into Yehud during the exile, have seldom been conceptualized in a systematic and empirical manner.

In this chapter I attempt to bring to the fore these effects of land reoccupations by the returnees, the loss of an economy which the 'people of the land' had built over the years of the exile and the resultant migration complications as some of the displaced 'people of the land' sought alternative settlement. To achieve this, I will divide this chapter into three sections, a section focusing on the returnees and land reoccupations, a second section focusing on the economic effect of the returnees on the structure of the economy in Judah and finally a section on the migration complications faced by the displaced 'people of the land'. I emphasize here again that all these sections I have just mentioned remain part of the first pole of my use of the tripolar theory.

Scholars submit that two of the reasons why Babylon did not bring Judah to complete ruin are that Babylon needed Judah as a military buffer zone against Egypt (Finklestein and Silberman, 2001 p.308), and also as a source of agricultural products to sustain its vast empire (Bastard 2003 p.6-13). This view is shared by many biblical scholars. Lipschits (1999 p.154-190), a very recent voice, is one of them.

While commenting on Babylonian activity in the area of Benjamin, he noted that when the Babylonians took over control of the entire territory of 'Hatti-Land', Judah became one of the empire's border points facing Egypt. This naturally made Judah important for both Babylon and the Egyptians to access each other. Completely destroying Judah was, therefore, not the most strategic thing for the Babylonians to do. For this reason, Babylon, according to Lipschits, made Judah one of the provinces in its empire when it subjugated kingdoms under its care into provinces.

Although we have no direct evidence from primary sources that Judah was a province of Babylon and later on of Persia, Carter's study of the Yehud seals and seal inscriptions suggests this conclusion (Carter,1999, p. 259-68). From the study of the seals, Carter proposed the possible extent of the province and from inscriptions he got information on some of the governors as well as provincial administrative officials that led the province of Judah during the Babylonian and Persian periods.

The text of Ezra-Nehemiah also confirms the possibility that Judah may have been a province of Babylon and later on of Persia when Babylon passed off the scene. An excerpt from the letter that Tattenai wrote to king Darius refers to Judah as a province (Ezr. 5vs.8; cf. Neh. 1vs.3; 7 vs.6;11vs.13).

I would like to surmise that Babylon would not have brought to ruin any part of Judah, except for what Lipschits (1999 p. 158) calls the 'fool hardy and unstable leadership of the kingdom of Judah, together with the messianic ferment mounting up within', which fanned the flames of revolt. This made it plain that Babylon had to lay waste the kingdom's capital and temple, and to exile the royal house together with the elite of the nation.

From the evidence preserved in the Hebrew Bible, as we shall see below, it is evident that after the destruction of the capital and the temple, the Babylonians generally avoided doing the same to the rest of the kingdom Judah. This is particularly true of the region of Benjamin and the areas north of the Judean mountains. It can be assumed that in these areas the Judean inhabitants who did not go into exile were concentrated and amongst them the existence of the 'people of the land' of Judah continued.

Part of my task in this chapter is to prove that these people who did not go into exile lost land when those that had gone into exile returned. This loss of land on the part of the 'people of the land' has similarities to our own loss of land as farm worker families in post-colonial Zimbabwe as the reader shall see later on. A brief look into the biblical and other evidence for their existence will assist in supporting my argument. We will now turn and consider such evidence, starting with the views from the Hebrew Bible.

The Benjamin region became the centre of the people who remained in the land of Judah following the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the elite who resided there. Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shafan was appointed to an official position of leading this group of people (2 Kgs. 25vs.22; cf. Jer. 40vs.6), and he had his capital at Mizpah (2 Kgs. 25vs.23,25; Jer. 40 vs.6,10,12,13,15; 41vs.1,3). According to Jeremiah 40vs.10, Gedaliah was formally the head of the community that remained in Judah.

It appears that the center at Mizpah which Gedaliah would then go on to be leader of had been established by the Babylonians before their final destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 40 vs. 10). The chief indication of this, from which we also learn of the existence of an organized Judean group possessing rights on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem, is found in the account of the last attempts by Jeremiah to persuade king Zedekiah to leave the city and surrender to the Babylonians, with the aim of preventing destruction (Jer. 38vs.14-26).

In response to the prophet's request, the king is recorded in the Hebrew Bible to have said (vs.19), 'I am afraid of the Jews that have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they abuse me' (Jer. 38 vs. 19). The statement by king Zedekiah reveals the presence of two groups with different political orientations in Judah: on the one hand, a group that did not believe that the rebellion stood a chance and therefore quickly surrendered to the Babylonians and were allowed to continue with life outside the city of Jerusalem.

This group constitutes those that did not go into exile. The Hebrew Bible suggests that the destination of some of these people was the land of Benjamin as well as areas around the northern Judean hills. They joined those that were already in Benjamin who had surrendered earlier and were allocated land and houses by Gedaliah. In the process, they facilitated the formation of an alternative center to Jerusalem under Babylonian protection. At this center all the preparations were done for the continuation of Judean existence after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 40vs.6).

On the other hand, there was an opposing group made up of those that supported the rebellion and were therefore besieged in the city. These mostly comprised the elite and members and workers of the royal families.

The antagonism between these two groups, which would also manifest many years later at the return from exile, is seen in the harsh treatment that was meted on Jeremiah by the leaders of the rebellion in Jerusalem for refusing to join them (Jer. 37vs.12-16; 38 vs.1-13). We read that for trying to move from those that opposed Babylonian occupation to join those that supported it, Jeremiah was persecuted. It becomes clear that at this point that those that went into exile and those who did not became two groups that were clearly distinct and did not agree with each other's decisions.

In my view, as l have also highlighted in the last section of the previous chapter, some of the key factors that led to this distinction of the two groups are that:

1. Inspired by the Deuteronomist backed political understanding that the God of Judah (viewed as the husband), will never let Judah (viewed as the wife), fall to its enemies, one group decided to fight against the Babylonians. On the other hand, the other group, inspired by the admonitions from Jeremiah that they needed to surrender and survive, decided to accept Babylonian domination.

2. When the first group was exiled, they viewed the exile as similar to their God divorcing his wife Israel and leaving the land defiled. At the point of return, they viewed themselves as a purified Judah ready to reunite with her husband on refound pure land. They then saw those that did not go into exile as having not gone through the necessary purification.

In the same vein as those that had gone into exile believed that they fought for the land in the fires of foreign domination and were therefore pure, the Zimbabwean war veterans that we shall encounter in the second pole, believed that they had fought and shed blood for the land. Just as those coming from exile could not see the reason to share land with the 'people of the land', the Zimbabwean war veterans could not be induced into giving a portion to people like my father, a foreign national. Thus, my father's story like that one of the 'people of the land' in Judah was a tale of sorrow.

It is hardly surprising that when those that had gone into exile returned, they found it hard to accept those that did not. The returnees then felt justified to take back land previously reallocated by Gedaliah and any other land occupied during the years of the exile. Resultantly, those that did not go into exile lost land and an economy they had developed over the years and under great pain. Their displacement from the land they occupied resulted in several migration related challenges (Magezi and Magezi 2020, p.6).

Below is my attempt to expose these issues in greater detail. I will start by looking at the question of land then proceed with the question of the economy and before closing the chapter with a look at the question of migration.

3.1 The Returnees and the Question of Land

A cursory survey of the broader perspective of land ownership and real estate in the Ancient Near East in general shows that land holding could be divided into three types: privately owned land, priestly land and royal land. In line with this categorization, a real estate study of the Ancient Near East by Michael Hudson and Baruch Levine (1999 p.254-260) identified and suggested the following forms of land holding:

1. Private ownership through a sale or inheritance

   Under this form of land holding, property could be sold from one party to another for an amount of silver. An oath that this transfer would not be contested in the future was sworn in front of a witness. Following this, a tablet bearing evidence of the transaction was dated. Such a contract was kept by the new owner of the house, who was also given existing earlier sale documents from the archive of the seller. These documents could either be kept by the seller or transferred to a public archive in a temple, (Jer 32vs.9-12; Rut 4 vs.7-8).

   Property could also be acquired through inheritance. In this form of land holding, a deceased father could have his property divided among his sons who were supposed to protect this family property for generations. Just like in Israel, family property was jealously guarded such that in the event that one had to sell their property or a part of it, it had to be to one of their brothers. A property divided among four brothers for example, could eventually be owned by two or one of them (Num. 27 vs.1-11).

2. Priestly property

   Temple personnel owned the property they lived on. Priests and other temple dependents could buy or sell their houses. The temple did not own property in the areas where the priests and other temple dependence lived (Num 18 vs.20-24; Lev 7 vs.31-34).

The land holding scenario in Judah is not very different from that of the Ancient Near East in general. Before I look at this in greater detail, I will pause here just mention that for farm workers in Zimbabwe during the Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement programme a different land ownership structure existed. We as farm worker families did not own any land, our only claim to land was on the basis of service rendered on the farm. For example, my father controlled a small portion of land where we grew our maize to supply our staple throughout the year but this land was owned by the white farmer who employed him. This we will discuss in greater detail when we consider the second pole of this study. I offer now an analysis of land holding in Judah below.

Jeremiah 41 vs.10-12 suggests that the Babylonians allowed Gedaliah, as the official head of the community that remained, the powers to distribute land and houses to ensure opportunities for a livelihood for all who would settle in the 'land of Judah'. Lipschits (1999 p. 154-190) proposes that in consequence of such assurances, and in view of the stabilization of the alternative regime in Judah, a process began after the destruction of Jerusalem of the assembly of refugees in the Benjamin region and in areas north of the Judean mountains under Gedaliah's leadership (Jer. 40vs.11-12).

Notable from this text of the Hebrew Bible is the fact that reallocation of land may have had nothing to do with which tribe previously owned what land. Joshua had previously allocated land according to tribe, but at this point we have no evidence that this is the same method that Gedaliah followed. It is not surprising that during the years of the exile, some may have been allowed to return to their ancestral land after the siege was past and others were allowed to claim other productive land left behind by those taken to exile (Grabbe 2000b p.406).

It is also important to note that due to its proximity to Samariah, the land of Benjamin also played host to many Samaritans who had drifted from the north over a number of years. This whole group would form part of the people who took up farms and resided in Judah during the years of the exile (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2000 p. 218).

Gedaliah led Judah from Mizpah for a very long time; this allowed him to allocate land not only to the Jews that remained but also to other people groups that were in and around Judea at this time. Those would include the Samaritans, noted above to have drifted from the north and those of other tribes and nations that had already been in the land (Ahlstrom 1993 p. 799, Cogan Tadmor 1988 p.327, cf. Harrison 1973 p. 161).

After Gedaliah's assassination, some of the 'people of the land' are reported to have left for Egypt, but their number was small. The greater portion of the population remained in the land, (Jer. 41 vs.16, 2Kgs. 25 vs.23b; Jer. 40vs. 8b). The account in Jer. 52 vs.30 in which 745 Jews were exiled in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar (582/1 B.C.E.) shows that Judean settlement persisted in Benjamin and the northern part of the Judean hills beyond the time of Gedaliah.

3.2 The Process of Land Ownership in Judah prior to the Exile

In order to fully understand the question of land reoccupations at the return of the exiles, I wish to explore the processes of land ownership in Judah prior to the exile. For information on this Oded Borowski (1987 p.3-30) is a valuable source. Borowski carried out a biblical survey on the question of land ownership and tenure in ancient Israel. His views will provide an important background to the study of the loss of land suffered by those who did not go into exile.

Borowski (1987, p.30) suggests that it is not very easy to paint a very accurate picture of land ownership in Israel, even for the period before the states divided. This is because the Hebrew Bible does not systematically present information regarding land tenue. Archaeology is not of much help on this matter either, because the number of documents discovered in the land of Israel is small. Only a small collection, the Samaria Oraca, is directly related to the subject of land tenure, but with direct reference to the Iron Age. For this reason, providing direct answers to questions such as who owned land, how ownership was acquired, how ownership was maintained, even the process of how land could be purchased, is not an easy task.

In the text of the Hebrew Bible, the underlying concept regarding land ownership is that the Lord owns all land (Lev 25vs.23). All three patriarchs were promised by the Lord that the land would be theirs and their children's (Gen 12 vs.7; 13vs.14-17; 15vs.7,18; 17vs.8; 24vs.7; 26vs.3-4; 28vs.4,13-15; 35vs.12; 48vs.4). One way of fulfilling this promise was by business transactions, as indicated in the purchase of the cave of Machpelah by Abraham (Gen 23) and the land near Shechem by Jacob (Gen 33vs.19).

The Israelite conquest of Canaan, as documented in the canonical narrative, was another way of achieving the same goal. The connection between the promise to the patriarchs and the conquest of Canaan is made clear on the eve of Joshua's campaigns on Canaan (Josh 1vs.2), as well as in the speech that Joshua makes at the renewal of the covenant at Shechem (Joshua 24).

Joshua and the Israelite nation he led felt justified to conquer Canaan because part of the Deuteronomist ideology was that all land belonged to the God of Israel (Lev 25:23 cf. Deut. 2:5; Deut. 2:9). Later on in this thesis, we shall consider the land resettlement program in Zimbabwe between the years 2000 and 2002, here we will also see a similar concept at play. We will meet groups that took over land justifying their actions on the basis of the ideology that the land belonged to the blood of the ancestors (Zimbabwe Ndeye Ropa Remadzibaba).

Putting everything together, it is possible to recognize three types of land ownership in the Hebrew Bible: (1) private, (2) royal, and (3) priestly. We will briefly take a look at each one of these.

3.3 Privately Owned Land

The Hebrew Bible has portions that suggest the idea of private land ownership. This right to private land ownership was secured by participation in the conquest. Joshua 13-19 details how land was divided by lot among the tribes following their participation in the conquest. Each tribe then went on to further divide and distribute its land according to clan and families. A concept similar to the, 'Zimbabwe ndeye ropa' mentioned above. This kept land within the family's blood line. This concept on the Zimbabwean scene however, deprived some people like my father, (Arajo Foromoz Chambalama who was part of (farm workers of foreign origin) because they were not part of the bloodline that had claim over land.

Having been allocated land, each family guarded its inheritance zealously. We learn from the story of Naboth (1 Kgs 21vs.1-3) that each family would do all it could not to lose its land. The many inheritance laws found in the Old Testament provided for the family land to stay intact within the family or clan. Obvious Vengeyi commented on the story of Naboth and suggested that, the Israelites were influenced by the idea from a human relations perspective, namely that land is inseparably connected with the spirituality, identity, history and wellbeing of a person.

This he said, makes land as an inheritance an entitlement. He argued further that this thinking guided the Israelites prior to the introduction of foreign philosophies that reduced land to an economic asset in the 9th century B.C.E.

According to him, the struggle between Ahab and Naboth revealed the disharmony that was created after the 9th century. The vehemence with which Naboth, a peasant, resisted the King's request to exchange and buy ancestral land showed that peasants refused to recognize both the foreign ideology and its local agents. 'Naboth and the peasants were aware of the human factor content and were prepared to die in defense of their birth right as did Naboth' (Vengeyi 2014 p.59).

We will interact with Vengei again on the question of land when we shall look at the Zimbabwean section of this thesis. Before we do that, it would be helpful that I point out in advance that Vengeyi (2014 p.59) believes that a similar concept obtains among Africans (of which Zimbabweans are part). We shall hear him later expand his view that, 'from African perspective, the loss of land is the loss of everything that defines an African.' Having said this, we turn our focus back to private land holding in Israel.

In the event of economic hardship or some other constraining circumstances, a provision was there in Israelite law where a person could dispose of their land through a sale. Selling off land was, however, not the first option, even when hard times would befall a person. To avoid selling their land, a person would first sell himself (Lev.25vs.39) or his children (Exod. 21vs.7-11) as slaves rather than sell his land. While there was a provision of returning the land to its original owner, this provision usually worked within the years of the Jubilee within which the sale was made (that is within 50 years, cf. Lev. 25 vs.25).

Land for agricultural purposes and land in the city were not treated the same. For example, a house sold in a walled city could be redeemed within a year. If it was not redeemed within that year it would belong to the buyer (Borowski 1987 p.26). On the other hand, a house sold in an unwalled village was considered part of agricultural inheritance and would revert to the original owner in the year of Jubilee according to the biblical narrative in Lev. 25. It is important to note that the Babylonian conquest affected mostly Jerusalem and left the countryside virtually un affected. From this view, I conclude that village and farmland was left in the hands of the families that had inherited it from their forefathers.

It is also key that I highlight that, based on the traditions described above, redemption of property in a city was within one year of the transaction. While many of the people that had taken up city spaces may have drifted in and not bought the properties, I wish to argue that they had 'owned' those properties for more than the one year within which the land was expected to revert back to its original owner. For one to return and claim the same land after more than 50 years of absence was not within the provisions of the laws governing land at that time.

Since the exile was not total, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the people that remained may have resided on their ancestral land up to the time those that had gone to exile would return. We are not told that when the returnees repopulated areas such as Jerusalem, they allowed those of the 'people of the land' residing on ancestral land to stay on. This can only mean that these 'people of the land' suffered displacement from land which they had rightfully come to own.

Evidence of their resistance to displacement can be found in biblical and extra biblical sources, (Ezr. 5 vs.1-17) (Walton et al 1997, p.465). It is however not within the scope of this thesis to delve deeper into issues around such resistance at this point.

It should be noted that not all Israelites were land owners at all times. Under certain circumstances some families had to sell their land and even themselves. Others had to hire themselves out and work for wages, either as day laborers (Lev 19vs.13; Deut. 24vs.14), or by the year (Lev 25vs.50,53; Isa. 16 vs.14; 21vs.16), and others belonged to the landless population even until the return of the exiles.

I assume that the fate of these was similar to that of the people whose farms they worked on; they too were displaced and had to go through the struggles of seeking alternative settlement. This situation mirrors what happened to farm workers in Zimbabwe during the year 2000 Land Reform and Resettlement Programme, especially farm workers of foreign origin. I particularly relate because my family was part of this group. They suffered the same fate as the white commercial farmers on whose land they worked. We shall see this in the second pole later on in the thesis.

Private land ownership did not cease throughout the history of the divided monarchy. Accounts in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah show that private land ownership still existed in Judah. The warning of Isaiah, 'Woe to those who join house to house. Who add field to field, until there is no more room' (5vs.8), refers to the accumulation of wealth by a small number of people at the end of the 8th century B.C.E.

It is obvious that this accumulation of land by certain individuals was possible because there were still private land owners who wanted or had to sell their land. But the sale of land around Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah did not eliminate the small land owner. Even in the final days of Jerusalem before its sack by the Babylonians, land tenue laws were still observed, at least to a certain extent.

While Jerusalem was under siege, Jeremiah acted within the confines of these land tenure laws when he bought his uncle's field, located in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (32vs.6-14). While there is no way of determining how much land was left in the hands of large plantation owners, the account documented in the book of Jeremiah shows that the laws regarding family inheritance were still known and observed in the first quarter of the 6th century B.C.E.

Apart from private land ownership, another form of land holding was that of land owned and controlled by the royal family. Borowski (1987 p.26) refers to this land as royal estates. Farm size under this form of holding was usually very large. In the next section, we discuss this form of land holding.

3.4 Royal Estates

While private land ownership is found in the law codes, this is not the case with royal estates. These are found in the historical texts instead. Royal estates seem to trace their origins to Saul, the first king of Israel. The book of Samuel depicts Saul as belonging to the landed segment of the Israel community (1 Sam 9vs.3, 11vs.5). Saul himself had vast amounts of property, which was inherited by David, who would later hand it to Saul's son Meribaal (2 Sam.12vs.8 ;2 Sam 9vs.9-10).

Borowski (1987 p.27) suggests that Saul was the first king to grant land to his servants. He deduces this conclusion from 1 Samuel 22vs.7-8 where Saul made an attempt to discourage his servants from joining David, 'Hear now you Benjaminites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vine yards…?' Before this, royal estates were generally unknown in Israel.

Following a survey of the Hebrew Bible, Borowski (1987 p.27) suggests six ways by which royal land could have been acquired. These are put across in his words below:

1. Military conquest, as was done by David who conquered Jerusalem and called it the 'City of David' (2 Sam. 8 vs.6).
2. Taking possession of vacant land, as happened with the land of the Shunamite woman (2 Kgs 8 vs.1-6).
3. Buying, as was the case with Araun's threshing floor (2Sam.24 vs.24, 1Chr. 21 vs.22-24).
4. Exchanging with other commodities, as happened between Solomon and Hiram of Tyre (1Kgs 9 vs.11-14).
5. Receiving land and cities as presents, as when Solomon received Gezer from the Egyptian Pharaoh (1 Kgs 9 vs.16).
6. Confiscating land from domestic enemies charged with treason, as with the land that had been granted to Meribaal, (2 Kgs 9 vs.7, 16vs.1-4).

Earlier on we noted that when Gedaliah assumed the position of leader in Judah during the exile, he allocated land to those that had no land. It is very possible that part of the land that he gave to those that sought land was part of the royal estates. This is possible because the exile targeted mostly the elite and the royal families. After the royal families and the elite were taken to exile, large farms might have been left unclaimed and lying idle.

I deduce that the farms were large from the fact that David's land was so large that it had to be managed by several overseers (1 Chr. 27vs.25-31). I however say this statement with caution knowing that the word 'large' is relative.

Scripture also records that there were large numbers of farm workers on these royal owned estates. These included slaves and forced labor (1 Kgs 5 vs.27, cf. Grabbe 2004 p.9). This practice seems to have been prevalent during the days of King David and also continued through the days of Asa (1 Kg 15vs.22), and Jehoiakim (Jer. 22 vs. 13). Many of the farm workers were taken to exile together with their masters; some of them are recorded among the returnees from exile, (Ezr. 2:55; Ezr. 2:58; Neh. 7:57; Neh. 7:60; Neh. 11:3).

It is also possible that a good number of the slaves and farm workers remained in Judah and took over land belonging to their former masters. At the return of the descendants of these masters, land was taken back. Among the leaders of those that returned was Zerubbabel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin of Judah (1 Chrn 3vs.17) and therefore a descendant of David. Born in Babylon during the exile of Judeans, Zerubbabel possibly laid claim to the royal farms left by those of his family.

There is no record of Zerubbabel or any other leader among the returnees either allowing the slaves and farm workers that had not gone to exile to retain their master's land they had occupied through the years of the exile or allocating land to them since they initially did not belong to the community that owned land.

A third form of land holding can be referred to as priestly land. This was land controlled by individuals that were attached to the temple. This will be the last form of land holding we will discuss here.

3.4 Priestly land

This is called priestly land because it was land only open for use by priests. This land was attached to local sanctuaries, as opposed to ownership by individuals. It included land vowed to the Lord (Lev 27 vs.19-21), as well as cities allocated for use by priests. A total of 48 cities are recorded in the Hebrew Bible as having been allocated to priests (Num. 35 vs.1-8). Key information on this type of land is found in the biblical narrative of Joshua 21.

Here I wish to highlight for the benefit of the reader that the idea of the conquest as presented in the biblical narrative is not the only possible explanation for the occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. There are other explanations which include the peaceful infiltration theory and the peasant uprising theory. In the context of my study however, I will limit myself to the conquest theory as understood from the biblical narrative perspective for reasons I have already shared in the introductory chapter of this study.

Borowski (1987 p.29) has noted that overall, the Priests/ Levites were allocated approximately 192000 dunams of land, breaking down to an estimate of 4000 dunams around each allocated city. If these accounts and calculations are correct, it means that priestly families, just like their royal counterparts, owned and controlled large tracts of land. A total of 13 cities are recorded in Hebrew Bible to have been allocated to the priests. These cities came together with farms used as pasture lands (Jos 21 vs.19-21).

From a summation of what I have said so far regarding the question of land, I conclude that there were at least five types of land occupants in Judah by 538 B.C.E., when those that had gone to exile began to return.

1. Those that had been allocated land by local leaders such as Gedaliah. It is possible that subsequent leaders/ governors allocated land or allowed people to occupy vacant land. It is possible that people like Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah had land related business interests in Judah.

2. Those that were left on ancestral land (private land owners). These include families that were not taken into exile at all, as well as families in which some members survived the siege.

3. Farm workers and slaves from royal estates, as well as any royal relatives who may have been left behind when their counterparts went to exile. I say that many of them survived because estates were mostly located in the country side, which largely survived the Babylonian raids.

4. Priests and Levites that survived and therefore continued to use priestly land. The book of Nehemiah mentions Eliashib as being the high priest in Judah at the time of Nehemiah's return from exile around 445 B.C.E. (Neh. 3vs.1). Other priests are also mentioned (Neh 2vs.16-18).

5. Those that had bought land from local owners, for as stated earlier, a provision was there to sell land in the event of economic hardship.

Following the siege, it is possible that a season of hardship ensued, especially because markets in Jerusalem had been destroyed.

All these land 'ownerships' suffered severe interruptions from 539 B.C.E., onwards, that is, when those that had gone to exile began to return. These interruptions are relatable to such interruptions on land as my father and other farm workers of foreign origin suffered during land reoccupations of the year 2000 in Zimbabwe as the reader shall see later on. At this point in my analysis, we now turn to the areas that were occupied by the returnees at the conclusion of the exile.

3.5 The Land on which the Returnees Settled

In chapter 2 we noted those areas that were occupied by the 'people of the land'. In this chapter so far, we have established the forms of land holdings that were found in the Old Testament. We will now compare what areas where already occupied to areas that the returnees took over upon their return from exile. My aim is to substantiate the argument that the 'people of the land' suffered displacement. In the process of doing this, I will make use of an analysis of the biblical text of Ezra-Nehemiah carried out by Lester L Grabbe in 2004, as well as a summary of the results of an archaeological analysis of the same texts carried out by Israel Finkelstein in 2008.

These two are important because they provide views from different perspectives. It should be noted that there is a general lack of ancient Near Eastern sources on Yehud. Discussion on this epoch of time, has thus focused mostly on biblical texts and archaeology (Finkelstein 2008 p.1). These two will therefore be key in providing information. We will begin by looking at the views posited by Grabbe.

Lester Grabbe has documented an analysis of the lists of places occupied by the returnees as recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah. His analysis of the lists can help us understand the areas in which the returnees settled. Understanding this settlement pattern assists us also in deducing to what extent this new settlement pattern overlapped with the already existing one, in the process creating a land crisis for those that did not go into exile.

In his analysis of the areas occupied by the exiles on their return to Judah, Grabbe divided the material to two lists. The firsts list grouped the sites of settlement mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah. The second one names the families that are said to have settled there. These lists are also analyzed by Lipschits (2005 p.156-158). We will take a look at the one that refers to settlement first. Of the listings that seem to refer to sites of settlement, I find the following to be of interest to my research:

1. Gibeon (Neh. 7vs25; Ezra 2 vs.21 has Gibbar)
2. Bethlehem (Ezr. 2vs.21; Neh. 7 vs.26). Allocated to the tribe of Judah by Joshua, (Jos. 15:1-63).
3. Bethel (Ezr. 2vs.28; Nehe.7vs.2).
4. Netophah near Bethlehem, allocated to the Tribe of Judah by Joshua.
5. Anathoth (Ezra 2vs.26/ Neh. 7 vs.30), a town in territory of Benjamin assigned to the Levites (Jos 21 vs.8).
6. Azmaveth (Ezr. 2 vs.24 or Beth Azmaveth in Neh. 7vs.28) is associated with el-Chizma, a village a little to the North of `Anata (Anathoth). It was probably part of the territory allocated to the tribe of Judah.

7. Kiriath-jearim (Neh. 7 vs.29; Ezra 2vs.25). Kiriath-Jearim was allocated to the tribe of Judah and served as a boundary marker between Judah and Benjamin. It was one of the Gibionite cities.
8. Ramah (Ezr. 2vs.26 / Neh. 7 vs.30).
9. Geba (Ezr. 2vs.26 / Neh. 7 v.30), a town on the northeastern boundary of the tribe of Benjamin (Jos. 18vs.24), allocated to the Levites (Jos. 21 vs.17).
10. Mishmash (Ezra 2vs.27/ Neh. 7 vs.33), a town east of Bethel associated with the tribe of Benjamin.
11. Ai (Ezr. 2 vs.28 / Neh. 7 vs.32) was allocated to Joshua by the God of Israel according to Joshua 8 vs. 23-29.
12. Nebo (Ezr. 2 vs. 29 / Neh. 7 vs.33), allocated to the tribes of the clans of Benjamin.
13. Magbish (Ezr. 2vs.30); Magbish is mentioned in the Bible as a town in Benjamin. It is noted that 156 inhabitants of Magbish returned from exile with Zerubbabel, as recorded in Ezra 2vs.30.
14. Harim (Ezr. 2 vs.32 / Neh. 7 vs 35) seems to refer to the name of a family that returned from exile and settled in Judah (Ezr. 2 vs.39).
15. Lod (Ezr. 2 vs.33 / Neh. 7 vs. 37) is a town associated with the territory of Benjamin, where returnees settled on return to Judah.
16. Hadid (Ezr. 2vs.33 / Neh. 7vs.37), The Bible associates this town with the tribe of Benjamin.
17. Ono (Ezr. 2 vs. 33) was a town of Benjamin in 'the plain of Ono' (I Chrn. 8 vs.12).
18. Jericho (Ezr. 2 vs.34 / Neh. 7), was allocated to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh 18 vs.21).
19. Senaah (Ezr. 2vs.35 / Neh. 7 vs.38) is mention in the texts already given, no additional detail is given.

From the book of Nehemiah (11 vs.25-36), Grabbe picks out a list of villages inhabited in the country of Judah and Benjamin. Some areas are common with the lists in Ezra 2 and Neh. 7. I will only describe those that I have not already commented on in the previous list.

1. Kiriath-arba, associated with Hebron, was allocated to the tribe of Caleb (Joshua 15 vs.13).
2. Dibon was given to Gad and to Reuben (Num 32:3, 34; Josh 13:9), and although Dibon was built (i.e. rebuilt) by Gad (Num 32:34) and, therefore, was sometimes called Dibon-gad (Num 33:45, 46), it was part of the territory of Reuben (Josh 13:17).
3. Jekabzeel, one of the 'uttermost cities' of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South (Negeb) (Josh 15:21).
4. Jeshua (not much is known of this place in the Bible).
5. Melodah, a place in the far South (Negev) of Judah, toward Edom (Joshua 15 vs.26), reckoned to Simeon (Josh 19 vs,2; 1 Chron.4 vs.28).
6. Beth-pelet (Neh.11vs.26), a city assigned to Judah in the extreme south toward the border of Edom (Josh 15:27). It was rebuilt and inhabited by people of Judah after their return from exile in Babylon.
7. Hazar-shual (Neh 11:27), a village or enclosure of the jackal, a city on the south border of Judah (Josh 15: 28; it has been identified with the ruins of Saweh, half-way between Beer-Sheba and Moladah).
8. Beer-Sheba, a town in the Judean Negev at the edge of the permanent agricultural cultivation area. It represents the southern extremity of the land of Judah.
9. Ziklag was one of the towns in the Negev, south of Judah. It was assigned to the tribe of Simeon (Josh. 15 vs.13, 19 vs.5).

10. Meconah (Neh. 11vs.28), a town in the southern part of the tribe of Judah, and inhabited after the exile.
11. En-rimmon, an ancient town in the northern Negev. Originally part of the territory of Simeon (Josh. 19:7), it was absorbed by the tribe of Judah in the time of David.
12. Zorah, allotted to Judah, and after the captivity it was reinhabited by the children of Judah (Neh. 11:29).
13. Jarmuth, listed among the cities allotted to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:35). This allotment signifies the city's integration into the territory designated for Judah's descendants.
14. Zanoah, a town in the Shephelah region allotted by Joshua to Judah (Josh 15:34).
15. Adullam, an inheritance to the tribe of Judah and was included in the northern division of the lowland (Shephelah) cities of the land of Judah (Josh 15:35).
16. Lachish was apportioned to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15 vs.39).
17. Azekah was given to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:20).
18. Nob was a sacerdotal city in the tribe of Benjamin, situated near Jerusalem.
19. Ananiah, a town in the tribe of Benjamin between Nob and Hazor (Neh. 11vs.32).
20. Hazor was in the territory allotted to Naphtali (Josh. 19:36). Hazor was one of the cities for the fortification of which Solomon raised a levy (I Kgs 9:15).
21. Gittaim, the town with which the Beerothites were associated, and where they lived as gerim, or protected strangers (2 Sam 4:3); returnees settled in this area also after the exile (Neh.11vs.33).
22. Zeboim (Neh. 11 vs.34), one of the places in which returnees settled, associated with a place near Sodom and Gomorrah.
23. Ge-harashim, valley of Craftsmen, one of the cities associated with returnees after the exile.
24. Neballat, a Benjamite town, in west central ancient Palestine, north east of present-day Lod, Israel. It was reoccupied after the return from captivity.

As I have already noted, an analysis of the lists leads to the conclusion that the returnees occupied mostly towns and villages associated with either the Benjamin area, or land previously allocated to the children of Judah. This is important because, as has been shown in the previous chapter, as well as earlier in this chapter, the 'people of the land' were mostly concentrated in the Benjamin area. Persian period demographic studies shown in the previous chapter make it clear that those towns and villages allocated to the tribe of Judah were not entirely devoid of a population during the Babylonian and Persian periods.

The returnees could only have settled there through the displacement of those people that already were resident there. Grabbe (2004 p.9) has suggested that the religio-political measures of the leadership of the returning community depict a singular aim: to open possibilities of life in the homeland for those Jews released from Babylon. It ended there; they were not very worried about to what extent this was going to be at the expense of those that had been in the land up to that time.

While they were numerically fewer than the 'people of the land', the returnees were backed by the Persian government in many ways including financial support (Grabbe 2004 p.5). They therefore had power beyond their number. Apart from this backing by the Persian government, the returnees were largely Deuteronomist; this predisposed them to interpret the law of Moses in ways that allowed them further power over those that that did not go into exile. Thus, despite their numbers, it was not very difficult for them to gain control of the land of Judah.

In the Zimbabwean post-colonial section of this study (the second pole), the idea I have just discussed will come up again. There the reader will note that, farm workers and their white employers lost land at the hands of government sponsored groups. The groups however were way stronger than the farm workers and farmers combined because the government backing, they enjoyed, gave them power beyond their number.

That they met opposition is not surprising because the people that had already been on the land during the exilic period lost land as the returnees started re-occupying towns and farms. It is important to note also that those that were exiled were mostly those that were resident in Jerusalem and its immediate environs; one wonders why on return from the exile the returnees are recorded to have reoccupied those areas that are not necessarily within Jerusalem or its environs.

The last list also is peculiar in that it has names from the Negev and Idumea, an area, as shown in the previous chapter, also considered to have been occupied by Idumeans during the exile. I conclude, therefore, that the loss of land on the part of the 'people of the land' was not limited only to the Benjamin area but also extended to any area that was productive and likely to give an easier start up to the returning citizens. As I shall show in the section on the economy later on, the areas targeted by those returning also had significant economic importance.

Admittedly, the lists in Ezra-Nehemiah do not give a full picture of the extent of Yehud. They, however, do share important information on the places considered to have been occupied by the returnees and this is important to my argument.

Four years after Grabbe, Israel Finkelstein made an analysis of the same list from an archaeological perspective. Unlike Grabbe, who took the list as presenting a historical reality, Finkelstein took the list as a literary creation possibly depicting a reality of a different epoch of time likely the Hellenistic period. He suggested that the lists of places occupied by returnees as stated in Ezra/ Nehemiah does not reflect settlement realities of the Persian period, (Finkelstein 2008 p.8). His reasons are that some of the places which have the largest numbers of seal impressions are absent from the lists as given in Ezra/ Nehemiah. These places include Ramat Rahel, Jerusalem, Mizpah, Nebi Samuel and En Gedi.

He also argues that the number of returnees mentioned in the lists, if taken to reflect a real demographic reality, do not fit the depleted population of Yehud in the Persian period. Finkelstein concludes that the above is sufficient evidence to argue that the list of returnees cannot be seen as an authentic record of places where returnees settled in the Persian Period. His view is that the archaeology of the list contradicts the ideas of both those who accept the list as summarizing several waves of returnees up to Nehemiah.

He goes on to further suggest three possibilities as the reality behind the list of returnees. Of the three Finkelstein suggests that the third was the most probable.

1. The list focuses on a late Iron II reality, probably focusing on a vague memory of the main areas from which people were deported, or the main areas to which they returned.
2. The list has no historical value; it simply mentions important areas in the late Iron II period
3. The list was compiled in the Hellenistic (Hasmonean) period and reflects the settlement reality of that time against a vague memory of the of the territory of the province of Yehud.

The views expressed by Finkelstein are very important for our study, however, it is important to note that Finkelstein did not himself conduct archaeological excavations or surveys on the places above. He made his conclusions on the basis of studies made by other scholars, which works he had no direct control over. He admits from the works that some of the places on the lists were not excavated and among those that were excavated the actual sites some of the places mentioned in the lists occupy were not known. A good example is of places such as Netophah, Nebo (Nob) and Senah (Finkelstein 2008 p. 2-3).

I also observe that Finkelstein makes his conclusion on occupation during the Persian period on the basis of a comparison with Iron Age II and the Hellenistic periods. There is no doubt that these two epochs of time had a much larger human occupation in Judea than the Persian period. My reasons are that the Iron Age II is a period before war disturbances in Judea, when settlement was fairly stable, and the Hellenistic period is an epoch of time three centuries after the same disturbances. The possibility is that demographic recovery was now in full swing.

It is also important to note that while Finkelstein questions the time period suggested for the lists in Ezra-Nehemiah, he does not himself deny the fact that the returnees occupied a number of places already in the possession of the 'people of the land'. Thus, his views do not defeat the argument I seek to present in this chapter that the returnees disadvantaged those that did not go to exile on the question of land.

Apart from the lists, Grabbe (2004, p.134-155) and also Finkelstein (2008 p. 7), mention seals and seal inscriptions as another useful source of information in determining which portions of land the returnees occupied in the province of Judah. It should be admitted, however, that seals and seal inscriptions are mainly in a supporting capacity. Despite that, the information they give is still very valuable to the argument that the returning citizens displaced the 'people of the land' from the land they had occupied for many years.

The distribution of the seals gives an idea into the extent of the province of Judah, including some towns that functioned as administrative centers and therefore attracted occupation from the returnees. The seal inscriptions give information on some of the governors and other provincial administrative officials. A background check on these governors is helpful in showing the extent to which the returnees took over land.

Much of what Grabbe records on seals is borrowed from Carter; in this section we will, therefore, directly consult Carter. From his study of Persian period seals, Carter (1999, p. 259-68) concludes that the following functioned as key administrative centers during the Persian period.

1. Ramat Rahel
2. Tell en -Nasbeth (Mizpah)
3. Mosah
4. Jerusalem
5. Jericho
6. En-gedi

Apart from the above, Carter also mentions Horvat Zimri, Har Adar, and Gibeon as places that were known to have had administrative importance and rank among the places that were attractive to the returnees. It is important to highlight that most of these places are the places already noted to have been occupied by those who did not go into exile.

While a few of the areas can be questioned, there is very little dispute over those areas considered to be the core occupied by returnees.

Carter (1999 259-68) suggests that from Jerusalem, this core stretched north to Beit-Ur et-Tahata (Lower Beth-Horon) and most likely included Bethel (already this shows that areas occupied covered the whole area of Benjamin). The eastern boundary is likely to have been the Jordan river and the dead sea and most likely included Jericho.

It also included the old territory of Judah as far west as the Shephelah, as has already been shown on the lists analyzed by Grabbe. In the previous chapter, we noted from the hand of Dagan (1992 p.259-262) that this area was inhabited by a sizable number of the 'people of the land'. The southern border seems to have been south of Beth Zur, including Hebron.
Carter suggests that the boundaries of the core areas occupied by the returnees were determined by favorable geography as well as environmental considerations. This thought, though, is disputed by Lipschits (2003 p. 360), who argues that it was mostly political considerations that determined which places the returnees chose to settle in. Whichever criteria one uses, I submit that they will still come up with the same list of places.

It is possible that both considerations may have applied, for example the Shephelah is geographically removed from Judah, but Nehemiah 11vs.25-36 includes Lachish and Azekah in his list of places occupied by the Jews on return from Persia. Both places are part of the Shephelah. Lipschits (2003 p. 345) agrees with the text of Nehemiah and affirms Jewish occupation of the north-eastern part of the Shephelah at the return from exile. In this example both geographic (and environmental) factors as well as political considerations seem to have come into play.

In the second pole of this study, the reader will observe that those that took over farms targeted mostly the productive farms located in favorable farming areas. They also targeted those farms known to belong to supporters and or members of the largest opposition political party in Zimbabwe at that time. The farm at which my father raised us for example was a typical example with a combination of both good geography and support for the opposition. Thus, the reasons for choosing where to occupy were motivated by geography as well a political factor as in the case of Judah at the return from exile.

Many years before Carter, other scholars had used the same evidence from seals to draw up the map of post exile Judah from a different perspective. Michael Avi-Yonah (1966, p.19-23), Stern 1982 (p. 247-49) and Yohanan Aharoni (1979 p.418) view the return from exile to have shaped out Judah into six districts as follows:

1. Jerusalem assuming center status, with a sub-center at Ramat- Rahel.
2. Keilah, including the South western part of the province; the sub-center being most likely at Adullam.
3. Mizpah, the northern district, with the sub-capital at Gibeon.
4. Beth-haccerem, the western district, with Zanoah perhaps being the sub-capital.
5. Beth-Zur, the southern-most district, with Tekoah probably being the secondary capital.
6. Jericho, the eastern district, with the secondary capital at Senaah.

Carter's submission given earlier, challenges the gaps left by these scholars and improves on them. While the above list is old and is challenged by Carter and possibly by others as well, the list is still important especially in adding emphasis to the general picture of how the influence of the returnees spread in Judah from the time the first groups arrived in the land. In this study, it further strengthens my argument that the returnees interrupted those that did not go into exile in the area of land.

The submissions made by Carter and other scholars mentioned earlier are valuable, but I find them incomplete without the thesis proposed by Albrecht Alt. It is important that we also consider views expressed by Alt on the same subject.

A hypothesis developed by Albrecht Alt in 1953 is a possible additional source of evidence that the 'people of the land' where displaced by those returning from exile. Alt (1953) suggested that Judah was included in the province of Samaria during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. This theory attracted support from scholars such as Galling (1964a, p.92) and Stern (1982 p.213).

His views can be summarized as follows, (with my analysis in brackets):

1. Under the Babylonians there was no importation of people to replace the Jews that had been taken; instead, Judah was ruled as a part of the province of Samaria. (This possibly allowed free movement of people between Judah and Samariah therefore occupation of vacant land on either side was possible).
2. In Ezra 4, members of the Samaritan upper class came with the governor of Ebir-nari to investigate as a part of their ruling function which continued under the Persians. No governor of Judah this time is mentioned, showing that Tattenai did not regard Zerubbabel as governor.
3. Although such figures as Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are referred to as *Peha*, this term has a very broad meaning. Sean E, McEvenue (1981p. 353-364) argues that only in Aramaic does the term mean ruler of a province or satrapy; in Hebrew it means only the head of an extended family.
4. The term medina also meant 'extended family' in pre-exilic times and keeps this meaning in Ezra-Nehemiah. It does not mean 'province' in these books as is normally believed.
5. Only with the arrival of Nehemiah does Judah become a separate province with its own governor. The reaction of Sanballat and his companions may be taken to indicate that they envisage a new situation which encroached on their powers rather than just the appointment of another governor of an independent province.

This hypothesis is not without critics. Several scholars have critiqued certain aspects of it. These include notable names such as Smith (1987 p. 193-201) and Widerngern (1977 p. 509-11). However, while these disproved of this hypothesis, they did not themselves suggest a new one. In the absence of an alternative hypothesis, I conclude the following from this one submitted by Alt:

1. That the situation envisaged by this hypothesis provides a picture of the leadership that controlled Judea after the death of Gedaliah (Grabbe, (2004 p. 134-154), and also supports the idea from this thesis that when the first group of Jews returned from exile, during the Cyrus administration of Persia, Judah was under the administration of Samaria.

2. That those Jews that did not go into exile, including Samaritans and other peoples mentioned especially in the previous chapter, continued to occupy and control the allocation of land in Judah during the exile.
3. That these people groups suffered prejudice from land at the return from exile.

Apart from suffering the loss of land discussed above, the 'people of the land' also lost an economy they had developed at the hands of those that had were returning from exile. We now turn to the loss of the economy.

3.6 The Returnees and the Economy of Persian Period Judah

In this section I propose that the 'people of the land' lost an economy they had developed over a long period of time to the returnees. This loss, as the reader shall observe later on, is comparable to the loss my father Arajo Foromoz Chambalama and other farm workers, especially those of foreign origin suffered at the hands of government sponsored groups in the land reform that ran from the year 2000 to 2002 in Zimbabwe.

To paint a fuller picture of this on the 'people of the land' in Judea, I will begin this section by discussing the economy of Judah in the late Iron Age, I will then compare this with the economic situation during the exile, and end by considering the economic implications of the return of the exiles on those people that did not go into exile. In brief, here I am engaging in a conversation that seeks to expose the economic history of Judah in the periods just before, during and after the exile. For a definition of economic history in general, I will turn to North (1981 p.3), who suggests that:

> The task of economic history is to explain the structure and performance of economies through time. By 'performance' I have in mind typical concerns of an economist - for example, how much is produced, the distribution costs and benefits, or the stability of production. The primary emphasis in explaining performance is on total output, output per capita, and the distribution of income of the society. By 'structure' I mean those characteristics of society which we believe to be the basic determinants of performance. Here I include the political and economic institutions, technology, demography, and ideology of a society.

A closer look at the two words mentioned in the definition, 'structure' and 'performance', and relating them to the economy of Judah reveals some very helpful details. North suggested that structure refers to those features of society that determine performance. Included in these features of structure are such elements as the political and economic institutions as well as the ideology of the society. For Persian period Judah, it comes out clearly that structure works in determining the performance of an economy. For example, as I seek to argue, it is the change in the political structure of Judah at the return from exile that changed economic fortunes for those that did not go to exile.

This idea is equally observable in the second pole of this study. We (my father's family and other farm workers) suffered economic loss at the farms because politics had stepped in and took over control of the land that we subsisted on. The dominant political ideology of the time (Our Land is our Prosperity), gave political mileage to the ruling party and the groups it sponsored. I experienced this first hand.

In Judah the ideological understanding that those who did not go into exile were not truly Jewish led to their exclusion from the land which was their primary economic source, as Judah was mostly an agrarian economy. Ideology was determined by the returnees at the sole religious center (Jerusalem) and anyone who did not share the same ideological understanding with them found themselves excluded from all primary sources of the economy.

Peter Altmann (2015 p.104) says that performance requires identification of what is produced, who produces it and who benefits from the production. A brief summary of what was produced in Judah during the Babylonian - Persian periods is necessary here although we will look at this same idea in greater detail later.

Two of the famous agricultural products which were of great importance to the Babylonian and later on the Persian empire where the olive and the vine. None of these products could grow in Mesopotamia and hence had to be imported there from places like the land of Judah. In the late Iron Age (around 550 B.C.E.) olive industries prospered in Judah.

Archaeology has uncovered remains of olive processing industrial installations in places such as Tell en-Nasbeth (Mizpah), Tell Beit Mirsim (located on the eastern side of Lachish about 20 km from Hebron), Tell Beth Shemesh near the town of Beth Shemesh, Tel Gezer (on the foot hills of Judean Mountains very close to Jerusalem), Tel Batash (the city of Timna), and Tel Miqne (ancient Ekron) (Dothan and Gitin 1993:1051-59, 1997:30-35).

While olives were farmed in the areas stated above, the center of grape farming and wine processing during the same period was Gibeon. Gibeon in particular and Judea in general always produced more wine than could be locally consumed, for this reason the economic importance of wine during and after the exile is worth noting.

It is important however that I point out that there was often pressure from the monarchy to produce olives and grapes for export, so that elites might exchange these export crops for luxury imports. Subsistence farmers would have preferred to produce less of these and more of crops they could consume, but monarchic pressure forced them to comply. This thought I expand on a little later on.

Carey Ellen Walsh (2000:158-62) stated that the storage capacity of over 63 wine cellars discovered in Judea has been estimated at 95000 liters. If all of them were used for wine, it means post 586 B.C.E., Judah produced more of this cash crop produce than it could locally consume. Powell (2000:101) shares the same view and adds that excess wine and olive oil were sold or sent to Babylon as tribute because at this time these two were well sought after commodities in Neo-Babylon and they were available only to the rich.

I find it important to highlight that these areas in which wine and olive oil were found are some of the places that not only continued to function but also flourished in Yehud during the Neo Babylonian and the Persian periods up to the time of the return from exile.
These areas were able to function as such because the ‘people of the land’ were in charge of the administration of the local economy. The coming of the returnees changed the administrative outlook of the economy of Judea (Yehud).

Clearly, as places like Mizpah lost importance at the reestablishment of Jerusalem and the strengthening of Ramat Rahel to the south, many ‘people of the land’ ceased to benefit from what was produced, especially in the areas they had controlled during the years of the exile.

As we shall see later on, those that had returned from exile began to dictate what could be produced. Before the exile, the monarch dictated the nature of the economy, including what crops they could farm. I personally relate to this situation, as I will discuss fuller in the second pole of this study, however, here, in brief I mention that we also lost the ability to dictate even what would could grow in the small pieces of land we controlled on the farms we lived as farm workers from the year 2000 in Zimbabwe.

In Judah, the farmers were usually forced to farm either what the rich consumed, or what the elite could trade for a profit. (I discuss this thought in greater detail later on in this first pole of the study). The exile allowed the local economies to shift as pressure from the monarchy wanned. For the first time, the 'people of the land' could determine what nature of economy they wanted to lead. This would shift again at the return of the exiles however. The returning elite were particularly interested in the growth of those products that would be required for export in exchange for luxurious imports.

That Nehemiah gave instructions relating to trade in Jerusalem (Neh. 13 vs.21 cf. Neh. 13 vs.15-16) means to me that the returnees not only took back control of land but of trade and the economy in general also. This means even those that relied on trade with Arabs and Phoenicians, such as the inhabitants of the districts of Beth-haccherem and Beth-zur to the south (more on these areas later on), could now only do so at the instructions and under the guidance of the new leadership of the province. To understand this shift in economic fortune better, we begin by a look at the economy before the exile.

3.7 The Economy of Judah before the Exile

Between the years 730 and 630 B.C.E., Judah was incorporated as a vassal of the Assyrian global economy. During this time, the economy of the kingdom of Judah transformed from a typical mixed Mediterranean subsistence agriculture to a high-risk/high-gain specialized, region-based economy. This transformation coupled with the specialized nature of the economy of Judah was so advanced and complex that it stimulated the development of a highly advanced system of administration. While this kind of economy may have been existent even during the days of the monarchy, at this time it became even more pronounced (Finkelstein 2021 p.13).

The major task of this elaborate administration system was to oversee centralized storage and distribution of agricultural products as well as the collection of liquid commodities (wine, oil and other beverages) as tax to be paid to the Assyrian government and later on the Babylonian and Persian governments. The administration was also needed for resourceful control over products and quick reaction in times of crises such as droughts, Finkelstein (2021 p.13).

The administration had to organize markets, transportation and fair exchange of goods leading to a sophisticated use of weights as a measure to promote fairness in trade (Finkelstein 2021 p.13; cf. Altmann 2015 p.117). Evidence of the existence of such an administration system is found in seal impressions and incisions on handles of storage jars, inscribed bullae, weights and an extensive expansion of literacy far beyond the capital of the kingdom (Finkelstein et al. 2021 p. 11-12).

The stage-setting setting for the developments that happened in the economy of Judah at this time was the unique geographical background of Judah. This geographical background was characterized by varied topography and climate on the one hand and access to international roads in the south and west on the other (Finkelstein et al. 2021 p.12). As a result of its geographic setting, Judah was divided into economic regions (Joshua 15). A brief look at the economic regions induced by the just mentioned geographical background will reveal the following:

1. Highlands – Specializing in viticulture

This refers mostly to areas west and south of the city of Jerusalem. It is an area characterized mostly by highlands. A study by Michael Zohary (1962) shows that the site of ancient Jerusalem is located east of the 'highlands' watershed, on the fringe of the Judean Desert.

Finkelstein et al (2021 p.4) suggested that unlike the area immediately surrounding the city to the east, which is impassable, arid and rocky, the western side of the city is dominated by two valleys: the Soreq and the Rephaim, which together with their tributaries served as the food basket of Judah in general and Jerusalem in particular. This fruitful production was possible because the Soreq and Rehpaim valleys have rich alluvial soils which allow dry farming and slopes on which vine, and olive orchards could be cultivated. Small springs located along the course of the valleys were an important source of irrigation water.

Yuval Gadot (2015) and Benyamin Storchan (2017) have suggested that there was an extra-ordinary intensification of rural settlement and activity on the western highlands between 800 and 586 B.C.E. The major activity in this rural community was agriculture. Places like Moza, located within this region, acted as sites for storage facilities of the produce of the region.
Finkelstein et al (2021p. 4) mentioned as evidence of the agricultural viability of the broad valley of the Soreq that at least 37 large granaries dated to the late Iron Age were unearthed. These were used for storing large quantities of grain from fields.

The Soreq here mentioned is very important in the history of Judah. Much of it was allocated as inheritance for the tribe of Dan. It is also the place which acted as the primary setting for the some of the events in the life of Samson one to the Judges of Isreal (Judg. 16 vs.4). The valley ran between Zorah (where Samson was born of Manoah Judg. 13 vs.1-25) and Beth Shemesh (allocated to Judah by Joshua (Josh 14 vs.10) and later on associated with Dan (Josh 19 vs.41) in the north and ran down to Timnah (also associated with Dan, Josh 15 vs.43) in the south. It was part of the valley contested by the Israelites and Philistines. This is not surprising because the valley had very fertile alluvial soils and was located very close to key trade routes connecting the interior of the land to coastal regions.

Apart from contestations for the valley between the Israelites and the Philistines, the valley was also a center of contestation between the north and the south during the days of the divided monarchy. 2Kgs 14vs.11-13 and 2Chrn. 25vs.21-23 record a battle between Amaziah and Jehoash in this valley. It would not be surprising that after the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem that some people from the former land of Israel to the north drifted to this region seeking livelihoods.

As shall be commented on later on, this valley continued to be of agricultural and trade importance during the period of the exile. This means the 'people of the land' resident here were in charge of not only good land but a thriving economy also. That land associated with the Soreq was also good for grain farming is attested to in the event of the return of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines recorded in 1 Samuel 6 vs.13-15.

The Hebrew Bible records that the ark arrived in Beth-Shemesh where people were reaping a wheat harvest in the valley. This suggests that the valley was important not just for viticulture but also for grain farming. This is one of the areas taken over by the returnees for economic survival leading to loss of land on the part of those that did not go into exile (as has been noted earlier) and the loss of an economy on the part of the same people group (as shall be discussed later on).

Apart from the production and collection of grain, this area was also used for animal husbandry. It is from such animal husbandry that the city of Jerusalem and the rest of Judah got supplied. In a detailed zooarchaeological study of the western wall plaza in Jerusalem and Tel Moza, Lidar Sapir-Hen et al (2016 p.103) found out that while the inhabitants of the western wall plaza did not engage in actual herding, but focused mostly on consumption, the people of Tel Moza focused on agriculture and produced caprines's secondary products and likely also supplied sheep and cattle to Jerusalem.

Near Moza (which is located in the Soreq about 5 km west of ancient Jerusalem) was Ramat Rahel, which most likely was used as a center for tax collection. Ramat Rahel will be discussed in greater detail later on.

Areas such as the villages of Kh. El - Burj and Alona to the northwest and Kh.er-Ras to the southwest of Jerusalem had several rock-cut wine presses indicative of strong grape farming activity taking place in this area. Several grape farms of different sizes were located here. Along both the Rephaim (a fertile vale to the southwest of Jerusalem, (Josh 15vs.8, Joshua 18vs.16) on the border between Judah and Benjamin grapes were also farmed. Also, a popular site for Israel-Philistine battles (2 Sam. 8 vs. 18, 22, 2Sam. 23 vs.13, 1 Chron. 11vs. 15, 1Chron 14 vs.9, due to its agricultural and general economic importance) and Soreq valleys (described earlier), more than fifty wine presses were located. It would appear that wine processing and storage was one of the main activities of these valleys.

It can be assumed that the grapes farmed in this area were not trellised but rather grew on the ground planted in soil pockets between rock outcrops. This cultivation method is more common in traditional agriculture when growing grapes for wine production, since contact with the ground promotes fruit ripening due to the heat. A typical example are the Nahal Shmuel plots which were part of a much larger wine industry (Finkelstein et al. 2021 p.7).

An interesting textual reference to this kind of viticulture in the highlands can be found in Isaiah (5 vs.1-2): 'I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.'

Rock-cut, jar shaped cellars were found in clusters at several Iron Age sites in the Benjamin Plateau slightly to the north. The largest concentration, with as many as 63 cellars, was found at Gibeon according to James Pritchard (1964 p.1-8). Pritchard interpreted them as storage facilities for ageing wine. As many as twenty-four were found at the site of Kh. El-Burj, located on the high hill overlooking Nahal Shmuel, 2 km from the presses described above. It would appear that this was a collection center for wine grown along the slopes of Nahal Shmuel and other nearby tributaries of the Soreq.

The spring system of Ein Joweizeh in the Rephaim Valley represents another aspect of activity in the Jerusalem highlands. This valley is believed to have watered the royal estates around the area.

2. Shephelah (hilly low-lands) – Mostly Oleo- culture (olive oil processing industries)

The Shephelah is a region located to the south western end of Judah, forming a transitional zone between Philistia and the central highlands of Judah. Much of its land was allocated to the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15vs.33-47). Parts of its territory includes Lachish (Josh. 10vs.3,5;10 vs.35;12 vs. 11; 2Chrn 10vs.1), Azekah (Josh. 10 vs.10,11;15vs. 35;2Chrn 11vs.9) and Socoh (Josh. 15vs.35; 1sam 17vs.1;19vs.22).

Often referred to as the 'lowlands', or 'foot hills', the Shephelah is a region of significant geographical importance in the biblical narrative. This region is characterized by rolling hills and fertile valleys, thereby making it very important for agriculture and military campaigns. It is in this region that the famous battle between David and Goliath is reckoned to have taken place in the valley of Elah (1Sam. 17). Much of it would fall away to Sennacherib during the days of Hezekiah (2Kgs. 18vs.13-14).

Here there was no viticulture but a wide spread occurrence of olive oil presses in the late Iron Age. Olive oil presses are usually located not too far from the orchards in order to save the need to transport the raw material. It was also necessary for the fields to be close to the presses because, according to Finkelstein (2021 p. 8), oil extraction has to take place less than 48 hours from harvest in order to avoid the bitterness of the fruit. To date, the earliest evidence of intensive olive oil production in this region has been found at Gath (although Gath is a non-Judahite part of the Shephelah).

Much of the area around Gath was dedicated to olive oil production and the takeover of this area by Assyria in the 7th century B.C.E. helped in boosting the olive oil industry in this area. Apart from Gath, Ekron also had significant olive oil installations. Ekron most likely had the largest number of olive oil installations. This massive olive oil production also spilt into those parts of the Shephelah that were directly under Judah, with places such as Tel-Beit Mirsim (located in the eastern region of Lachish about 20 kilometers southwest of Hebron) and Beth-Shemesh taking a leading role (Lederman 2009). The Judahite olive orchards must have sent their yields to be pressed both locally and in the central facility at Ekron.

The shift to large scale olive horticulture in the Shephelah in the late Iron Age, under Assyrian hegemony, seems to have been a direct imperial decision. Production in the highlands, away from the main arteries of the Southern Levant, was not convenient. Northern regions could have supplied enough oil to Assyria itself and hence it is possible that the Shephelah industry, close to the main highway of the coastal plain, was directed at the market in Egypt (Finkelstein 2021 p.10).

This shift to large scale production may also have been influenced by the introduction of iron for tool making, replacing bronze. The use of iron for tool making led to the development of modernized tools which in turn led to surpluses in olive oil production. Gunther Wittenberg (1991 p. 151-170) makes an important observation worth noting. He suggests that iron technology led to disparities among ordinary subsistence farmers, leading to some having surpluses and others not, leading to the loss of land through debt.

In this submission, Wittenburg makes the point that disparities began to emerge even among the 'people of the land' and were only exacerbated by the monarchy, and then by imperial powers and then finally by the elite returning from exile. This is important as background information; my focus though is on how disparities between the elite and the 'people of the land' became pronounced at the return from exile.

Among other important tools that were developed at this time for use in olive oil and other production was the beam press. The use of the beam press enabled production of large quantities of oil. The new increase in the volumes of produce called for the introduction of modern storage facilities with a larger capacity. Archaeologists have uncovered several buildings that were used as storage facilities in the Shephelah and in Judah in general, (Borowski 1987 p.7, 72-83).

However not every plot in the Shephelah was dedicated to olive oil production. This region was generally the bread basket of Judah and certain areas must have been devoted to dry farming, to supply grain for the locals, as well as the growing population of Jerusalem before its destruction by Babylon and during the time when the exiles began to return. While the Shephelah was an active olive oil production region, the classic olive oil regions in the Southern Levant in general are the Samaria highlands and western Galilee.

Archaeological surveys have repeatedly shown that the northern part of the former region did not suffer demographic decline after 720 B.C.E., while the southern part closer to the border of Judah may have scaled down (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2006a).

3. Negev (the Beer-Sheba Valley)

The Beer-Sheba valley was located on the south part of the land of Judah. The farms near the city of Beer-Sheba just north of the Negev marked the southmost boundary of the cultivated land of Judah. Beer-Sheba is the southmost, just as Dan is the northmost part of Judah, hence the proverbial statement 'from Dan to Beer-Sheba' which describes the promised land (Judges 20vs.1; 1Sam 3vs.20, 2 Sam. 3vs.10;17 vs.11,15;1 Kgs 4vs.25).

It was allocated by Joshua to the tribes of Simeon and Judah (Josh. 15vs.20-28, 19vs.1-2). It was a prominent residence of several patriarchs (Gen. 21vs.22-32; Gen. 26 vs.18-33). A lot of the 'people of the land' would settle in this land, firstly because it was an area associated with senior Jewish tribes like Simeon and Levi, and secondly because it was an area where a lot of people were believed to have met with the God of Israel. These people included: Isaach (Gen. 26 vs.24), Jacob (Gen.46vs.2), Hagar (Gen. 2vs.17) and Elijah (1Kgs. 19vs.5).

Beer-Sheba was also the place where Samuel's rebellious sons served as leaders (1Sam.8vs.1-3), and as we will learn later from Gerald West's observations on 1Sam. 8vs.6-9, it was the perversion of leadership by Samuel's sons that led Israel to demand a king at whose coming the Tributary Mode of Production (an economic system in which there are classes in the society and the primary producers pay tribute to the ruling classes through labor or goods. This economic system operated in precapitalistic times) began.

Just like the two areas discussed above, expansion of settlement activity in the Beer-Sheba valley was closely related to the prosperity of the Assyrian dominated Arabian trade. In the 7th century B.C.E., and in later times, the Arabian trade route passed along the Edomite highlands and then led, via the Beer-Sheba Valley, to the Mediterranean coast. This trade was a specialized economy given to those who moved along the Arabian trade route.

Altmann (2015 p.104) pointed out that the items that Judah exported through Arab traders and other routes included, grain, wine, grapes, and figs. In return local people received as imports, fish and various other items that could be included in what was known then as 'Merchandise', (Neh.10vs.31).

Nathan McDonald (2008 p.38) suggests that fish as an import was not necessary for survival, it was for elite consumption, functioning mostly as a carrier of social status. If this analysis is accurate, then the fact that fish is found in Neh.13 vs 16 means that the consumers in this case were the elite who had returned from exile. Altmann (2015 p.11-7) believes that the consumers were indeed elites that had come from exile and taken over the control of Yehud.

The inhabitants of Judahite towns such as Tel Ira (overlooking the Beer Sheva valley) and Tel Beer Sheva could have also engaged in animal husbandry and opportunistic/dry farming. Their economic activities may have included a date and (possibly) exotic plant industry, especially in the oases of Ein-Gedi as well as services to the Arabian trade route in the Beer-Sheba Valley.

In the biblical text, the participation of Judah in the Arabian trade route under the Assyrian Hegemony is probably represented by the narrative of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon in Jerusalem recorded in 1Kgs. 10vs.1-3 and in 2Chrn. 9vs.1-12 (Finkelstein and Silberman 2006b, 167-71).

4. Judean Desert (including areas around the shores of the Dead Sea)

The Judean Desert, also known as the wilderness of Judah, is the same region of Judah the Hebrew Bible at times just refers to as the 'wilderness' (1 Sam. 23 vs.14). To the Hebrew faithful, the area is a significant spiritual region. Geographically this refers to the rugged and arid terrain characterized by sparse vegetation, barren hills and deep ravines. Though holding profound theological and historical significance, it was generally a place of solitude and desolation, a challenging environment for habitation stretching from the central highlands of Judah to as far as the Dead Sea to the east of Jerusalem.

Those that did not go into exile exploited parts of the Judean desert such as the Buqeiah Valley for 'opportunistic' farming, opportunistic because this area was generally not suitable for any type of farming. The Dead Sea area, especially areas around Jericho and Ein-Gedi, were devoted to the cultivation of date palm and possibly exotic plants for the perfume industry such as the balsam tree.

These crops require a specialized habitat characterized by high temperatures and very low humidity. The Judean desert proved to have just the required conditions for this kind of economic activity.

It is in this region that cities like Jericho were found and the Bible refers to Jericho as the city of palms (Deut. 34 vs.3), and draws connection between Ein Gedi and palms (2Chron. 20 vs.2). The Judean dates from Jericho and Ein Gedi, as well as balsam from the desert area attained world reputation around this era of time. Besides dates, the people in the desert fringes on the Dead Sea shore end also have exploited bitumen for export to Egypt via the coastal trade route, (Finkelstein and Silberman 2006b, 167-71).

What we have discussed so far is a description of the economic situation of Judah before the destruction by Babylonians. To balance our discussion on this subject, I find it necessary that we look at the biblical portrayal of the economy of Judah before we consider the economic situation of Judah in the period after the Babylonian conquest. Here, I again remind the reader that this section is still part of the first of our three poles in this study. Borowski (1987 p.3-30) made what I consider an eye-opening analysis on the subject. Part of his analysis will be discussed here.

The Bible in Exodus (3vs.8) describes the land of Canaan (of which Judah was later to be part) as a land which flows with milk and honey. A similar but more elaborate description of the same concept is found in the book of Deuteronomy (8vs.7-8).

> For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper (Deut. 8vs.7-8).

Reading the text above, Borowski (1987 p.3-30) proposed that although some of the details in this text are idealized, the portrayal of the agricultural versatility of the land of Canaan in general is accurate. He suggested that during the Bronze Age, Canaan was divided into city states which had kings acting as vassals to Pharaoh. These semi-independent political units were situated in the fertile plains and near major trade routes.

Their political network extended over most of the agricultural land. The books of Joshua and Judges record how these cities were heavily fortified and possessed chariots of iron, such that it was not easy for Israel to take over (Josh 17vs.16,18; Jdg. 1vs.19;4vs.3,13). The narrative from the Hebrew Bible would however suggest that the Israelites took over some of these cities and engaged in farming activities. As a result of the fact that many of these cities were located where they controlled large tracts of land useful for agriculture, it is not surprising that agriculture then on dominated the Israelite economic and daily life.

Borowski (1987 p. 6) suggested that in ancient Israel, agriculture had an impact on almost every facet of daily life: economic, social, and cultural. From the beginning, Israelite settlement depended heavily on successful adaptation to natural conditions and available resources, an example is the Judean plateau where adaptation was really necessary.

In spite of their political strength, the political situation left the Israelites with only limited resources for agriculture, since the Israelite tribes could only occupy previously unsettled land in the Ephraim and Judean hill-country and in the mountainous regions of the Galilee. This region was not the most fertile part of Canaan. A description in Deuteronomy 32 vs.12-14 gives a picture of Israelites settled full time into agriculture.

> So, the Lord alone did lead him, there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

The book of Judges puts it differently, but expresses a similar thought (Jdgs. 4vs.19;5vs.16, 25; 6vs.25). The Israelites cultivated cereals (Deut. 33vs.28) and a variety of fruit trees. Although wheat was cultivated, it was not the most important cereal in Iron Age Israel (Deut. 32vs.14; Jdgs. 6vs.11;15vs.1;1 Sam.6vs.13). Barley seems to have been the most important cereal from early to late Iron Age settlements in Israel (Jdgs. 7 vs.13).

Judging by the number of Old Testament references to it, the most prominent fruit-bearing plant was the grape vine. Areas in which grapes were cultivated have already been discussed above. As early in the Old Testament as Genesis (according to the order of the biblical narrative), the importance of the vine was attested (Gen 49vs.11-12; Deut. 32vs.14; 32-33;33vs.28; Judges 6vs.11 etc.). Grapes from this vine were mostly used to make wine. By the same measure the olive was the second most important fruit tree (Deut. 32vs.13; 33vs.24; Jdgs. 9vs.8-9).

Apart from production for local consumption, these were important agricultural produce for local and foreign trade, thereby, developing a multi-faceted economy which among other things also included commerce. Agricultural surpluses were used by locals (mostly elites) to pay for imported items. This practice is seen as way back as the days of Solomon (an elite) when oil, wheat (1 Kgs 5vs.25) and wine (2 Chron 2 vs.9,14) were given to Hiram of Tyre in exchange for cedar wood.

The farming of these crops made land so important in the economy of Judah that at some point issues related to it were the driving force behind some social movements. One such movement was the uprising of the northern ‘people of the land’ under Jeroboam against Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12), which situation resulted in the creation of the northern and the southern kingdoms from the former state (922 B.C.E.) (West 2022 p.1-9).

The Hebrew text narrates that the people of Israel requested Rehoboam to abolish the cove’e. This was a slave institution established by his father Solomon to extract profit from their agro-based economy using cheap labor (1 Kgs 5vs.2830 cf. 5vs.13-15). The hardships caused by conscription of the corvee probably led to changes in land ownership. I suggest that the rebellion against Rehoboam and the killing of Adoniriam, who was in charge of forced labor (1Kgs 12), stemmed mainly from the fear of the Israelites that they would become landless and hence lose the farming economy that sustained their day-to-day living. After all, as I have discussed earlier, land had strong ties with one’s ancestry.

A different but related narrative is that of Naboth recorded in 2Kgs (9:30-10:36). In this account Jehu is recorded to have purged the Omride dynasty (842 B.C.E.). This purge had its roots in the confiscation of a vineyard belonging to Naboth (1Kgs 21, cf. 2Kgs 9 vs 26). Not only was this vineyard important to Naboth because it was a gift from his fathers, but it was also of economic importance for him as grapes and wine could bring an income or items that were not produced locally. Ahab, assumed by some scholars to have been a distant relative of Naboth according to observations made by Charles Russel (2014 p. 454), on the other hand, wanted to use this land for a vegetable garden. A use which consumes a lot of water and requires extensive care. He unlike Naboth, wanted the garden for elite consumption according to Nadav Na'aman (2008 p. 197-218).

This case of Naboth was probably not an isolated case, it is comparable to the confiscation of the land of the Shunamite woman (2 Kgs 8vs.1-6). This woman also depended on land not just as a ground upon which to construct a shelter, but also as a source of economic sustenance. The very fact that she had left the land as a result of a famine means that she had left the land because for a season it was not going to economically sustain her.

The cases of Naboth and the Shunamite woman strike a familiar code within my life. Land, though my father did not directly own the piece we lived on, was beyond a piece of ground on which we lived. It was also to us a source of economic sustenance. It was on the small pieces of land allocated to us on the far that we grew vegetables to sell. It was here that we kept fowl for our consumption and also for sale. Selling vegetables and fowl gave us income that we used to buy other things we needed. We were also tied to this same land by strong familial codes. To my father, this is the land on which his first daughter was buried, leaving this land was equal to separating from her. As a family, we believed in a very strong connection between the living and the dead.

Israel's religious practices also displayed the economic importance of agriculture. Many of the stipulations included in the covenant between Jewish people and their God were directly related to land. For example, the observance of the requirements of the covenant assured the Jewish people of prosperity through the Lord's intervention by influencing nature to bring about blessings related to land, (Deut. 11vs.14-15;28vs.1-14) and curses (Lev 26 vs.19-20; Deut. 11vs.16-17; 28vs.15-18, 22-24 etc.).

On the same note, the Lord's displeasure toward the Jewish nation for breaking the covenant is always described by the destruction of the land related economy in addition to the physical destruction of people (Isa.7vs.23; 24vs.7; Jer. 5vs.17; 8vs.13; Hos.2vs.1 etc.). The restoration and prosperity is also expressed in the same language (Hos.14vs.8; Ams 9vs.13-15; Mic.4vs.4).

Care for the economically unfortunate, largely referred to in the Hebrew scriptures as the poor, the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow was also fulfilled using agriculture resources. The many ways of providing for them included: (1) allowing them to participate in the harvest of the 7th year growth (Exod. 23vs.11; Lev 25vs.6), leaving them a corner, side of the field unharvested (Lev 19vs.9a;23vs.22); (3) allowing them to glean in the fields (Lev. 19vs.9b;23vs.22) and the vine yards (Deut. 24vs.21); (4) leaving for them in the vineyards the small bunches (Lev. 19vs.10); (5) allowing them to have any sheaves which had been forgotten at the end of the day (Deut. 24vs.19); (6) paying tithe for their support (Deut. 26vs.12) (Borowski 1987 p.11).

The religious calendar was also influenced by land related activities. The three most important festivals were celebrations of either the beginning or the end of certain land related activities. The Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles were all related to the fruit of the land (Deut. 16vs.16).

Borowski (1987 p.12) suggested that Judah's closeness to the soil and her dependance on it are evident in the use of agriculturally related terminology as metaphors throughout her literature. Proverbs and allegories, blessings, prophetic speeches and psalms used agricultural symbolism extensively. Gideon (Judg. Vs.8vs.20), Jotham (Judges 9vs.8-15), Samson (Judg.14vs.8), and Nathan (2 Sam.12vs.1-4) use land related allegories when trying to clarify a problem.

When describing the Jewish nation, the prophets also used land/agriculture related terminology. They described the nation as a vineyard (Isa.5vs.1-8), a grape vine (Jer 2vs.21; cf. Ezekiel 17vs.6-10), and a night shelter in a cucumber patch (Isaiah 1vs.8). In the process of trying to prevent conquest by the Babylonians, Jeremiah used agriculture related wording: 'Break off your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns' (4vs.3 cf. Hos.10vs.12).

Judah's relationship to agriculture is also exposed by place names derived from farming themes; examples include, Bet-Haggen, 'place of the garden' (2Kgs 9vs.27), Bet-Lehem, 'place of bread' (Ruth 1vs.19). Right up to the raids by the Babylonians (2Kgs 25vs.12; Jer 52vs.16) and beyond, this aspect of the Jewish economy remained intact. Having looked at insights of the Jewish agrarian economy from the Hebrew Bible, we will now turn to the economic set up of Judah following the Babylonian raids.

3.8 The Economy of Judah in the Babylonian and Persian Periods

Lipschits (2015 p.237) made an illuminating observation of the economic set up of Judah following the Babylonian conquest. In this section we explore his observations in the areas already discussed by Finkelstein above. Lipschits suggested, based on archaeological data, that Judah continued to exist as a rural society when it became a Babylonian vassal kingdom and then a province. Its economy was based on agriculture and the production of agricultural products, just as it had been during the 7th century B.C.E., when it was an Assyrian vassal kingdom (p. 239).

I turn now to look at this view in greater detail. My aim in doing this is to prove that the 'people of the land' continued to maintain and build a vibrant economy during the time when the elites were in exile. I intend to highlight as a conclusion that it is this economy built by those that did not go into exile which was taken over by the returnees when they were released by the Persians, resulting in a loss on that the part of the 'people of the land'.

Lipschits suggests (2015 p.237) that, the most conspicuous phenomenon that took place following the destruction of Jerusalem was the sharp deterioration of urban life as contrasted to the stability of the rural settlements north of the capital in the region of Benjamin, as well as in the area south of the city between Bethlehem and Beth-zur.

According to him, the settlement center of gravity moved from Jerusalem to its close periphery, and a new pattern of settlement was created. The old core became depleted, and the nearby periphery continued its existence almost unchanged. The nearby periphery continued its existence almost unchanged, albeit in lower numbers. This view by Lipschits is important to my argument.

Earlier on I argued that it was the people in Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity that were taken to exile. Lipschits here offers information that corroborates that view. This means that it is the 'people of the land' who maintained the economic infrastructure of the countryside when elite urban dwellers were taken to exile.

From Lipschits we learn that remote peripheral regions of the Kingdom in the southern Shephelah to the southwest, in the Negev to the south, as well as the Judean Desert, the Jordan valley, and on the western shore of the Dead Sea to the east collapsed in a long and complex process, with ruinous consequences. The Negev and the southern Shephelah became cut off from the Persian province of Judah, and in a slow progression the new province of Idumea emerged. This was however not the case with settlements to the north, west and near south Jerusalem.

Throughout the Persian period, the rural settlement in the close periphery around Jerusalem continued to characterize the province of Yehud. Both the settlement and the economy were rooted in the settlement, economy and administration of Judah after it became a vassal of the Assyrian kingdom, and especially in the history of the land after Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C.E., and the loss of the Shephelah, as well as the consequences of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in the early 6th century B.C.E., and the transition of Judah from a vassal kingdom to a Babylonian province (Lipschits 2015 p.238).

During this time, the Judahite population that continued to subsist in the northern Judean Highlands, the Benjamin region and areas to the south and south west of Jerusalem, continued to preserve its economy. This population also preserved its ways of life, administration and material culture. After the Shephelah was lost in the 7th century B.C.E., two areas became centers of administration in Judah, Mizpah in the Benjamin area and Ramat Rahel in the south.

The Rephaim valley to the south of Jerusalem, with its rich alluvial soils and moderately terraced slopes, was one of the most prosperous districts in the environs of Jerusalem, vital to the economy of the city. During the Persian period, there was significant economic growth in the Rephaim valley leading to the growth of Ramat Rahel as an administrative center of the southern region. Earlier on, we encountered Finkelstein arguing that the Rephaim valley was one of the critical economic zones of pre-exilic Judah.

Here, Lipschits suggests that even after the elites were taken to exile, it (the Rephaim valley) remained an important economic area. This can only mean that the economy in this region of Judah at this time was sustained and maintained by the 'people of the land', most of whom were either farmers or farm workers. We shall see a similar situation at play in the Zimbabwean section, where farm workers like Arajo Foromoz Chambalama my father, built a subsistence economy of their own which was sadly lost at the reoccupation of farms by government backed groups in the year 2000.

Lipschits (2015 p.240) argued that in the south, Ramat Rahel became the main collection center for agricultural products, primarily wine and oil stored in jars. It retained this function in both the Babylonian and Persian periods. Lipschits further suggested that during the Persian period in the south, there continued to exist a system of agricultural settlements**,** royal estates, administrative centers, and districts in Judah continuing from the 8th century through to the 5th century B.C.E. All these were an economy in the hands of those that did not go into exile.

The mention of royal estates brings up an important dimension to the study. These are farms mentioned earlier by Borowski (1987 p.27) to have been belonging to the royal families. We know that members of the royal families were taken to exile by the Babylonians. That being the case, I surmise that the royal farms were left under the care of farm workers and slaves. Given the number of years that the exile spanned, these people worked on the farm economy for a long time in the absence of their former pay masters.

At the return of those that had gone into exile, control of the administration of Judah was taken over by those that returned. By this I mean that the farm workers and slaves on these farms lost an economy that had been in their possession for a long period of time. A bird's eye view of the settled area in Judah during the period of the exile shows that the land of Judah was divided into different economic zones. Lipschits identifies them as districts p. 246. I will now turn to a discussion on these districts in an effort to further show that the 'people of the land' were in charge of a complex economic system which they sadly lost when those that had gone into exile returned.

According to Lipschits (2015 p.246-258), as Judah transitioned from being a vassal kingdom of the Assyrian government into a province of the Babylonians, it was divided into several districts. It is interesting to note that the district system that Lipschits suggests here is not very different from what had been proposed in earlier years by other scholars such as Avi-Yonah (1966, p.19-23), Stern (1982 p. 247-49), and Aharoni (1979 p.418) as has been shown in the previous chapter. Lipschits lists the districts as follows:

1.The Mizpah District

This was largely congruent with the first temple region of Benjamin and reflected the region's continuity from the 7th to the 5th centuries B.C.E. It was a 6th century continuation of the economy north of Jerusalem described by Finkelstein above. It is assumed that the people of Jericho and those of Sena'ah also belonged to this district.

In this district, Mizpah was the major city acting also as the center of (economic) activity within the region. This district was separated within a 5km distance from Jerusalem to the south by settlements such as Mozah, Kijath-jearim (Joshua 18vs.26,28), Gibeah and Anathoth (Isa. 10 vs.28-32). To the north west it was connected to the Soreq valley which earlier on has been mentioned to be a valley of great economic influence.

During the 8th and 7th centuries, Jerusalem depended on the grain supplies from the plains of the Benjamin region, especially that part of Benjamin that was connected to the Soreq whose rich alluvial soils allowed farming. It is also in this area that some large royal estates could be found. From the same source Jerusalem was also supplied with olives and grapes useful for exchange with foreign merchandise. With the destruction of Jerusalem and as a result of its economic importance, the Benjamin region became the center of the new province under Babylonian rule.

From the 7th century B.C.E., onwards, the Benjamin Plateau had become economically prosperous. At this time, the main sites in the Benjamin region were Mizpah, el-Jib, Tell el-Ful, Khirbet el Burj and Nebi-Samwil (Lipschits 2015p. 246). In the 7th century B.C.E., after Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel to the south, the area of Benjamin was the third most important region of the Judahite administration.

This thought has already been expressed by Finkelstein earlier on; I mention it here in the process of showing what happened in the transition to the 6th and 5th centuries.

With the loss of much of the Shephelah to the south west of Judah in 701 B.C.E., during campaigns by Sennacherib, Benjamin became even more economically important. As has already been mentioned several times, the Benjamin area continued its dominance into the 6th and 5th centuries. The prosperity of this area during this time must be attributed to the administrative centrality of Mizpah and the economic importance of Mozah and Gibeon. It was around this area that agricultural hinterlands were based and settlement grew.

It is clear from the above that the 'people of the land', whether land owning or working on the farms, were the custodians of this thriving economy post 6th century Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem. Given post siege challenges, they developed this economy at great pains such that it was unfair for them to lose control to returning exiles in the mid-5th century B.C.E. One of the reasons why this part of Judah may not have been destroyed is that it was a source of important agricultural products required in Babylon.

Two of the famous agricultural products which were of great importance to the Babylonian empire where the olive and the vine. None of these products could grow in Mesopotamia and hence had to be imported there from places like the land of Judah. In the late Iron Age (around 550B.C.E.) olive industries prospered in Judah.

Archaeology has uncovered remains of olive processing industrial installations in places such as Tel en-Nasbeth (Mizpah), Tel Beit Mirsim (located on the eastern side of Lachish, about 20 km from Hebron), Tel Beth Shemesh near the town of Beth Shemesh, Tel Gezer (on the foothills of the Judean Mountains very close to Jerusalem), Tel Batash (the city of Timna), and Tel Miqne (ancient Ekron) according to Trude Dothan and Seymour Gitin (1993:1051-59,1997:30-35).

While olives were farmed in the areas stated above, the center of grape farming and wine processing during the same period was Gibeon. Gibeon in particular and Judea in general always produced more wine than could be locally consumed, for this reason the economic importance of wine during and after the exile is worth noting. Walsh (2000:158-62) stated that the storage capacity of over 63 wine cellars discovered in Judea has been estimated at 95000 liters. If all of them were used for wine, it means post 586 B.C.E. Judah produced more of this cash crop produce than it could locally consume. Powell (2000:101) shares the same view and adds that excess wine and olive oil were sold or sent to Babylon as tribute because at this time these two were well sought after commodities in Neo-Babylon and they were available only to the rich.

Archaeological evidence (30 out of 43 *mwsh* stamp impressions found in Tell en-Nasbeth were all dated 6th century) shows that post the Babylonian conquest, tribute was collected by the governor of the province stationed in Mizpah. As we shall see later on, this was to change with the return of the exiles and the installation of new leadership to the economic detriment of those that did not go into exile.

The Mizpah district had been the demographic center and hence an economic hub of Judah during the 6th to mid-5th century when the exiles in Persia began to return. At least one third of all the sites in Judah at this time were in this district. In the 5th century B.C.E. as the exiles began to return; together with Mizpah, another place Nebi-Samwil also became a significant administrative place, while Gibeon and Khirbet el-Burj lost the major role they had in the system of stamped jar handles during the 7th century B.C.E. Gradually the major economic centers started to lose their significance, as the returnees established new centers (Lipschits 2015 p. 258).

At this time, as Jerusalem renewed its status as the lone center for Jewish religious activity, the location of the temple and the seat of the priests, Mizpah lost its status as the seat of the local governor. It became partially deserted as business left its courts for Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel. Ramat Rahel became both the seat of the governor and the main administrative center for collecting taxes, (Lipschits 2015 p. 258).

I agree with the observation made by Lipschits that these changes undermined the economic base of the region, leading to a marked demographic decline. It is possible that the decline in the Benjamin area holds the explanation to the strengthening of the settlements in the north eastern part of the Shephelah (the area between Lod-Ono and Modi'in) during the Persian period.

My motivated to agree with Lipschits because I observed a relatable situation when government sponsored groups took over farms and those that originally ran the farms were chased off. A new system of governing farms was introduced, however with the marked demographic decline of both the farmer and farm worker communities, the economic fortunes of the farms shifted. Skilled labour vanished, production declined and even those that had taken over the farms began to suffer.

My main argument in this section of the chapter is that the 'people of the land' suffered economic prejudice at the hands of the small but powerful group of returnees. On a similar note, Lipschits rightly observes that the migration of the people of Benjamin and other northerners had ideological motivation against the new ruling elite in Jerusalem (p.258-9).

This new ruling elite forced its religious, ritual, social, and national views on the residents of the province, leading some people, especially in Benjamin to migrate beyond the administrative limits of the province and settle close to the border. In the process they lost an economy they had developed and sustained for over a century. The Zimbabwean case runs almost parallel to the above, those that took over farms like the one on which my father kept us had a new national rhetoric, one that branded them as divine messengers to liberate land for the benefit of the black majority, the white commercial farmers as foreign oppressors and any black farm worker that sided with them as a sellout. As a result, marked exodus from the farms was witnessed.

As observed in the section of this chapter whose focus is on land in Judah, many people that were in the area of Benjamin to the north had been allocated land as an economic base and source of sustenance by Gedaliah during the Babylonian period. This involuntary movement from their farms, pushed by an unfriendly economic environment, resulted in a serious loss of investments and markets. It reversed the gains of an economy built over years under difficult circumstances.

The Hebrew Bible attests to this migration. 1Chr. (18 vs.12-13) makes mention of the families of Elpaal and Beriah, whose origins were in Benjamin. Such texts suggest that these two families built Lod and Ono and were heads of the fathers of Aijalon. While these are recorded to have gone on to do well after leaving Benjamin, not all people who left did well economically. The presence of these people in Lod and Ono may possibly help us understand why Sanballat the Horonite and Geshem the Arab requested to meet Nehemiah in one of the villages of Ono (Nehemiah 6 vs.2) where a Judean settlement whose political allegiance was not clear was located.

Many years later, during the Hellenistic period, there was a population of Jewish affiliation that lived in this area (Lipschits 1997 p.10-11,28-31), indicating likely that more people continued to move to areas such as these as other towns continued to lose business to the areas where returnees were staying. It is possible also that this is where some 'people of the land' from other areas, including women and children (Ezra 9 vs.1-2,12-15; 10 vs.2-3,10-15; Neh. 10vs.31), chased by the returnees retired to.

2.The Jerusalem District

To the south of the Mizpah district was the Jerusalem district. This district included the city limits as well as its environs. It extended eastward to the edge of the desert and to Mt Scopus in the north. To the south it was boarded by the Beth-haccerem district just before the Rephaim Valley.

It has been argued in this thesis that the target of the 6th century B.C.E., Babylonian raids was Jerusalem and its most immediate environs. While it did recover at the return of the exiles, it never got to develop back to its pre-exile glory. Lipschits (2015 p. 256) suggested that during the entire Persian period, Jerusalem was only a small city, nothing more than a temple with a few hundred priests and other temple servants living around it.

Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish faith in the province where the temple and the center of the district around it were located. Keeping this in mind, I will hasten to remind the reader of the words by Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.308) and Grabbe (2004 p.5) that these inhabitants of Jerusalem though few, had power beyond their number.

The land in the immediate environment of Jerusalem and forming part of the Jerusalem district had a very low carrying capacity. This was due to a steep and rocky terrain with poor soil coverage and limited water sources. The result of these conditions was that agricultural activity connected to the city was not located in its immediate sphere but in an area concentrated in the Rephaim and Soreq valleys with their many tributaries located around 2-4 km to the north, west and south west of the city. These areas where not part of the Jerusalem district.

The Rephaim valley, a major economic source, begins just west of the Old City and flows southward toward Ramat Rahel. While the 'people of the land' controlled the economy of this area throughout the whole period of the exile, as described in earlier sections, I must point out that it immediately became a target by the returning groups for sustenance of their own economic lives soon after their return. Almost like how it played out in Zimbabwe, where it's the farms located in the most productive areas that were targeted. This included where my father, Arajo Foromoz Chambalama worked and raised us his family.

This was also motivated by the fact revealed in this section that the Jerusalem district, though housing the sole religious center, was itself not a place where serious agriculture could take place. Its geographical setup did not support this. It relied on grain, olive oil and wine supplies from the surrounding areas, the Rephaim and Soreq valleys being key suppliers.

The source of the Soreq valley was 4km north of Jerusalem, flowing westward before making a wide curve at the ancient site of Moza and continuing southward. Along the course of this valley, as well as the course of the Rephaim, are rich alluvial soils and many springs. These areas with alluvial soils were mostly used for growing grain while the slopes of the ravines were used for cultivating vines (Gadot 2015 p. 3-26). Many rural sites of those that did not go into exile existed in this region and they partook of different types of specialized farming.

While this area had naturally led a successful economy from as way back as the 8th century, its economic success in the 6th century can also be attributed to the 701 B.C.E. campaigns by Sennacherib, which led to the loss of the Shephelah (Faust 2013 p.7-38). With the desertion of the Shephelah after Sennacherib's attacks, business competition for this region of Judah was reduced. This made this economy even more viable for the 'people of the land' who were resident in and controlling this area.

The Jerusalem district was cut off from its agricultural surroundings to the west and to the south of the city; these were still in existence, but as a separate region that was administratively connected to Ramat Rahel and under the control of those that did not go into exile. It is important to point out again that it was in this area that most royal estates were located. This means that farm workers and those resident in these areas were not taken to exile.

They remained in Judah not only working the economy but also developing an economic base of their own to the day that Jerusalem would be reestablished at the return of the exiles. As the exiles established their own administration which took back control of Yehud, the farm workers and other peasants that had remained in the land lost control of an economy they had grown and sustained throughout the years of the exile. This area became the Beth-Haccherem district (the ancient name of Ramat Rahel). We will return to this area later.

While Lipschits emphasizes here the economic dependence of Jerusalem on its surroundings, an argument by Altmann (2015 p.104) gives a new perspective. Altmann suggests that at its re-establishment, Jerusalem and its temple-controlled trade and did not directly depend on its environment. He argued, based on texts such as Ezra 1-8, that cultic production in the form of religious services in Jerusalem can be conceived in economic terms.

He suggested that the services offered in Jerusalem at the reestablishment of the temple brought in outside investments in the form of gold, silver, temple vessels, clothing, state property in the form of tax receipts of the satrapy that the Persian king designated for the rebuilding and maintenance of the Jerusalem temple. The trade he mentions here was not just limited to what could happen at the temple. To Altmann, the royal payments in silver mentioned in Nehemiah 5 imply that there was also trade of agricultural products for silver as well as payments in kind to the governor (p.104).

He further argued that the fact that Neh. 10 vs.33-40 mentions the products that the community of 'Israelites' (Neh. 8vs.1) committed to bring to the temple meant that the temple was part of the extraction system and hence a business center. The thought that the temple itself became a business center is however disputed by many scholars. We now turn to the Beth-haccherem district.

3.The Beth-haccerem District

This district lay to the south of Jerusalem. It had at its core the economically important Rephaim valley that has been described above. Its main administrative center was Ramat Rahel, making it the major economic force of the south comparable to Mizpah which dominated the north. In this district were the people of Tekoah who drifted north at the collapse of the garrisons of the south during the raids by Sennacherib described earlier.

Lipschits (2015 p.244) suggests the possibility that the Jerusalem and the Beth-haccerem districts evolved from and were split off the geographical unit known in the first temple era as the environs of Jerusalem. In the 8th and 7th centuries, the environs of Jerusalem were very economically successful, especially to the west and to the south. It is important to note that this is the same period in which growth can be seen in the area of Benajmin (Jer. 17vs.26;32vs.44;33vs.13). It is in these environs of Jerusalem to the north and west that Gedaliah the son of Ahikam is described as having been active after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jer. 40-42).

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the area to the south under which the Beth Haccherem district fell, was left to continue as before. It was separated from the environs of Jerusalem, creating the Beth Haccherem district mentioned in Nehemiah 3 and in the lists of the sons of the singers in Nehemiah 12 vs.28-29. Its economy remained firmly in the hands of the 'people of the land' right up to the time the exiles would return. Just like the areas to the north and west described above, the people resident in this district fell victim to the people that returned from exile, losing control of their economy in the process.

In this district, a number of royal farms were also located. These farms in particular, and the district in general, flourished post 6th century B.C.E. On the basis of rainfall, only parts of the land could be cultivated. This district however formed part of those areas in the province where there was access to both rain and irrigation water. In parts of this district where the annual rainfall averaged below 300 mm the water supply called for human ingenuity; the farmers-built terraces, reservoirs and irrigation systems in order that a harvest could be realized according to Erhard S Gersternberger (2011 p.111).

The historical and settlement roots of the Persian period Jerusalem District, together with the Beth-haccherem districts, were the outcome of the development and dividing of the geographical unit known in the first temple as the 'environs of Jerusalem.' During the 7th century there was a defined growth in the number of agriculture-based settlements around Jerusalem especially in the Rephaim and Soreq valleys, not in the immediate sphere of the city.

After the destruction of the city by the Babylonians when the main destruction was in the city and its 'close periphery,' the environs of Jerusalem were divided into two different administrative units (Gersternberger 2011 p.111). The city and its close periphery ceased to exist, it became the district of Jerusalem. It was cut off from its agricultural surroundings to the west and the south west and, as has been stated earlier.

This area became the Beth-haccherem district. This area flourished economically in the coming centuries as a rural area just like the Benjamin area north of the city. Further to the south, after the Beth haccerem district, came the Beth-zur District described below.

4.Beth-zur District

This district came after the district of Beth-haccherem to the south. It covered areas southmost of the Judean hills. On its east is Ein-gedi, and it is bounded on the west by the Keilah district. The southern border of this district likely ran between Beth-zur sand Hebron. It is the district that is closest to the former territories of the Shephelah. Of all areas in Judah, areas around what would later become the territory of this district were the most affected when Sennacherib raided the Shephelah in 701 B.C.E., during the days of King Hezekiah in Judah.

This was the least populated of the Judean districts during the exile. Its economic potential was limited, especially when the large areas of the desert fringe were used for pastoral economy, and the higher areas facing the central and southern hill country was based mainly on pasture and dry farming. The economic output of the vineyard areas and olive orchards in this area was limited, much more than in the areas of the two districts to the north, Lipschits (2015 p.245).

Though on a limited scale, the 'people of the land' continued to maintain a grape and olive economy throughout the period of the exile, especially in areas north of Hebron. South of Hebron, they maintained a trading economy with the Arabs and Edomites that were drifting north.

In the Shephelah, the settled area concentrated on the foot of the mountains though the population continued to ebb. In the Beer-Sheba and Arad Valleys, Edomites and Arabs from the south moved in, crossing the Negev around the 6th century. The groups began to advance northward toward the Shephelah and the Hebron Highlands mostly for trade purposes. Trade in this area was so important to the 'people of the land' that it requires a brief comment.

During the Persian period, two systems of long-distance exchange circulated goods throughout the region. The shipping fleets of Phoenicia brought goods from across the Mediterranean and the camel caravans circulated goods around the margins of the Arabian Peninsula. Daniel Master (2014 p.89) suggests that the two systems had every reason to interact within the institutional norms of the market, but they were separated by a string of tribal kingdoms.

This gap created an institution on its own by exploiting the routes from the desert to the sea. The highland people in-between were not exactly consumers but they were able to extract goods for passage, especially in the 8th and 7th centuries. One must imagine that this trade was bidirectional, (Master 2014 p.89). It was not just a matter of caravanners reaching out to the sea but also of the sea merchants reaching out to the people of the east. In the south, the Edomites and Philistines were natural partners (Ams 1-2, Num 34; Josh 15; 2Kgs 3 vs.20). As a result of trade, tribute to the monarchy or the imperial powers often included goods not locally produced.

For Judahite kings, the income from facilitating the caravans was a key source of prestige goods displayed by kings until such a time as they were attracting the attention of some of the great powers. The goods thus traded were very important to the kings, but did not necessarily trickle down to the rest of the economy, especially to the lineage economy in the farmsteads in the 8th and 7th centuries (Master 2014 p.90). After the 6th century however, the 'people of the land' had access to these foreign goods despite their social class.

Well, we did not quite have this kind of trade in the farms in Zimbabwe. Many farms however, especially those that did flowers, had a vast foreign market. They especially produced for export. In this discussion however, I am keen on the kind of trade my father took part in, this was on a very small scale but was very personal to me. He used to make mats made from river side reeds. We sold these mats for income. People would buy them for several purposes, for sitting on at home, for giving to the in laws during lobola ceremonies and for laying in graves during burials. The income we got from these was a key supplement to our family economy. This trade would be lost however as the farms were taken over and even most of our clients migrated.

The trade aspect of the economy of Judah seems to have taken what could be described in modern day language as a free market approach at this time. Master (2014 p.88) suggested that, generally, large and permanent markets were only located in the largest cities (Askelon 2Sam.1 vs.20; Damascus/Samaria 1 Kgs. 20 vs.34; Nineveh in Nahum 2 vs.4; Babylon in Jer. 51vs. 4; Tyre Ezek. 26vs.11, 8th - 6th century Jerusalem, Jer. 5 vs.1). That the external traders such as Tyrians who provided goods for elite consumption likely in exchange for agricultural harvest could be seen as far as Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13 vs.16), somewhat suggests free markets.

This interregional trade was most certainly profitable, such that the traders saw it worth the risk to undertake it. For such trade to take place certain structures needed to be in place to maintain an adequate level of transaction costs. This would include relative security and the ability for sellers and buyers to find each other (Altmann 2015 p. 116). Up to the time of the return from exile, such a structure was provided by the 'people of the land', mostly those from the rural / farming community.

Trade was as necessary for these 'people of the land' as it later would be for the returnees when they took over. Gersternberger (2011 p.111) pointed out that, for the Persian period rural communities, most of the necessities of life such as food, clothing, housing, technology, education and hygiene could be satisfied on one's own. Any extra items that would be desired could be obtained by battering or purchase; for this purpose, people needed their own surplus production of agricultural goods that could be offered in exchange.

In the world at that time, knowledge of buying and selling was not as developed as we have it today. Personal relationships between buyers and sellers were common, and negotiations covered all aspects of a non-homogeneous repertoire of goods. In the farmsteads during the exile, trade was fairly managed to avoid excesses of social ranking that existed before and after the exile, Gersternberger (2011 p.111).

In the end, during the exile, across the length and breathe of exilic Judea, borrowing the words of Master (2014 p. 89) 'A system of trade radiated out from the ports of the Mediterranean across political boundaries to reach the smallest hamlets in the lineage economy'. The impetus for the market was generated by non-local goods which were an integral part of daily life but had to be exchanged for agricultural surplus or goods from Judean workshops.

Primary trade in non-local goods brought agricultural goods into the market for exchange, thereby creating opportunities for specialists to supplement their subsistence from the local market.

Since the Judean farmers were also subject to taxation, and had to pay temple tax as well, their production had to exceed their personal use. This can only lead to the conclusion that the 'people of the land' worked very hard to develop and sustain their farming economy during the Persian period, such that it would be unjust to lose such a hard-earned economy to the returnees at the consummation of the exile. We turn now to the Keilah District in the south western end of Judah.

5.The Keilah District

Together with the valley of Elah and the city of Azekah in its south western corner, this district was the only stronghold that the province of Yehud was left with in the Shephelah after the time of the Assyrians and beyond. This district was boarded to the west by Ashdod, and to the south by the region controlled from Maresha. On the north, the boundary ran close to Gezer (Lipschits 2015 p.245).

As has been noted earlier, the Shephelah was the best area in the former territory of Judah for cultivating olive trees, and it was traditionally the center of olive oil production, as was shown in its 8th and 7th century B.C.E., history presented above. However, this area never got back to the levels of success achieved before the 701 B.C.E., raids by Sennacherib. This is despite the idea that it was conveniently in proximity to the flourishing coastal area. The important roads leading from Judah westward also passed through this area crossing important border towns including Azekah.

Though its economic importance was far from being fully utilized, this district was one of the strategically important areas of the province, (Lipschits 2015 p.245). Around the 5th century and with the growing importance of Jerusalem, the pottery production center of this district was abandoned and the center of production for Yehud jars moved to the environs of Jerusalem, leading to a significant loss of business to people that remained in this district. The reestablishment of Jerusalem made the Keilah district increasingly weak.

From the information on the district system given above, it is notable that in the years following the crisis of the Babylonian destruction, there was stability and continuity in the rural settlement economy. This was especially true of areas to the north, west and immediate south of Jerusalem. This stability may have been in the interest of ruling empires, which preserved the local system of collecting agricultural products, especially wine and oil in administrative centers that existed throughout the whole time that Judah existed under the hegemony of empires, such as Ramat Rahel and Mizpah (Lipschits 2015 p. 256).

It is interesting to note however that, of the 41 people recorded in Nehemiah to have constructed the segments of the wall following the return from exile, 7 of them were official functionaries in-charge of districts or subdistricts (Lipschits 2015 p.240).

These were Rephaiah, son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem (3vs.9); Shallum, son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem (3vs.9); Malchijah, son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccerem (3vs.14); Shallum the son of Colhozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, (3vs.15); Nehemiah the son of Azbuk the official of half the district of Beth-zur (3vs.16); and Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah (3vs.17 and Bavvai the son of Henadad, the official of half the district of Keilah (3vs.18).

From the above I conclude that given the hostility that the returnees had toward the 'people of the land', these leaders mentioned above were part of the returnees and had taken over the administration of the districts either appointed by Nehemiah upon his return or by previous leaders. As a result of their connection to the local governor (in this case Nehemiah) and to the Imperial government (Persian authorities), they took over the administration of the economy from those that did not go into exile. This led to the loss of an economy that the 'people of the land' had built prior to the 6th century and during the years of the exile.

I glean further evidence to support my argument from Nehemiah (13 vs.15-22); verse 15 reads,

> In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions.

Wine presses and grapes mentioned in the text above were found in the rural and farm areas. These, as has already been shown, were located in highland areas to the west and south as well as the area of Benjamin to the north of Jerusalem. Their mere mention in this text suggests a connection at this time between the rural periphery and central places, with regulation on all farming activities being done from central places including in this case Jerusalem (Altmann 2015 p.111).

That Nehemiah had the power to regulate the economic behavior of those areas known to have been occupied by the 'people of the land' means these people had lost the power to determine their economic behavior to those returning from exile. Altman (2015 p.111) suggests a possibility that Judean nobles from exile had taken over farms and were now, 'pressing peasants into agricultural work on the sabbath', thus leading to the action that Nehemiah is recorded to have taken.

My focus is not on whether it was lawful or not lawful for them to work or sell on the sabbath; my argument is that Nehemiah and the nobles, though being returnees, now wielded the power to stop economic activity if it occurred on the sabbath or in a manner they did not agree with.

People who lost or sold their farms to returnees were forced to migrate to towns for economic opportunities. In urban areas things were a little different. Here they had to work as manual laborers or traders among other professions and could only turn to the market for essentials they needed. However, to work as an artisan or to trade, these people had to obtain the necessary technical skills as well as raw materials, then move the manufactured or purchased products to areas of need and sell at a reasonable profit margin (Gersternberger 2011 p.111).

Due to the fact that farming was mostly carried out by the 'people of the land' in the rural periphery, residents in these towns were completely dependent on economic exchange. No wonder the traders came to Jerusalem in droves to sell their goods as recorded in Neh. 13vs.15-16. Gersternberger (2011 p.111) says an indicator of increasing trade in urban areas at the expense of the farming communities, was the minting of coins in the period following the return from exile. While this made exchange considerably easier, it further isolated the 'people of the land' from the control of an economy they had sustained for such a long time.

The agricultural products recorded in Neh. 13 vs. 15 were brought from the rural farming areas either for exchange or delivered as tax payments. I have already argued that in the villages production was mostly grain, wine, and oil (cf. Deut. 12 vs.17;14vs.23;18vs.4; Neh. 13vs.12). Gersternberger says these essential foods were used generally for trading apart from local consumption.

In addition to the above mentioned, there were some market place wares of metal, wood, stone, textiles and earthenware. These required special skills from expert artisans, as has been highlighted above; after the return from exile, administrative authorities, generally attracted the best of these workers and determined the cost of labor and exchange of goods. This implies that the returnees at this time, not only took over control of the exchange of goods but also became the center for the collection of taxes for the local leadership and for forwarding to the imperial government. This only strengthens my argument that they had taken over the economy from the 'people of the land'. They at that point were able to determine the regulations under which goods could be exchanged, taxed or sold.

The power that the returnees had over the 'people of the land' at this time can be compared to that which the government sponsored groups had over people like my father in the year 2000 in Zimbabwe. My father and fellow farm workers had no power to determine how they wanted to live or how the farms could be run. Everyone was required to comply and those that did not comply saw themselves forced off the farms, often very violently. They lost jurisdiction of their small farming activities just like the 'people of the land' during the days of Nehemiah.

The mention in verse 16 (Neh.15) of the regulation of trading activities of Tyrians by Nehemiah means trade control was no longer the jurisdiction of the domestic community of the 'people of the land'. We meet here Nehemiah formulating community boundaries in terms of economic transactions.

In verse 17-18, Nehemiah turns his attention to the leaders and the nobles. His reprimand to the nobles was an attempt to regulate the economic activities of Judah through an ingroup appeal; he did not direct his address to the 'people of the land' but to the leaders among the returnees. This to me indicates two things; first that these nobles were connected to the elite that had been taken to exile many years before and secondly that the nobles were in charge of steering the activities of the community of Judah. In the Zimbabwean situation, this would mirror war veterans and other people groups that were linked to the government. In the year 2000, these took over control of land previously under the care of commercial white farmers and the black groups that served as farm workers; this we will explore in greater detail in the next chapter.

When we consider the structure of the Judean economy, at least as exposed in Ezra-Nehemiah, the nobles appear time and time again playing very key roles: for example, they are those with the capital to lend to small land holders and rural farmers as noted in Neh. 5 vs.1-13 (Altmann 2015 p.116). In the Persian epoch, the economic situation in Judah seems to have been at times precarious. Nehemiah (5 vs.1-5; cf. 9 vs.36-37) gives us a glimpse of challenges caused not just by natural occurrences but also by exorbitant interest rates levied by nobles among the returnees on their brethren.

The economy of the Persian province of Judah was susceptible to natural disasters. This made it impossible at times to produce large surpluses and pursue an extensive economy of provisions, and the pressure of the Persian system of taxation plus the intra-Judean temple tax drove the 'people of the land' to despair. Many of the nobles among the returnees exploited the situation and made a lot of gain out of peasants by lending at exorbitant interest rates, leading to the people drowning in debt.

Those owing had no choice but to mortgage their children and land, resulting in a situation documented in Nehemiah 5 vs.5, 'We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless to redeem them because our fields and vineyards belong to others.'

While Nehemiah steps in to correct this situation, it is also evident from this scenario that the returnees had taken over the means of production and of the economy in general. Even some of the 'people of the land' had now to depend on the nobles for support in the event of a dry season, or complications in their economic lives. It is important at this point that we look at how exactly production and extraction took place in Judah during this period.

3.9 Production and Extraction in the Jewish Economy

How exactly did the economy of Persian period Judah operate in this district and sub-district system? Avraham Faust (2011 p.256-273) has proposed a thesis which attempts to answer this important question. His argument is that Persian period Judah was a combination of several household economies. His views, contrasted with those of others, shall be consulted at this time.

Faust (2011 p.261) divided the economies of Iron Age II Judah into three, the urban household economy, the rural household economy and the state economy. The urban households controlled a section of the economy. According to him, evidence from late Iron Age II shows economic activity in urban dwellings, including many installations for the production of foodstuffs and agricultural products. A type of installation typically found in urban spaces was the wine press.

Among other examples of urban areas in which such installations were found, Faust (2011 p.261) mentions:

1. Mizpah: A few olive oil presses were unearthed within a few dwellings scattered across the settlement.
2. Tell Beit Mirsim: Approximately thirteen olive oil presses were unearthed both inside and between buildings.
3. Tel Beth-Shemesh: Approximately twenty olive oil presses have been discovered in and between the dwellings, as well as scattered across the settlement.

Much of the oil at the presses was used by the families near the presses, but surplus was for exchange with neighbors or at the local market. Those houses in which olive presses were not found must have made their living out of other activities. They may have owned wine presses which were located on the countryside near agricultural areas. Many of these none olive-pressing households could have worked as hired laborers in enterprises belonging to other families. It was also possible that those that owned wine presses supplemented their income by sometimes also working as day laborers in different industries.

Faust (2011 p.262) says there was evidence of economic activity which involved such industries. He mentions large scale store houses found in places such as Hazor (Ben Tor 1999 p. 37) Jerusalem, Lachish, and Tel Ira. His suggestion is that these large-scale storage facilities may have belonged to those families that fared better than others in the urban economic arena. Outside the urban economy was also the rural economy.

The rural economy operated differently from the urban economy. Rural communities lived as extended families in fairly large households that could house large number of inhabitants. Unlike in the urban economy where installations were found within and just without houses, installations for the production of agricultural foodstuffs in rural areas were concentrated in agricultural industrial areas where large scale agricultural production was taking place.

Economic organization in the rural areas operated at a level higher than that of the family or extended family. Faust (2011 p.265) suggests that it operated at lineage level, where each lineage operated its own industrial area with lineage elders being responsible for organizing production. Master (2015 p.85) concurs and adds the suggestion that clan or tribal leaders sometimes acted as intermediaries, collecting generalized tribute contributions from the entire tribe or lineage and forwarding to the royal leadership. In some villages there was only one lineage and hence one industrial area while in others there were several lineages resulting also in several industrial areas.

Roland Boer (2013 p.31) offers a similar analysis to that of Faust, however for Boer the sacred is political; the sacred is a form of legitimation of the political. Boer (2013 p.31) suggests from a Soviet perspective that the economy of the Ancient Near East (Judah included) was sacred. He understood it in terms of sacred instead of political. In this ‘sacred economy’, Boer believed the economy operated a Tributary Mode of Production (TMP), in it he identifies three distinctions: the village commune, the temple complex and what he calls the despotic state.

He views the village commune as both a kinship and economic unit. Boer quotes Mario Liverani (2005 p.21-4) to have said, ‘While the political and cultural centrality of the palace is beyond doubt, the majority of the population (about 80 percent) lived in villages, relying on its own means of production: the family-owned lands and flocks of sheep and goats’.

He suggests that until the Persian Era (537-303B.C. E.) there was no substantial change in the structure and nature of the village commune. He however notes a view that is important to my argument in this study; he suggests, based on a study by Carter (1999 p.249), that there was a significant reduction in village communes in Persian period Yehud. I would like to propose that this reduction was as a result of a loss of an economy by the ‘people of the land’ to the returnees that forced those in the rural periphery to migrate beyond the border of Yehud or to the cities were they could work as hired labor instead.

Evidence for the rural or farm organizational framework could be seen not just in the processing of what was produced but also in how they were stored in this economic system. Surpluses that were produced here were stored in homes and in communal storages in the case of produce belonging to the clan or reserved for tax purposes. These storage facilities functioned as part of the local lineage economic structure just like the industries discussed earlier. Compared to the royal storage facilities which we shall discuss later, they are much smaller.

According to Faust, (2011 p.66), the rural families could only interact in matters of the economy with the outside world through the lineage group they were part of. Evidence for this is found in the fact that the industrial areas and the storage facilities were relatively centralized and were controlled by the larger kinship group. Above the rural economy was the state economy, into which the other economies fed. We turn now our attention to it.

The third and final division of the Iron Age economy of Judah mentioned by Faust is the state economy. Faust divided this economy into subsystems of royal production, the system of royal produce collection (taxation), the system of royal storage (of the collected produce), and the royal system that regulated trade.

1. Royal system of production

The royal system ran a complicated system of production centers including large farms and sophisticated processing systems. An example is a royal center of wine making located in Jerusalem estimated at a capacity of 150,000-200,000 liters of wine per season. This was associated with centers of production at Ramat Rahel. Several royal estates and centers of production have also been found in the periphery of the Judean Highlands. A possibility is also that the center of wine production uncovered at Gibeon was part of the royal system, Boer (2014 p.39).

It is important to also note that the royal system of production just like the other systems of production commented on earlier, depended on what Boer (2014 p.39) calls production outside human knowledge and control. This refers to production attributable only to the God of Isreal. It is the God of Israel who was responsible for the fertility of the soil, rains and the opening of wombs. It was not only production that was attributable to the God of Israel but also part of allocation. A good example is the allocation of fertility according to Boer (2014 p.39).

This includes fertility of land (Gen. 1 vs.11-12; Ex. 3 vs.8; Isa. 35vs.1-2), women (Deut. 28vs.11-12, Psalm 113vs.9) and animals (Deut. 7vs14c). Boer (2014 p.39) says, at this level the over-riding metaphor is one of a receptacle for seed, whether that is a woman for a man's seed, the ground for crops, or female animals with the seed of male animals. God ultimately controls and allocates such fertility as the narratives of opening and closing of wombs of animals and women indicate, as well as the fear of famine and the celebration of plenty. No human structure could claim control or influence over such allocation. While the returning elite claimed this as legitimation of their control, the 'people of the land' could make a similar argument.

2. The royal system of produce collection

The existence of a system that collected produce is seen in the existence of organized storage facilities within Judah at this time. Put simply, the royal system of produce collection was a mechanism of economic extraction. An in-depth discussion on any one model of extraction was beyond the scope of the analysis by Faust. For the purposes of this thesis however we will take a deeper look into this concept by consulting the works of other scholars.

Several models of production and extraction have been proposed. These include the Asiatic Mode of Production (ASP), Slave Mode of Production (SMP) and the Tributary Mode of production (TMP). The one that appeals to me the most is the Tributary Mode of Production proposed by Noman Gotwald in 1999. This is a model of production and extraction found in social systems divided into classes of rulers and subjects. Subjects in this model, peasants (farmers and/or herders), produce not only for the consumption of their families, but they also have to give a proportion of their goods or labor to their rulers as tribute.

I find Gerald West's comments on the Tributary Mode of Production (here after TMP), to be useful. For this reason, here l will share views expressed by West (2011 p.516-522). West views 1 Samuel 8 as the Hebrew Bible birth narrative for TMP. He suggests that among other features of TMP is a mechanism for economic extraction which I liken to the royal system of produce collection mentioned above. This economic extraction mechanism would allow the leader(s) to:

1. Take some of their sons and daughters as peasant farmers (vs. 11-13)
2. Take some of their land (vs.14)
3. Take some of their produce (vs.15)
4. Take some of their slaves and livestock (vs.16)
5. Make them his slaves (vs.17b)

Apart from the above, according to 1Samuel 8vs.20 quoted by West, 'in exchange for defending the people, the monarchy acquired the right to extract tribute in the form of products or levy (West 2011 p.516-522).' Master (2014 p.83) comments on the same text almost similarly; he adds that from 1 Samuel 8 onwards, any individual king, tribal leader or patriarch acted as an organization, navigating the shared traditions to his own material advantage. He mentioned the examples from Avner Greif (2006 p.16) of Rehoboam, whom he says misjudged his ability to manipulate the tribal assembly in pursuit of additional revenue, and Ahab (and Jezebel) who sought ways to manipulate traditional social mores about land sales in pursuit of a particular vineyard.

While this system started in the days of Saul, it continued to develop over successive kings. In the days of David, indications that are likened to TMP are that David had an administrator of forced labor (2Sam 2024). According to West (2011 p.518), the census taken by David recorded in 1Samuel 24vs.1-9 (cf. 1Chr 21 vs.1-6) likely had the objective of extracting tribute from the Israelite population.

David is reckoned to have created a class of the elite in the cities by distributing much of the fertile lands acquired during a war victory to his military subordinates. Apart from the military, other people groups attached to the royal families also benefited.

These include security personnel (1 Sam 8vs. 12,14-15), doormen (2 Kgs. 8 vs.14-11), singers (1Kgs. 10 vs.12), house builders (1 1 Kgs.4-5), wood cutters (Josh.9vs.23), perfumers, cooks, bakers (1 Sam. 8vs13), among others. The needs of the city life in which these personnel operated would, according to West, form the core of the TMP in both the days of David and those of his son Solomon. It was however in the days of Solomon that TMP became fully developed.

Here we will take a brief detour just to consider a related explanation of how classes came up. This was a suggestion by Boer. I will direct the reader's attention back to West after the comments by Boer. Appealing to the works of Gottwald (2001), among others, but commenting on the Asiatic Mode of Production, Boer (2013 p.36) analyses how the classes described above may have come up. He suggests that under certain conditions (such as soil fertility, rainfall, trade or booty), the differentiation of wealth and power sets in, and is concentrated in the hands of certain individuals.

This according to Boer, marks the beginning of class, in which a certain group is disconnected from the production of certain essentials like food and clothing. This group then depends on others to produce these and then extract from them in some fashion. This may include coercion or persuasion or a mix of both.

With the further concentration of wealth and power, chieftains and then towns develop. At some point when the extraction of wealth becomes complex, such that it requires defense, a city and a state would then develop, with at its helm a king or a despot or tyrant. From here the sate exploits the village communes. This view suggests that there are those who own the means of production who do not themselves produce (the state), those who own and produce (the village commune), those who do not own but produce (slaves and day laborers. This class would also include those captured in war and children born in slavery), Boer (p. 38). An important difference between West and Boer is that Boer focuses on allocation while West focuses on extraction, I will now return to West.

Solomon was known for large scale construction much of whose material was imported (1Kgs 6-9). Importation of luxury goods and skilled labor (1Kgs 5), as well as an elegant court life required a large budget (1Kgs 4 vs22-28). The costs of maintaining not just this but also state security and servicing of foreign debts (1 Kgs 5 vs.11) increased the necessity for extracting more tribute and labor from the common people, culminating after the death of Solomon in the division of the of Israel into the north and the south.

Regarding the days of the monarchy, whether united or divided, Master (2014 p.84) makes a suggestion that differs slightly from that made by West above and hereafter. Master says extraction was bidirectional. He views it as an exchange. He views the palace as having required individuals, some on occasional basis and others on full time, to perform their clan's craft for the king. In exchange, the king provided grain for the workers and their families, with goods extracted from land holding officials elsewhere. To him, the relationship was an exchange.

I would like to submit that I am more inclined to the view by West that extraction was more from the side of the elites. I do not view being given rations from the palace as an exchange. I view it as being given back what was taken from you. This in my view was especially strong as regards TMP during the period post the exile when the returning elites extracted to their gain, leaving many of the 'people of the land' stranded. This we shall explore further on.

Rightly so, West (2011 p.598) argues that TMP went beyond the just mentioned division of the state into two. He suggests that in both the new states (Israel and Judah), the elites earlier created took over the control of the economy together with its mechanisms of extraction. In Judah for example, the active participation of the elites in international trade is mentioned by West to have provided an opportunity to cut deeply into the subsistence of the peasant majority to collect enough exports to exchange for the luxury they desired to import.

The peasants were pushed to produce mostly that which was required by foreign traders, (wheat, olive oil and wine) so that the elite could use this exchange for that which they required. It is not surprising that agriculture at this time became specialized by region and arable land became consolidated in fewer and fewer lands. This explains why there was a proliferation of rock-cut olive and grape processing yards in the northern Judean hill country.

The elites usurped the peasants' power to make their own decisions regarding the priorities in agricultural production. They had to produce that which the elite could extract. The demand from an urban elite of wine, oil and wheat, for example, placed immense pressure on the farmers in the country side. There was incentive for the elite to extract every surplus. In less productive years, and stripped of the power to diversify, the farmers on the countryside had to take survival loans from the elite money lenders as these money lenders had the only money available for such facilities.

The money lenders became wealthier and the peasants became more and more dependent on them such that in some cases a cycle of cumbered harvest was created were each new harvest was already pledged to repay debts incurred in the prior procurement of factors of production, according to West (2011 p.521). The end result, West says, was a large number of 'debt-slaves' and transfer of land from peasant owners to urban elites leading to massive economic exploitation and pauperization of the peasantry (p. 521).

I view this system to have taken a radical shift following the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. We have already established that it was mostly the elite that were taken to exile, leaving factors of production as well as the ability to decide on the direction if the economy in the hands of that resident on the country side (peasantry). For a number of years, the peasantry had the privilege of getting access to international trade, which previously was reserved mostly for the access of the elite.

They could now determine the cost of their own goods on the market, and could directly negotiate with foreign merchants. For the period of the exile, they enjoyed a breather from extraction by the elite, this is despite the fact they still needed to pay tribute to the imperial powers. At the return from exile however, there was a reestablishment of control from urban centers by the elite. The 'people of the land' had not been subjected to this in a while, hence resistance was only natural. The returnees however had power enough to enforce their ends. This, as I have argued before, led to the loss of an economy on the part of the 'people of the land'.

Nehemiah chapter 5 vs. 1-5 bears witness to the reestablishment of the loan facility at exorbitant interest rates system, and the loss of land on the part of the peasants, as well as a life dependent on such loans for economic or even social survival.

3. Royal system of storage

Many storage facilities were identified in several settlements with Judah. This excludes the rural storage system which was part of the lineage economic system. Several were also found that clearly served as royal storage facilities. A few examples have been given already, so I here avoid going into the details again. These facilities were particularly common in spaces where royal farms were located, for example, in Moza. Gibeon is also a likely location of such facilities owned by the royal family for the storage of wine.

4. Royal system of trade regulation

Faust (2011 p. 269) suggests the presence in Judah of an officer who facilitated and regulated trade. He suggests that it is possible that many uniform weights that were uncovered in the Late Iron Age in Judah were part of this trade regulation system. This trade, as has already been discussed above, included local trade as well as regional and international trade. Several texts from the Hebrew Bible also testify to the existence of such a trade (cf. Ezekiel 27vs16-.27).

Faust (2011 p. 269) posits that imported cedars were found in central sites like Jerusalem and Lachish, and even in more remote sites in the Beer-Sheba and Arad valleys. Imported pottery, fish bones and small finds such as ivories also were indicative of trade. Judah was thus part of an international network. Agricultural surpluses and possibly taxes from convoys were used to purchase luxurious imported goods. International trade in Judah before the exile, however, was a state endeavor and household and lineage economies were generally not integrated into it.

This situation was to change however with the exile of the elites by the Babylonians. As a result of the fact that there was generally no more state to talk about, the household as well as the lineage economies could now engage international traders directly. For the duration of the exile, trade was thus controlled at household level in the case of the little urban life still in existence and at lineage level in the case of rural and farming areas.

This situation would however be reversed again as the exile came to an end. At this point, the organized leadership of the province took over control of trade yet again, leading it back to the old way of operation. This resulted in great economic prejudice on the part of the rural and farming communities that had largely controlled trade up to that time. We will end this section by briefly discussing how the three economies discussed so far interacted with each other.

3.10 Royal Economy and Traditional, Lineage Economy

During the late Iron Age period, before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, these economies generally operated along each other although the latter fed into the former by way of tribute and trade control. Faust (2011 p.272) has said that in the 7th century the entire Judean region functioned as a single economic unit with different areas specializing in the production of specific agricultural produce. He however points out that while agricultural produce came from the large royal estates, a lot of the agricultural produce on Judah also came from towns, villages and farmsteads.

It was however these smaller producers that were taxed. Some of the taxes were consumed by the king and by state apparatus but others were exported and helped incorporate Judah in the period's international network, headed by Assyria at the time.

As I have pointed out earlier, this extraction of wealth from rural and farming communities slowed down during the period of the exile. My challenge with the same system arises at the return of the exiles when those that had come from exile extracted a whole economy from those that did not go into exile, despite the fact that those that did not go worked over the years of the exile to grow and sustain such an economy. As the reader will come across later on, my own father lost our little farm economy to government sponsored groups post the year 2000 in Zimbabwe. It is for this reason that reading the story of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah particularly moves me. It's a story to which I closely relate.

The above analysis has sought to offer an explanation on how exactly the economy of Judah operated after the exile. As the reader may have noted, on any concept I discussed above, I began by locating the same concept before the exile and then went on to explain its progression to post exilic times. This was meant to provide the reader with sufficient background for the arguments I am making in this chapter. I will now turn to the third and final section of this chapter. This third section focuses on migration complications suffered by the 'people of the land' upon being displaced from land by the returnees. I remind the reader that this third section is still part of the first pole of this study. The second pole begins in the next chapter and the third pole comes in the chapter after that.

3.11 The Migration Complication

In the previous section I drew the reader's attention to the loss of an economy suffered by the 'people of the land' at the hands of those that were returning from exile. In this section I turn to the migration complications that were faced by those that were excluded from land for various reasons by the returnees. An example of such a group of people are the women and children that were sent away in the Ezra-Nehemiah cleansing of the Judahite community (Ezra 10vs.3; Nehemiah 13 vs.23-29).

This part of the chapter is of particular and personal interest to me. This is because my father (Arajo Foromoz Chambalama) was a migrant farm worker. The experiences of those that are recorded to have been forced into migration in this chapter, act as a reminder of the personal stories that my father shared of his own migration. These stories form a part of my life that brings pain but it's a part that I do not want to forget because it reminds me of the sacrifices that my father made for his future and of mine as well as of the rest of my family. His is a story of a double migration, first from Mozambique, then from the farms to seek alternative abode. I recount his story in fuller detail in the second pole of the study.

I will approach this subject of migration in three steps. First, I will look at the global perspective on migration in the world of that time, with special emphasis on the forced migrations orchestrated by the Assyrian Empire from 911- 609 B.C.E. (I have chosen to include Assyria in this section because it is in my view the empire most relevant for effecting deportations in the Levant). I will then discuss the forced migration of Judean elites at the hands of Babylonians in the 6th century. In closing the section, I will discuss what I consider the core of this section; which is the migration from Judea that followed the return of the exiles in 538 B.C.E.

According to Robert R, Stieglitz (1992 p.263), human migrations in the Ancient Near East have been attested from the earliest historical times, and continue intermittently throughout the ages. He views this Ancient Near Eastern human migration as coming in two categories, that is: voluntary and forced or involuntary migration.

The latter being largely influenced by imperial policies which resulted in some of the largest deportations and population transfers documented in history. Rovira (2014 p.25) has pointed out that the forced displacement and migration of individuals or groups existed from as early as the Old Babylonian times (2002 p.1595) and that the same was used as a major form of social and political coercion in the Syria Mesopotamian region during the same epoch of time. We will now take a brief look into voluntary migrations.

3.12 Voluntary Migrations

This form of migration usually occurred when human groups made a collective decision to move, in many cases due to economic hardships or a combination of factors. Stieglitz (1992 p.264) says the catastrophes leading to this were usually natural, such as prolonged drought following an unavoidable famine. The Hebrew Bible is replete with this kind of migration. Fitting in this category of migration are such migrations as the migration of Jacob and his family to Egypt when Joseph became prime minister (Genesis 46 vs.1-47 vs.12), the migration of Isaach to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar when there was a famine in Israel (Genesis 26 vs.1-5; 12-17), Elimelech his wife Naomi and their children who migrated from Bethlehem to Moab escaping from a famine (Ruth 1vs.1-4).

Beside the above, people are also known to have migrated in the Ancient Near East due to the ravages of war. This would often lead to the creation of daughter settlements by a metropolis. The daughter settlement was a focus of immigration, often due to the pressure of over population in their homeland. People are also known to have migrated in the Ancient Near East due to pasture depletion. Much of the pressure on pastures was caused by large and ubiquitous heads of sheep and goats overgrazing the available land. The depletion of the pasture land was a known factor prompting tribal groups to seek greener pastures, thereby accelerating the dispersal of tribes, Stieglitz (1992 p.264).

People could move to or away from cities. The most affected were the urban rulers who had to receive new-comers. These infiltrations of population groups were of great concern to the urban ruler due to the pressure they exerted on resources and infrastructure. To curb or prevent such infiltration of migrating populations, rulers often marshaled military responses. Alternatively, or complimentarily, there was often construction of networks of fortresses as defensive lines to forestall unwanted incursions. The Pharaohs of Egypt are known to have constructed the ‘Wall of the Ruler’ to keep out nomads whom they designated as ‘sand dwellers’ (Stieglitz 1992 p. 266).

Migrants were usually many and often troublesome, and would sometimes keep on drifting towards centers of civilization despite mechanisms to repel them. As a result, even before the Iron Age in the Ancient Near East, human movement was already a subject of concern and regulation. Agreements between states are known to have been written which included standard clauses about the mutual responsibilities of rulers when tribal groups crossed the frontiers of states. Such treaties often required rulers to feed the migrants and then return them to their homelands without detention.

It is interesting how modern-day labour migrations have become such a great concern between Zimbabwe and South Africa, this is an area that I do not comment on in the second pole of this study but it is an opportunity for modern scholarship to study and write on.

In the Ancient Near East, some governments permitted the migrants to cross borders under the watchful eyes of guards, who dutifully reported all movement to their superiors (Stieglitz 1992 p. 267). The opposite of voluntary migrations was forced migrations. To allow comparison, we will now also look at forced migration.

3.13 Forced Migration

Unlike voluntary migrants, who can decide when to leave, where to stay, and who tend not to have any kind of infrastructure during their journeys or for their resettlement, and often attract people in the early stages of their lives who have the hope to succeed in the new location, people who experience forced migration are included by force into organized migration and resettlement programs with their given schedules and timelines. For them, there is neither spontaneity or self-determination. They have no say in the matter of their movement. Forced migrations often resettle them onto the same limited resource base, David Tuton (2006 p. 14-19).

Voluntary migration mostly affected groups; rarely would one migrate as an individual. Forced migration on the other hand could either affect groups or individuals. Genesis 27 vs.41-28 vs.22 documents the story of Jacob who was forced to migrate to his uncle's place fleeing from his furious brother Esau. As we will see in the second pole of this study, my father's migration from Mozambique was largely a solo trip.

Forced migration of individuals could comprise captured fugitives or individuals who had migrated without proper authorization. Such individuals could be captured by the state and become deportees. On the other hand, according to Rovira (2014 p.25), mass forced human movement were generally associated with war.

Individuals captured after clashes between kingdoms were taken as prisoners of war and plunder. They were often displaced and relocated depending on the victor's needs and purposes, usually as punishment for certain groups for their resistance to the besieger's attacks. The Hebrew Bible records an account of Abraham mobilizing a group of his men to go and rescue his nephew Lot who had been forced to migrate as a prisoner of war (Genesis 14vs.14).

Forced migrations may also have been for reasons of launching a territorial expansion strategy. Groups were often moved to peripheral ends of a territory to facilitate the extension of the influence of the ruler, Rovira (2014 p.25). This would reconfigure the dominated space both socially and politically. Socially, by diluting certain groups of people through intermarriages, cultural engineering or isolation from people groups that they were related to and politically, by diffusing a group's capability to spur rebellion and minor uprisings. This as we shall see later on, seems to have been part of the motivation behind Assyrian mass migrations that ended in the 6th century.

Forced migrations often broke family bonds, both objectively, by dismembering the family in a society where kinship was one of the key factors in subsistence, and subjectively, by fracturing the bond that joined the kin group through 'ancestors' worship. Rovira (2014 p. 26), says this was achieved when the place of residence or temples were razed. Worship often occurred in specially designated temples, homes or pieces of land. For those that practiced ancestral worship, this often conveyed a message of remembrance and of genealogical order of the memory of life in a particular place inhabited by the ancestors.

All this created a bond between the past and the present which would be broken in the event of any forced movement to the group. As we shall see in the second pole of this study, this was also at play in the forced migrations of farm workers during land reoccupations of the year 2000 in Zimbabwe. Farm workers were separated from the graves of their loved ones; these dead ones were believed to be a link between the living and their ancestors who would have died many years before. My own father, was separated from the burial place of his first daughter, Nyarai Chambalama. This we shall explore further when we turn to the section on Zimbabwe (the second pole).

Forced movement, which implied deportation of people reveals the violent mechanisms practiced by the state apparatus. They often did away with human resources which were chronically scarce, and usually used them to boost the workforce wherever they were needed. Rovira (2014 p.25) reveals some of the ills that often-accompanied human displacement and migration.

These included a variety of calamities, such as epidemics, disturbances in living conditions, dismemberment of native and deported families, land redistribution and more. He suggested that mass deportations could also trigger clashes that often escalated into real violence. Coexistence of deported and local people often brought about mixed identities. In rare cases this could be used to diffuse possible future conflict. We will now look at migration orchestrated by empires.

3.14 The Empires and the Question of Migration (722-587 B.C.E.)

In what follows, I am still in the first pole of this study. In this part of the first pole, I review the impact of mass migration by empires on Israel and Judah. I begin with a short Assyrian conquest historical synopsis followed by two topics: the deportation of Judeans by Babylon and the forced migrations of some of the 'people of the land' by the returnees at the end of the exile.

My decision to begin with Assyria is motivated by the views proposed by Gottwald (2009 p.241) and other scholars, that, the largest known forced dispersion- migration or displacement in the history of the Ancient Near East was the Assyrian destruction of the Northen Kingdom in 722 B.C.E.

The Assyrian Empire is known to have caused great population changes in the process of its territorial expansion by conquest. This empire was largely known to have pursued a policy of exiling large population groups. The practice of forcing conquered people to migrate was a fundamental component of Assyrian royal ideology and policy. This followed a millennium old Mesopotamian practice of relocating defeated groups into the victor's society (Liverani 2017a p.187-192). Tiglath-Pileser III and the Sargonid kings are a good example in this. During their time, deportations were a common yet catastrophic punishment that removed local resistance and issued a stern warning to rival polities.

This form of involuntary migrations saw the forceful removal of peoples, and their transfer to remote regions of the empire. The policy aimed at avoiding rebellion against imperial rule; as such, on occasion, whole populations were exchanged. As we shall see later in this section, the forced migration of Israelites and their replacement in the Northern Kingdom with whole groups of people from other territories conquered by Assyria is a typical example.

Apart from the record from the Hebrew Bible (2 Kgs. 17 vs.6;18vs.11;19vs.35-36; Hos 9vs.3), Assyrian annals have preserved a record of such deportations. A sample of which will suffice to illustrate their scope. Emperor Shalmaneser III is recorded to have deported 110,610 people in his 20 years of rulership. After the Assyrian capture of Samaria (721 B.C.E.), they deported 27280 people of the upper class to their north eastern provinces and then imported diverse immigrants from North Syria and Babylonia. These new comers would them amalgamate with some of the Israelites that were not deported to create a new people group called Samaritans (2Kigs. 17 vs.6;24). This is quite large scale and indicative of the routine transfer policy of the emperors.

Assyria is conventionally known as the vanquisher of the kingdom of Isreal. Its large-scale deportation of communities literally led to the end of Israel as an independent state. Its deported populations, Israel included, were often forcefully integrated into the empire, obliged to send the best of their belongings as tribute and their best men as labor or soldiers of the empire according to Ido Koch (2022 p.693).

In 745 B.C.E., the ambitious governor of the great Assyrian city of Calah in the Tigris valley revolted against his own overlords and began the process of transforming Assyria into a brutal and predatory state. As part of his new policies, he exerted much more control over all the vassal states of Assyria. His name was Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.E.). Under him, vassaldom would soon give way to conquest and annexation, with local populations being subjected to forced migrations wherever the Assyrian authorities wished (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2001 p. 214).

Upon the conquest of the Levant by Tiglath-Pileser III, the Assyrian imperial system began to reorient people and resources in line with the needs of the empire. Koch (2022 p.698) says foremost among the means used to achieve this fit as well as to break local resistance was the forced movement of conquered populations to the Assyrian heartland. Some deportees were sent to remote provinces and settled in frontier strongholds to serve as a demographic backbone supporting the imperial apparatus.

Here they were also used as instruments of developing the hinterland, maintaining urban centers or fortresses that provided security to topographic corridors and at times to support forces guarding such frontiers, often working under governors and provided with food, shelter and clothing according to Karen Radner (2017 p.210-11).

However, although the state often provided food and shelter to the deportees, they still endured loss and horrifying suffering from events that accompanied war, expulsion, and long marches. This contributed to the psychological breakdown of many and the disintegration of social bonds. The migrants, despite the area of origin, often found themselves dislocated upon arrival in their new frontiers.

The same is likely to have been the fate of the Israelites that were deported by Assyria; it however should be admitted that this part of ancient history is largely shrouded in obscurity due to limited information at the disposal of scholarship. Material culture is not of much help in this regard either. Koch (2022 p.698) says there was a scarcity of material remains attributable to travel restrictions. Such restrictions resulted in the forced migrants only able to carry limited baggage. He adds that the deportees depicted in Assyrian reliefs are seen with only the few belongings they could have carried.

A few of the forced migrants may have been fortunate enough to have used their animal drawn carts. This would allow them to carry a few more of their priced possessions than those without carts. In either case however, they could only carry small bags, probably holding their most personal belongings. Larger pieces of property would have to be left behind to be plundered or destroyed by the subjugators.

The groups forced to migrate by Assyria found themselves facing an unfamiliar landscape and sometimes totally new languages that they knew nothing about. The need to adapt and survive often saw them abandoning or modifying some of their traditional practices, especially those associated with their homeland and its landscape (Koch 2022 p.699). They were forced to change social positions and to sometimes face segregation upon exposure to the locals. After several years in these new communities, migrants sometimes began giving their children local names. (My father, (Arajo Foromoz Chambalama) hardly spoke the Zimbabwean language spoken on the farm he migrated to (Shona) but he gave some of my siblings Shona names (Nyarai, Tendai, Mutumwa), I guess in an attempt to fit into society).

During the same time, events were taking place in Samaria, the capital of Isarel, a vassal of Assyria, that would lead to the eventual forced migration of many Israelites by Assyria. In 737 B.C.E. King Menahem died and almost immediately his successor and son was assassinated by a military officer named Peka son of Remaliah (2 Kgs 15 vs.27). Pekah immediately changed Israel's foreign policy, suddenly ending Israel's obsequious vassaldom to Assyria. This would in a short time prove to be a grave mistake.

Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.215) would describe what followed as a tragic miscalculation that spelled the end of independent Israel. Tiglath-pileser III reacted furiously, destroying Damascus, led by Rezin an ally of Pekah (2 Kgs 16vs.5-9). He set his sights on the kingdom of Israel immediately after destroying Damascus. In Israel, he destroyed most of the cities and forced a large part of the population to either migrate as fleeing refuges to the southern Kingdom of Judah or as a contingent of deportees to Assyria, literally bringing Israel to its knees.

By the time of his death, Tiglath-pileser III had annexed much of Israel and deported its population, leaving only Samaria. He viewed all people of conquered territories as chattel that could and should be exploited to serve the best interest of the Assyrian state. Thus, under him, the Assyrians deployed a policy of deportation and repopulation on a grand scale. This policy had several objectives; from a military perspective, the capture and removal of all native groups had the effect of terrorizing and demoralizing the population and splitting them up to prevent further organized resistance.

From an economic point of view, large scale conscription into the army brought new manpower and military technologies into a framework where recruits could carefully be monitored. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p. 215) viewed the forced resettlement of artisans in the centers of Assyria as helping to boost the trained resource at the disposal of the Assyrian economy.

Finally, the systemic resettling of new populations in empty or recently conquered territory was intended to expand the overall agricultural output of the territory. The total number of deportees given by the annals of Tiglath-pileser, as reported by Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p. 215), amounts to 13500 people.

The same scholars observed that archaeology suggests a much wider depopulation in lower Galilee and other parts of Israel; thus, the Assyrians carried out a significant forced migration of the population of Israel.

The disastrous results of these campaigns by Tiglath-pileser III can be seen on Hazor, which in the Hebrew Bible is specifically mentioned as having been burnt down to ashes during his campaigns (2 Kgs 15 vs.29). At the death of Tiglath-pileser III in Assyria, Shalmaneser V (726-721 B.C.E.) took over; at the same time in Israel, Hoshea (722-724 B.C.E.) came to power having assassinated Pekah (2 Chrn. 28 vs.6). It is in the days of Hoshea as king that Israel would be brought to its final ruin. Shalmaneser V stormed Samaria and deported all survivors to distant Assyrian domains.

Sagon II, a king who came after Shalmaneser V in Assyria, documented that Shalmaneser V orchestrated a forced migration of 27280 people to Assyria from Samaria, and their lands repopulated by even more numbers than those taken out (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2001 p.216). The deported Samaritans were placed under the leadership of an Assyrian governor and encouraged to be like Assyrians. The Hebrew Bible mentions some of the destinations where these people were taken to, including 'Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of Medes' (2Kgs 17vs.6).

The ultimate fate of the rest of the tribes of Israel would never be known. They disappeared as though they had never been. In the beginning, the deportees may have tried to preserve their identity and culture, for example by continuing Israelite forms of worship or giving their children Israelite names. However, they were soon Assyrianized and assimilated, and the history of these tribes would forever be lost. This shows one of the dangers that attended the path of migrants of that time, a total assimilation of one group of people into the life of another.

According to Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.220), as Assyria had probably done in resettling key sites in the north such as Megiddo with dependable subjects, they went on to bring new population groups to settle the heartland of Israelite highlands in place of deported Israelites: 'And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avava, Hammath, and Sephavarim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samariah and dwelt in its cities' (2 Kgs 17 vs.24).

Archaeology suggests that these 'rebellious' migrants were settled not only around Samaria but in particularly strategic areas around Bethel. The Hebrew Bible makes a circumstantial suggestion to this effect in Joshua, (18vs.23) when it included Avvim (probably related to Avva) as one of the towns of seventh century Judah in the area of Bethel.

Koch (2022 p. 268) says over all the Assyrians deported, 'tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of men, women and children to leave their homes and march interminable routes'. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p. 216) comment on the same, but put it across differently. They put forward that the total forced migrations from Tiglath-pileser III's rein on Galilee to Sagon II's final raid on Samaria topped 40 000 people. This comprised no more than a fifth of the population of the northern kingdom west of the Jordan in 8th century B.C.E.

Tiglath -pileser III appears to have migrated and displaced the people that he deemed troublesome residing around main centers such as Megiddo, and Sagon II highly likely went for the aristocracy of Samaria, possibly also including soldiers and artisans to build his empire's skill base.

What is noticeable here, and as I shall also point out in subsequent deportations is that men, women and children were deported, Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p. 216). This increased the risks for those forced to move and compounded the losses that each family incurred. There is no doubt that some of the women forced were breast feeding or even pregnant. Their level of endurance could not be compared to that of men or of women with no children. Younger children, the elderly and the sick, including those that fell sick on the way were forced to trek for miles. Facing great risks, some of which I shall describe in detail when we focus on the 'people of the land' in Judah.

In the northern valleys, the Assyrians destroyed the administrative centers but left the rural population (which was basically Canaanite, Phoenician, and Aramean in tradition) unhurt so long as they remained docile and contributed their tribute. This situation mirrors what the Babylonians did in Judah when they destroyed Jerusalem. They forced a migration of groups mostly associated with the royal and ruling classes, leaving those in the countryside to develop the land and contribute tribute to the empire.

Admittedly, as we have noted already, and as we will see in our focus on Judah, those that were displaced went through severe discomfort during the forced migrations. In the Judah case however, we meet those that had been forced off the land by the Babylonians inflicting the same forced migrations on those that did not go into exile on their return from Babylon, particularly women believed to be of foreign origin and the children born of their marriages.

In the Zimbabwean comparative case (more on this in the second pole of the study), farm workers and their families were forced to migrate from former white run farms when government sponsored groups forcibly took over land. The challenges all these migrants faced have resonances. We will proceed now to look at the same theme but with a special focus on the Jewish exile to Babylon.

3.15 The Babylonian Empire and the Forced Migration of Jews

The Neo Babylonian Empire succeeded the Assyrian Empire and continued with the policy of human displacement and forced migrations albeit at a comparatively smaller scale (Stieglitz 1992 p.269). The Babylonian empire forced a migration of many people groups after conquering them. Here we will restrict ourselves to their conquest of the Kingdom of Judah between 597 and 586 B.C.E., (2 Kgs 24 vs.14;25 vs.11). Such involuntary migrations led to a complicated existence for the people groups that were moved.

Following the Assyrian deportations, it is important that we note that, while we date the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the forced migration of the Jews from 597 B.C.E., this event was but part of a process of Israelite/ Judahite settlements in Mesopotamia and Babylon that had begun earlier and that would continue (Purvis 2002 p.154).

It has already been discussed in chapter two that Nebuchadnezzar and his officers could not have deported the whole population and that they carried away only particular sectors of society. I have already also broadly discussed the fact that those taken were relatively few in number, leaving the rest of the population behind. According to Bastard (2002 p. 79-80), and also Gottwald (2009 p.241), only the royalty, elite, and skilled laborers were exiled and for many, probably the majority of Jews who continued to live in Palestine, there was never an exile in the sense of a forced migration or expulsion from land at the hands of Babylonians.

At the same time, the return of thousands of Jews to Palestine in the following century to reconstruct Judah was not a return of all or even the majority of Jews from abroad. This view is also shared by Blenkinsop (1989 p.187), who suggested that Babylonian punitive expeditions were only directed at the central foci of revolt. To avoid further revolt, Faust (2011 p.97) says, the Babylonians meted an untold demonstration of power, including unusual cruelty consciously directed not only to those that were forced to migrate but also upon those that heard from a distance just to put them and those that had somehow survived into panic. This terrorism inflicted serious psychological injury especially on those that were being forcibly made to migrate.

It should be noted that the process of the forced migration or displacement of these 'few' was catastrophic, leaving their land and belongings devastated. The very people that were forced to move found themselves amidst a life fraught with uncertainties and inequalities (Gottwald 2009 p. 241-42). To understand the groups of people that were deported, the circumstances and the discomfort they went through, a brief history of Judah in the last century running toward the siege and forced migrations is necessary. We begin with the death of Josiah, the king who brought reformation to Judah.

Between the death of Josiah (609 B.C.E.) and the final fall of Jerusalem (597 B.C.E.) lay precisely twelve years. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.276) are of the opinion that the reign of King Josiah marked the climax of Israel's monarchic history. This is despite the fact that from the days of king Hezekiah, the grandfather to king Josiah (687 B.C.E.), to this time, Judah had experienced an untold reversal of fortunes. First it was a vassal of Assyria (Isa 7vs17; 2Kgs 16vs.7), then of Egypt (Isa 30 vs. 1-5; 2 Kgs 18vs.19-21) before finally falling to Babylon (Isa 13 vs.1-22; 2Kgs 24) after the days of Josiah. In spite of all that, the time of Josiah marked a different era for Judah.

The major biblical sources for this period are the books of 2 Kings (21- 25), 2 Chronicles (33-36), with additional information coming from the prophets who functioned during this time. These prophets include: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephania, Nahum and Habakkuk. Outside these biblical sources some extrabiblical sources are available to shed light on the period. Of these, the Babylonian chronicle is an important one.

From the biblical sources we learn that the later days of Josiah witnessed the final destruction of Assyria by the Babylonians (Isa 31vs 8; 2Kgs 23 vs 29-35). At this time Judah would eventually become free from vassaldom. This freedom from vassaldom was not to last long however; Judah would go on to lose first her independence and then her life at the hands of the Babylonians. This is because as Assyria went down as a dominant world empire, Babylon came on to the scene almost immediately to take over. As part of the expansion of its world empire, Babylon took over Judah too.

The story of Judah's loss of freedom, first to the Egyptians, then to the Babylonians, began with some decisions that Josiah made in what would become the last days of his life. As documented in (2 Kgs 23 vs.29; 2 Chron 35 vs. 20-24) and coinciding with the year 609 B.C.E., Pharoah Neco (609-593 B.C.E.), who had just taken over from his father Psammetichus, marched with a large force to Carchemish on the Euphrates to assist Asshur-uballit of Assyria in his last efforts to retake Haran from the Babylonians. At Megiddo, now part of the territory of reunited Israel, Josiah's life was cut short; he fell in battle at Megiddo trying to stop Pharaoh Necho's advance (2 Kgs. 23 vs.29; 2 Chr.35vs.20-24).

After Josiah's death, four kings came in almost quick succession; three of them his sons. The first of these four kings was his son Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz would only rule for three months before being summoned by Necho, deposed and forced to migrate to Egypt (2 Kgs 23vs.31-35; cf. 22vs.10-12) (Finkelstein and Silbermann 2003 p.592). His brother, initially called Eliakim, whose name in imperial fashion (Collins et al. 2022 p.492) would be changed to Jehoiakim, was placed on the throne as an Egyptian vassal. With this act, Judah's independence, which had scarcely lasted 20 years, came to an end. The nation would go on to be under Egyptian domination from 609-605 B.C.E., (Bright 1966 p.303).

Under Jehoiakim, religious reform lapsed. The palace had little religious depth and had little feeling for it. Under the watch of and peddled by the elite, paganism crept in (2 Kgs 26vs.20-23); it would be surprising years later, as I shall discuss toward the end of this chapter, to see these violators of the Deuteronomic code expel and force the 'people of the land' off the land using the same religious principles that they themselves violated.

In 605 B.C.E. Babylonians would begin to emerge very strongly on to the world scene. This year witnessed Nebuchadnezzar defeating the Egyptians at Carchemish (Jer. 46 vs.2) and beginning his march towards Judah. Judah was not ready for the coming of the Babylonians, as prophetic utterances of the time would show (Hab. 1 vs.5-11; Jer 46; cf. 4vs.5-8;5 vs.15-17;6 vs.22-26). As the Babylonians marched closer, Jehoiakim responded by transferring his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon. This transfer of allegiance was however short lived because he was a restless vassal (2kgs 24 vs.2). He in no time rebelled again, causing the Babylonians to come for Judah in 598 B.C.E.; the very year that Jehoiakim would be assassinated (Jer. 22vs.18;36 vs.30).

Upon Jehoiakim's death, his eighteen-year-old son Jehoiachin was set on the throne as a replacement and would face the might of the terrifying Babylonian army (2Kgs 24 vs.8-16). He was not ready for such a big task at such a tender age and so early in his leadership life, within three months, the city surrendered. The king, the queen mother, the high officials, and leading citizens marked the beginning of forced migrations to Babylon. Those deported represented what Bright (1966 p. 307) referred to as 'the cream of the country's leadership'. During this deportation, the population of those that had largely played leadership roles drastically reduced, and there was increasing conflict among the remainees as their new leaders no longer had a clear idea what to do.

To lead this somewhat unstable group of remainees at the exile of Jehoiachin, his uncle, Mattaniah (Zedekiah) was placed by Nebuchadnezzar as king. Left to lead with him were nobles of small vision and less character, as Jeremiah makes clear (Jer. 24;34vs.8-22). He was himself a weakling, a poor judge unable to stand up to his nobles and fearful of popular opinion (Jer. 37 vs.17-21;38 vs.7-28; 38vs.5). His position was also very ambiguous, with many Judeans still regarding Jehoiachin as the true king and looking forward to the day of his return. In the year 589 B.C.E., within ten years of Zedekiah's reign, the end would come forever. More forced migrations would occur as Judah under Zedekiah went into open and irrevocable rebellion against the Babylonian empire (Bright 1966 p. 306).

Babylonians responded swiftly, by January 588 B.C.E., their army had arrived (2 Kgs 25vs.1; Jer. 52vs.4). Starting by reducing outlying strong points (Jer. 34 vs.6-7), the army marched toward Jerusalem (Bright 1966 p. 308). The Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem until such time that the food supplies within the city began to deplete. As food supplies began to critically dwindle (587 B.C.E.), the Babylonians breached the walls and poured in. Zedekiah, together with some of his soldiers, grabbed a chance to escape toward the Jordan (2 Kgs 25 vs.3-7; Jer 52 vs.7). They however did not make it far; they were caught before they got to Jericho. Upon being caught, they were shown no mercy. The King's eyes were gouged and his sons were killed. He and his soldiers were forcibly migrated to Babylon in chains.

The following month witnessed another forced migration of certain of the ecclesiastical, military, civil officers, some leading citizens. These were forced to migrate to Babylon and were later executed before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah (Jer 52 vs.27-30). The city and their homes were put to the torch and those that were taken alive lost almost everything they owned as they left their land. Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.295) suggest that archaeological finds convey a picture of horrible violence as the migrants were forced out. Signs of great conflagration are reported to have been everywhere in the city. Private houses were set on fire with roofs collapsing over all that was left in the them creating huge heaps (Neh. 2vs.13).

At a stroke, not only was Judah's national existence ended but also the institutions in which her corporate life had expressed itself. Their home would never be recreated in precisely the same form again. The Babylonians left Jerusalem and some parts of Judah completely wrecked, its economy heavily damaged, its sacred spaces desecrated, leading citizens killed or forced to migrate, and its society ripped apart. They left a population consisting chiefly of the poor peasantry considered incapable of causing any trouble (2 Kgs 25 vs.12; Jer.52 vs.16).

It is at this point and over these people (forming part of the group that are called the 'people of the land' in this work) that Gedaliah, a man of noble family, whose father Ahikam had once saved Jeremiah's life (Jer. 26 vs.24) and whose grandfather Shaphan who was most likely Josiah's secretary of state (2 Kgs. 22vs.3), a prime mover in the reformation, was made governor of Judah by the Babylonians (Bright 1966 p.310). Officially the Jewish people had become both a people in their ancestral land and in the diaspora (Purvis 2002 p.154).

It is the remainees that are the focus of my research. I would have thought that since the groups that were forced to migrate to Babylon went through a lot of pain, they would have taught their descendants on the ills of forcing one to leave their land. Upon their return from exile, unfortunately, these groups forced some of the 'people of the land' to migrate from parts of Judah, thereby causing great stress, pain and suffering among the 'people of the land' in Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah would lead a painful forced migration of women and children and others upon their return from exile. We will relook into this in greater detail as soon as we finish the discussion on the forced migration of those that were taken to exile.

The forced migrations to Babylon led to untold disruption in Jewish daily life. The population of the land was drained away. Apart from those forced to migrate, thousands must have died in battle, or of starvation and disease (Lam. 2vs.11;19-21;4 vs.9). A large number must have also been executed (2Kgs 25vs.18-27), while others (Jer.42) fled for their lives. The population of Judah, which exceeded two hundred and fifty thousand in the 8th century (refer to chapter 2 for population estimates), was vastly affected.

The conditions in which the deported officials of Judah were detained are practically undocumented. We do know that some of them were settled in Mesopotamia not far from Babylon (Ezek.8 vs.114vs.1;33vs.40). It is possible that they were kept together in compact groups settled on deserted agricultural sites in Babylonia (Gottwald 2009 p. 241-258).

Babylonians moved people into Babylon because they needed their human resources for the army, building projects, and the development of the under developed Babylonian countryside. The deportations of these people into Babylonia during the 6th century B.C.E., was not only a side-effect of war but one of the major goals. The deportees were part of the Chaldean's plan to revert the agricultural mismanagement and demographic decline of Babylon's peripheral regions of the previous centuries; the royal policy aimed at making Babylon great again.
The aim was to push forward the socio-economic growth and development of the destination country, Babylonia.

Many of the Jews deported to Babylon, according to the book of the prophet Isaiah, became part of the cosmopolitan community of Babylon, having to improvise their religion to remain Jewish. Two prophets worked among them, Ezekiel at the beginning and Isaiah toward the end. These did their best to uproot the experiences of the people's forced migration. Their journey to being resettled was one of hardship and humiliation. Life was never easy for a migrant. Scholarship does not have a full picture of their fate; I will share here just what I could glean.

As I have stressed already, there were three deportations of Jews to Babylon. It has been noted that the first deportation took place around 587B.C.E., making it the starting point for later developments. This first group of people arrived in a country where they could expect no siblings or compatriots, but relied completely on their Babylonian abductors according to Berlejung (2022 p. 150). These however had the chance to create parameters for their lives in Babylonia earlier than those who would arrive in later deportations.

This created a sort of stratification between earlier deportees and those that would come in subsequent deportations. Apart from this kind of stratification, the deportees themselves were not a homogenous group. They were socially stratified. They were thus stratified when they left Judah and equally when they settled in Babylon. Cornelia Wunsch (2014 p.248-249) suggests that these deportees were made up of 'high profile deportees' and 'low-profile' ones. The first group was settled in urban areas and the last group was mainly settled in the countryside where workforce was needed for agriculture and irrigation.

Apart from the above, they were also stratified as follows according to Berlejung (2022 p. 150):

1. The exiled monarch and his family in Babylon. These had the highest symbolic value and served as hostages to the Babylonian government. Apart from these, housed also in the cities, were high profile deportees such as high-ranked military officers, diplomatic envoys, experts, craftsmen, higher priests etc. These were brought to Babylon and other Babylonian urban centers such as Nippur, Sippar and Borsippa. These also had under them deportees who were given to slavery and those who had to perform manual work required for the large construction projects in Babylon and other Babylonian cities.

2. In the rural setting, the composition of deportees was different. Here were located intermediaries who held key positions in the interface between the low-profile migrants and the Babylonian and (later on) the Persian administration. Other residents of this area included small scale business men, low ranked military men, low profile migrants which included non-specialist countrymen, as well as enslaved people (Jer 29 vs.1; Ezek. 8 vs.1).

All foreigners arriving in Babylon as migrants had to face the fact that the Babylonian urban society was a closed inner circle allowing only a few options for social mobility, social climbing and integration. They were segregated from native Babylonian clans in their cities by demarcation lines; such demarcation lines were determined by Babylonians. This restrictive practice and social self-conception of Babylonian urban elite and urban *habitus* significantly impacted the Babylonian society, not allowing full acculturation or inculturation of outsiders, according to Berlejung (2022 p.153).

Thus, even if different ethnic groups lived together in Babylon side by side, the areas of the Babylonian society that were open to foreign migrants were very limited. This applied to all foreigners regardless of whether they had come to Babylon as mercenaries, merchants, refuges, hostages, or deportees. Berlejung (2022 p. 237) says non- Babylonians had only two options for social climbing in urban contexts. The firsts being to become a member of the royal services or state administration and the second being joining a Babylonian firm or family enterprise.

Judean migrants, being weak, their encounters with local Babylonians were asymmetrical and almost not attested to. This is nearly true for both the Neo-Babylonian period as well as the Persian period. The situation may have been somewhat different in the rural spaces. Rural Babylon was the backbone of the economy. Its social reality, according to Berlejung (2022 p. 153), was multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-cultural. While social stratification was also common in these rural areas, the society was permeable, allowing improved opportunities for integration, intercultural interaction and social climbing.

Berlejung (2022 p. 154) shares very important views regarding the Babylonian countryside by the time Judeans were deported there. He suggests that archaeological and textual evidence from Babylonia depicts the 6th century as a period of agricultural and demographic recovery after preceding centuries of neglect and continued abandonment of the peripheral countryside. He further suggests that the Chaldean dynasty had a clear plan to change this mismanagement of agriculture and water systems, leading to the development of the country side and this plan could only work with the arrival of new workforce such as forced migrants of which the Jews were part.

Suggestions from the Hebrew Bible are that the Jewish migrants were allowed to engage in agriculture and build houses (Jer. 29vs. 5). They were able to assemble and continue some form of community life (Ezek. 8vs.1;14vs. 33vs.30). Jehoiachin was still regarded as their king. Of the further details of their existence, we know not much, although we do know that sometime in 595/4 certain of their leaders suffered reprisals (Jer. 29). Sometime in 592 B.C.E. Jehoiachin was imprisoned for suspected complicity in some seditious action (2Kgs 25 vs.27-30). All in all, there is not much evidence that the exiles suffered any unusual hardship above that inherent to being forcibly migrated.

It is possible that life in Babylon may have opened some opportunities for some of them. Some of them entered trade and probably became rich. Some of them even owned slaves, (Ezr. 2 vs.64). One would have thought that the returnees would have implemented a migration that showed that they had learnt from their own experiences in exile. A way to make life easier for the displaced 'people of the land' would have been to introduce strategies providing them with land, the means for long-term survival, forging ties to what would be their new living places. The people could have been resettled on planned sites where the relocatees could benefit from agricultural programs not only as compensation for their losses but also as development for the areas. This was however not the case with the masses of forced migrants from Judah after the exile.

As one will also discover in the second pole of this study. An almost replay of this scenario is found in the case of my father and fellow farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000-2002 FTLRRP. Government sponsored groups, especially war veterans, who themselves were claiming to have been victims of colonial oppression, became perpetrators of the oppression of farm workers during the time they took over commercial farm land. I will elaborate on this in the second pole of this study, for now I return to the case of the Judahites taken to Babylon.

Apart from those in Babylon, other Jews voluntarily left their homeland to seek safety elsewhere. Bright (1966 p. 310) suggests that a considerable number made their way to Egypt. Gottwald (2009 p. 241-258) suggests a similar argument. He additionally suggests that outside those in Babylon, a number of Jews migrated elsewhere. Some could be attested to have been in Syro-Phoenicia and also in Egypt. Not much however is known of these groups in the 6th century.

This is possibly because some of them may have become indistinguishable due to their ceasing to be Yahwists. Many among them may not have wished to go back to Judah, even if at some point they may have found themselves free again to do so. A compromise of their faith therefore became inevitable.

We know of one party that fled to Egypt after the assassination of Gedaliah taking Jeremiah along (Jer. 42). This group settled at Taphenhes (Daphnae), just within the frontier. Others were to be found dispersed in other cities of Egypt (Jer. 44 vs.1; Isa. 19vs.18). A Jewish, military colony existed throughout the 5th century B.C.E., at Elephantine, at the first cataract of the Nile. We are also told that a number of Jews fled before the Babylonians to Moab, Edom, and Ammon (Jer. 40 vs.11). Though some of them drifted back when the wars ended, we can be sure that many of them did not. There was never to be a full return to the pattern of the past Gottwald (2009 p. 245).

These migrants, with particular focus on those that were forced to Babylon, went through very difficult circumstances associated with their forced displacement. The negative effects of the forced migration were physical as well as psychological. One of the most severe psychological harms inflicted on the migrants related to the effect of the same on their religious beliefs. Judah's faith was tested to the uttermost. The migration to a foreign land not only called for a reassessment on their religion, but also for profound adjustment in terms of how they understood their faith.

The dogma upon which the state and faith were founded was dealt a mortal blow. The belief that God had chosen Jerusalem as God's earthly seat was shaken. The prophets that had prophesied that Judah would never be destroyed had been proven to be liars (Lam. 2vs.14). With the migration to exile, the faith could never be held in precisely the same form again. The temptation to lapse from the ancestral faith altogether was acute (Jer.44 vs.15-19).

They were plunged into despair and fear as worship that was based on Jerusalem came to an end. A wholesale loss of faith threatened. This was aggravated by the fact that they were torn from their homes and many of them got into contact with such great centers of world culture for the first time. Their faith was on trial for its life. They were filled with hatred for those who had brought them thither (Ps. 137 vs 1-3). They however were hopeful for eventual restoration.

Gottwald (2009 p.241-258) pointed out a different but still negative effect of forced displacement on the Jewish migrants aside from its direct impact on Judah's faith. According to Gottwald, the Babylon effected forced migration led to the domination of Jewish elites by foreigners. This domination signaled a shift from autonomy to colonization. It brought the monarchic state to an end and Judah thereafter to exist under Babylon. Those among the senior leadership that were not forced to migrate were killed, leading to an enormously consequential political and institutional rapture.

An earlier publication by Berquist (1995 p.13-16) shares almost similar views. It suggests that after being forcibly migrated, there was a significant change in Jewish daily existence. Those forced to migrate had been elites, they had been urban people with significant employment in the temple and in the palace. The same people were large land owners and had considerable wealth and power. Their forced migration not only brought about geo-displacement but also removal from their sources of power that had formed the basis of their self-concept.

There is little evidence of how the Babylonians may have treated them. However, the few clues that can be found are helpful. Our knowledge of Jewish life in Babylonia is fragmentary, we are none the less able to put together a general picture of the situation from the allusions in contemporary biblical texts such as Psalm, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutro-Isaiah. As well as from extrabiblical sources (Purvis 2002 p.156).

Psalm 137 constitutes an oft-cited cliché to express the mood of the exiles in Babylon. The text depicts a frustrated community in exile. Jeremiah had to write to them encouraging them to settle in for a long stay, building houses, farming lands and giving birth to children and growing families.

The book of Ezekiel depicts the exile as mostly a rural event; his locale is near an irrigation canal in an agricultural area. He referred to the elders apparently representing the village and other small communities of Jewish exile (Ezek. 1vs1;8vs.1; 14 vs.1). Deutro-Isaiah gives the impression that some of the Jews in exile had to work in the fields to pay their taxes. Those with governmental experience worked in the palace or temple systems, meeting Babylon's need for experts in bureaucratic, imperial and foreign expertise.

In rural areas, Babylonian interests were on increasing production. In the process of trying to meet this ambition, they normally transported newly migrated populations to farm isolated portions of land and bring about production. One such piece of land is the farming area between the Tigris and the Euphrates (Berquist 1999 p.15). It appears that a number of the forced migrants were taken to reside and bring about production on some of these farms. Their status did not permit them to be land owners (Purvis 2002 p. 157).

Wunsch (2010 p.40-61) and Berlejung (2022 p. 154) however make slightly variant observations. They seem to agree that the forced migrants lost economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals. They then differ when Wunsch (2010 p.40-60) suggests that as a result, the migrants became highly dependent on a number of factors, which include; The royal; administration for the transfer and resettlement arrangements, their survival, land allocation, basic provisions, basic information, 'start up packages', and access to basic and common resources and services.

He also suggests that they depended on the host population who had to provide them with additional expertise (e.g., where to hire a scribe), ad-hoc help, and cooperation as well as on their intermediaries who were appointed as internal staffing by the Babylonian government to administer several shares of bow land and to control and manage the interface between local bow-fief holders and the crown.

The environment allowed them to create helpful synergies for survival. Their circle of solidarity was increased by open interaction with people from neighboring units. This increased their own life circumstances and reduced their risk and vulnerability, thus allowing them to gain access to increased capital. Some of them were even able to take the risk of investments and long-lasting contracts, including contracts running for over 5 or 10 years. Individuals with ambitions could improve their point of departure in the Babylonian countryside by cooperating with the Babylonian administration.

They had the best point of departure in order to move from being an intermediary in royal service to a private entrepreneur (Wunsch 2010 p.40-61). Some individuals managed to profit from the characteristics of the Babylonian economy, to accumulate social capital, and to transfer them into prestige and symbolic capital (Berlejung (2022 p. 154). Some of the individual Judahites were a success story in the date and cattle farming business; some were active in sheep breeding and wool production and could act as creditors and debtors on a large scale (Wunsch 2010 p.40-61).

From the book of Ezekiel, we know that some of them were settled on the river Chebar (Ezek. 1vs1-3, 3vs.15,23). One of the Judahite settlements near the river Chebar was known as Tel-Abid (Ezek. 3vs.15). If this site was indeed a Tel., it is possible then that the Babylonians settled the Jews at or near sites of abandoned cities as part of the program to develop unutilized land resources.

Further evidence of this comes from the fact that Jewish migrants were also settled at Tel-Melah and Tel-Haisha (Ezr. 2vs. 59). Other places of Jewish settlement mentioned by name are Cherub, Addan/Addon, Immer (Ezr. 2vs.59; Neh. 7 vs.7vs.61) and Casiphia (Ezr. 8 vs.17). Purvis (2002 p. 167) suggests that scholars have however not been able to identify some of these places.

It is not possible to determine the proportion of the migrants that was sent to rural areas against those that were settled in cities. It seems though that the urban populace may have continued in a lifestyle not too far removed from their previous way of life. The same may not have been the case for those that were settled in rural areas. Since all or most of the exiles came from Judah's upper social strata, this means those working in the fields of Babylon were former land owners, high profile and influential merchants and military officials. None of them would have been involved in primary food production in their Judean lives. Instead, their exile to the farms would have reoriented their whole lives (Purvis (2002 p. 167).

Neither the rural group nor the urban exiles were coming from a slave background, and since Babylon required intensification, the migrants may have experienced heavy taxation in order to maximize Babylonian profits. This was a severe discontinuity of their past. In their previous lives they were responsible for taxing others, in the new setting, tax was levied on them. This adjustment was definitely not an easy one.

As revealed so far in the first pole of this study, migrations were a common practice and had some demographic importance. I have so far looked at the effects of the migration on those that were forced to move, but there are views expressed by Oded Bustenay in 1977 that I think would be very important to consider. These views will be important as I move to proving that those that remained were also left in difficult circumstances, such that it was unjust for those later returning from exile to force some of the descendants of these remainees to migrate from core areas of Judah.

Bustenay (1977 p.435-488) suggest that with forced migrations came other mechanisms that affected both those that remained and the group that was migrated. These included the social disruption that was caused by the untimely death of loved ones. In what follows, we briefly discuss these.

Faust (2011 p.96) suggests that forced migrations often accompanied the execution of some of the relatives of the displaced populations. This was true of any war during this era of time. Apart from Babylon, the reliefs of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh depicting the conquest of Lachish detail the execution of members of the royal family, military commanders, leaders and the like. It has been argued that in order to 'persuade' their potential foes, Assyrians largely did this just to show that an attempt to oppose Assyria would be futile. Part of their strategy in achieving this was engaging in a psychological warfare (p.96).

The same seems to have been employed by Babylonians during the time they forced elite members of the Judahite community to migrate. We learn from the Hebrew Bible that when Zedekiah was captured and his eyes gouged, his sons were also killed (2 Kgs 25:7). Thus, while he suffered the loss of sight, property and power, he had to go through a grieving process for his sons. This grieving process was not just for Zedekiah and those that were taken with him, it was equally a cause for grief for anyone that may have survived the forced deportations and remained in Judah.

Those that died were not limited to the children of king Zedekiah; it is reasonable to assume that a good number also died, not just through execution, but also as a result of lack of any real evacuation, effective medicine for those that were injured in battle, and sterile conditions. Under such conditions, many wounds would certainly have ended in death. Such was generally the case in siege warfare and the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem would have been no exception (Faust 2011 p.96).

The number of casualties among the Jews was considerable, especially given the fact that Judah lost the war to the Babylonians and Jerusalem fell. Conditions even deteriorated further after the attack. Famine and epidemics came in (Smith 1995 p. 532-34). These increased the level of suffering for the survivors. It also led to even more deaths.

It is common that warfare brings famine (2 Kgs 6:25); famine did indeed follow the siege of Jerusalem, as suggested in the Hebrew Bible (2 Kgs 25:1-3). The Bible writer reports that Nebuchadnezzar and his host marched against Jerusalem in the 9th year of the rein of Zedekiah and they remained in place until the 11th year of his reign. Having been besieged for so long, Jerusalem ran out of bread and general food supplies and a famine prevailed. It became so bad that soldiers had to breach and try to escape.

As noted earlier, during the attacks that followed the siege, some people were killed. I believe due to the difficult conditions of war, the dead could not be disposed of easily, contributing to the spread of epidemics, and in turn resulted in more deaths. Scholarship has not yet detailed the number of people that may have died either through execution or conditions that followed the attack by the Babylonians. There is however no reason to assume that the death toll was small. This death of people was a cause of distress to those that survived.

Those that were forced to migrate suffered the inability to see to the burial of their dead loved ones. It must have been a cause of serious trauma for Zedekiah to fail to appropriately bury his sons. In the same light, those that remained in the land suffered immensely. My views are that they were left to deal with burying the dead left behind as well as deal with the effects of the disease that came with large numbers of dead and decomposing bodies.

We do not have exact figures of those that died or were buried during this time but Faust (2011 p. 97-98) shares a few examples of graves that were uncovered and can act as a guide. Those that did not go into exile are the ones that were left to deal with the decomposing bodies of those that died of execution, wounds or disease. It was not easy for them, and highly likely led to traumatic recollections extending to generations. Though they did not go into exile like the elite migrants, they suffered their share of the challenges of the aftermath of war.

After completing burials, they had to start rebuilding the nation to the point it grew by the time those forced to migrate to Babylon would start returning. Having thus suffered, I view it as unjust for some of them to have been forced to migrate from certain parts of Judah at the time of the return from exile. This we shall discus shortly.

Forced migrations often involved resistance and this led to the crumbling of the life support systems of a territory. The Babylonians for example are recorded to have laid part of the Jerusalem countryside to waste, Faust (2011 p. 97-98). Some things, they intentionally destroyed, others were inadvertently ruined, due to among other things the simple fact that the hostilities interfered with the processes of rotation, planting and harvesting according to Jamieson-Drake David (1991 p.145-147). The Babylonians attacked Jerusalem in the fourth month of the Jewish calendar generally associated with the transition from spring to summer.

As spring transitions into summer, Israel enters the season of wheat cultivation. The summer months, particularly June and July, are crucial for the growth and maturation of wheat crops. Farmers diligently care for their fields, ensuring optimal conditions for a successful harvest. At around this time in 587 B.C.E., the Babylonians attacked, irrevocably disturbing the preparation of the wheat crop as several farmers among other people were either deported or killed.

This study does not discuss in detail the season during which the returnees from Babylon chased the 'people of the land'. However, when the 'people of the land' were chased from farms in Zimbabwe, the program ran through two years and affecting the farming season. The government sponsored groups also target vary productive farms but however failed to run them. After the year 2004, my father's family among other, suffered significant food shortages because of the interruptions on farming and harvesting that accompanied the land takeovers.

We do not have a clear picture as to the numbers of people the Babylonians may have killed in the process of deporting the elite from Judah. We can draw inferences however from the number of people killed by Assyrians in their conquest and deportation of the people of Lachish and Ashdod. That can then give us a picture of the possible impact of death during the Babylonian forced migrations of the population of Judah.

Faust (2011 p. 97-98) suggests that the overall toll among populations was often great. He suggests that thousands of burials were unearthed at Lachish and Ashdod, thereby giving a glimpse of this reality. At both sites mass burials reported by Israel Eph'al (1996 p.37-38) and also by Moshe Dothan (1971 p.21), dating possibly to the 8th century, were unearthed.

Faust suggests that at Ashdod, in locus 1151 alone, remains of 2434 human beings were unearthed. Of these, around 538 individuals were identified to have been less than 25 at the time they died. In a different locus (1114), the remains of 376 individuals largely aged below 15 were discovered. Some of the assassinations were very forceful and brutal, for example in loci (1115,1113,1006); Faust records 61-62 skeletal remains of individuals, the majority of whom evidence that they had been beheaded.

At Lachish mass burials were discovered in a few caves (107, 108, 116, 120), during the excavations conducted in the 1930s, according to Faust (2011 p.98). These are largely attributed to deaths in the forced population displacement by Sennacherib during the days of Hezekiah as King in Judah according to David Ussishkin (1969 p.56-58).

Although the data presented above on the impact of deaths relates to Neo-Assyrian conquests, the fate of the defenders was likely the same for the Babylonian conquests, including Babylon's conquest of Judah. Marc Van Mieroop (2007 p.277) actually suggests that the Babylonians were more oppressive and brutal than the Assyrians. They are likely to have brutally murdered more, although the present writer does not have the records at present.

Clearly death during forced migrations affected those that survived, whether they themselves eventually were forced to migrate or somehow remained on the land. The collapse of an administration and social infrastructure, along with the famine that usually followed siege as well as the exile of the elite, led to even more drastic situations for those that remained. The 'people of the land' in Judah had to endure all this after the elite were taken to exile. They had to begin life by burying the thousands left dead during the siege.

This task was left to those that survived death or deportation. They had to also acre for those injured during the siege, these were probably not few. Given the collapse of infrastructure during the siege, medical facilities if ever they had been there were likely broken and no longer capacitated. All this talks to the precarity that the 'people of the land' had to deal with in the aftermath of the siege. It was a traumatizing experience. Compounding this was a new threat that followed war situations, that of the collapse of security systems.

Paul Bentley Kern observed in 1999 that the devastation of cities led to a process in which many of the survivors fled the region and migrated to safer and more stable places (p.81). Under such conditions, security was seriously undermined. For survivors in the Jewish siege, this was particularly dire; we learnt earlier that many of them had to return and start gathering broken pieces to rebuild a society. We do not know after how long exactly they were then able to start rebuilding their society, but we know that in cases of war, the conquering army could remain in the region for some time, looting, killing, and raping.

Tainter (1999 p.1023) suggests that coupled with the above, gangs often emerged that would mug, steal, and kill, resulting in more deaths, and consequently additional migration. This is likely to have affected the 'people of the land' such that they could only stabilize much later to start rebuilding their society. Having gone through so much suffering, some of the 'people of the land' would be forced to migrate by those returning from exile many years later. In what follows we look at the forced migrations that occurred in Judah at the return of the exiles.

3.16 Remainees and Returnees

The infrastructure of the population that survived the forced migration to Babylon was severely strained and had to be rebuilt from the ground up. The Babylonian government was not at all interested in the development of the departure area of the deportees. Babylonian was to profit from the arriving input of human resources, not the conquered country whose impoverishment risks were not counteracted. The decline of settlements in Palestine after Babylonian attacks attests to the fact that the areas that experienced the loss of human resources and suffered brain drain to Babylonia had to face the risks of impoverishment that were not completely different from the risks that targeted the displaced people (Lipschits 2005 p. 323 to 376).

The circumstances of their lives were arduous, such that even given a number of years, they were not able to rebuild Judah to its former success (Gottwald 2009 p. 246). The factors discussed above made their restart at life very difficult. The work they were able to do by the time of the return from exile was done under constraining circumstances. Never the less they were able to reshape and remodel a functioning society.

It has been discussed already that those that remained and survived in Judah were a mixed community. Biblical texts refer to them as the poor of the land (2Kgs. 24vs.14; 25vs.12), meaning they were largely composed of lower ranking members of not only the Jewish community, but also other people groups, since Josiah allowed free movement when he unified the north and the south during his reign. Left behind after the elite were taken to exile, the 'people of the land' struggled in a scarcity economy; they were inexperienced in state politics, such that for the whole period of the exile, they were organized and maintained by village tribalism and their economy mostly run as such (Gottwald 2009 p. 246).

An observation made by Finkelstein and Silbermann (2001 p.295) is important here as I seek to highlight my main argument in this section. They suggest that by the time of Josiah's death, he had expanded his leadership over the entire hill country territories of the ex-northern kingdom; that is, he annexed the former Assyrian province of Samaria, extending his rule further north to Megiddo. He succeeded in making Megiddo a northern strategic outpost of the growing Judahite state. This is important because it made all people both north and south members of a somewhat united monarchy again.

This allowed free movement of people both to the north and to the south. Such that it was natural for Israel to be mixture of tribes by the time of the return from exile. This in my view would render it unjust that members of the returning community would see to a forced migration of some members of this Josiah created community.

It is also important to note, as highlighted by Gottwald (2009 p. 246), that the leaders of Judah that were forced to migrate had been antipathetic to spiritual reforms as espoused in the Deuteronomic code and also to prophets that encouraged Judah to reform or face exile (Mic 4vs.10, Hab 1vs.12-17, Jer. 25vs.8-14). They were the ones that did not listen to the counsel of the prophet Jeremiah. For this reason, they were forced to migrate to Babylon. Those that listened to the counsel of Jeremiah to surrender to the Babylonians formed part of the group that did not resist Babylon and were allowed to remain in the land.

Those returning from exile claimed to have been purified by the persecutions of a forced migration. On the other hand, although the 'people of the land' had not been 'purified' by a forced migration as had those taken into exile, they were purified by the trials they endured in the land after the elite were taken. These trials included, as highlighted earlier, burying the dead left behind, dealing with diseases, famine and lawlessness that followed attacks by Babylon.

Though the returnees were a minority in Yehud, their religious, socio-economic and political status and their concentration in and around Jerusalem, coupled with their support from and connection to Persian kings, gave them power beyond their number. Finklestein and Silberman (2001p.308) suggest that this elite group from exile were probably also supported by some local people who were sympathetic to their interpretation of the Deuteronomic law code, promulgated a century before, but reinterpreted at the return of the exile.

With the help of a rich collection of literature, historical compositions and prophetic works, and with the popularity of the temple which they controlled, the returnees were able to establish their authority over the population of the whole province of Yehud and to retake control of land and the economy.

Torrey (1970p.285-314) provides a general theory of the course of events in Jerusalem from the time of the Temple's destruction to its restoration under Darius I. He suggests that shortly after the Babylonian armies withdrew from Judah, fugitives, that is those people who were not forced to migrate to Babylon, began to return and to bring life back to the ruined city to rework and develop the country in general. From then on, Judah grew by slow degrees and by the beginning of the Persian period, fifty years after its destruction, the nation had prospered.

Torrey argues that the ‘people of the land’, particularly those in Jerusalem, had to give up a functioning society and a land they had worked on when the exiles began to return. Bastard (1996, p.19, 42-43, 79) describes the functional society that the ‘people of the land’ had to hand over to the returning elite as comprised of agricultural workers who tilled the land and grew crops, artisans, traders, village and town elders, priests and prophets. It had all its social institutions intact and functioning well. In the process of losing agricultural land, they also lost a fully functional economy and a piece of land they had called home for many years (Gottwald 1993, p.5).

Ezra and Nehemiah, as heads of the returning community, instituted such reform as would lead to the forced migration of not only those that had drifted there from other nations, but also many among those Jews who had remained in the land during the time the elite were leaving for exile in Babylon (Fensham 1982 p.66; Kidner 1979p.49). As noted earlier in this research, and also by Klein (1999 p.694), a number of people had migrated into Judea during the days of the exile, and these people together with Jews that did not go into exile had taken up farms and settled other areas. On being forced to migrate, these people faced challenges comparable to that which the returning elites experienced when they were forced to migrate by the Babylonians (Washington 2003 p.429-30).

The ‘people of the land' forced to leave Judah by the returning Jews faced several impoverishment risks. These included landlessness, joblessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property/services, social disarticulation and education loss. For the displaced of Judah, they suffered these effects twice, because when the returnees came from Babylon, as a host population, they were equally affected.

This is despite the fact that as a host population to the returning exiles, they had been confronted with a higher demographic pressure (possible overcrowding), higher health risks (possible new diseases), and even more competition on resources, scarce social services and employment. These risks threatened the ‘people of the land’ with impoverishment, major losses, disruption, and the destabilization of the social status quo.

Migration became a big issue for them as some of them were descendants of groups brought in by Esarhaddon, many years before (Walton, Mathews and Chavalas 1997 p.463), as well as part Jews such as Moabites and Edomites according to observations by David Clines (1984 p.119). Having lived in and around Judah for several decades, these had lost connection with their former homelands. As we shall see in the section on Zimbabwe, many among the farm workers that were forced to migrate from farms by returning government sponsored groups had drifted from neighboring Southern African countries and had long lost ties with their former land.

During this phase, when the ‘people of the land’ were not yet settled in a new place but at the same time were no longer citizens of Judea, they were just migrants. While we have an idea on what basis the ‘people of the land’ were forced from Judah, we have no idea for sure how many of them were forced to leave; scholarship is still to comment in detail on this one aspect. It will not be very helpful in providing figures, but I will attempt to reflect on their possible psychological and physical conditions during the period of migration.

On this, I must confess that I will only be sharing possibilities, based on inferences drawn from other documented migrations such as the forced migrations by Assyria and that of the Jews by Babylonians. We do not have explicit information regarding their conditions of travel, health, both physical and mental. The ways they used to provide supplies for themselves and to their children, the distance they traveled and their operational conditions as they left their homes in Judah, are also not documented.

Archaeology has also not been of much help on this particular group yet. We do not have access to any temporary camps they may have set up as they sought a more permanent abode or skeletons of any among them that may have died along the way (if genetic analysis could determine their provenience), neither do we have shards scattered along the way that the migrants took after being forced to leave Judah. However, information given above of other documented migrations gives light.

Given that these people were Judahites or had been associated with Judaism and Judea for most if not all their lives, it is difficult to think that they were not at least troubled by the decision to force them to migrate. They likely also felt abandoned by those, who while forcing them to leave, took over and occupied the places they left. Unlike those moved by the empires, these were not provided with an alternative space to occupy, they were just sent off.

While Ezra-Nehemiah mentions the expulsion of women and children, I have a reason for including men: men in the form of children born in these 'forbidden' marriages but who were already grown-ups by the time of the forced migration, men in terms of those men that refused to let go of their families but chose migration instead and men in terms of those 'people of the land' who were accused of false worship and were moved out of important places of Judah.

Judging from what we know regarding deportations by Assyria and Babylon, the conditions of the migrants were not enviable. In the Assyrian example, deportee men and young boys are depicted as naked, though women and young girls were often dressed (Klein 1999 p.694). While the case of those forced to migrate from Judah was different, in that these were not booty of war migrated under guard, they likely felt very inferior and their situation so dire as to be clearly distinguishable from the vanquishers.

Scudder and Colson (1982 p. 267-269) are quoted by Hansen and Smith (2019 p.267-287) to have suggested that involuntary migration is very stressful and restricts the range of means to cope with the disaster. I agree with their assertion, and believe this suggestion best describes what the 'people of the land' endured at the point of being forced to migrate. I draw the readers' attention to the observations by Battini below.

Battini (2022 p.39) comments on the Belawat Gates images found in the palace of Nimrud. She suggests that on these gates is represented a group of deportees being introduced to the king. According to her, one woman in the group is depicted as touching her head with both hands and two other women were touching their heads with only one hand. This she says was a sign of consternation and pain used in mourning scenes. These women were so desperate in their deported state that their gesture suggests a comparison between their situation and a funeral.

This symbolism gives us an indication of the emotions some migrants may have felt. On leaving Judea, the migrants (women, men and children) must have lost all that meant life to them. They could not carry much of what they owned, and they took off not knowing where they would find shelter at night-fall. They hoped to be accepted by the host population of whatever their final destination was to be. This was surely a desperate situation. In the second pole of this study, I share the story of how Arajo Foromoz Chambalama (my father) migrated from Mozambique to Zimbabwe after being forced by war. From his story I can almost feel what these migrants from Judah must have gone through.

Battini (2022 p. 42) gives another Assyrian example that can help us get a glimpse into the sufferings of the 'people of the land' as they left their homes. She describes Sennacherib's deportees leaving their city represented as men, women and children leaving their homes with small bundles on their heads, some carrying children on their shoulders, or holding one by hand, some carrying bags, others in wagons. In the same description is in image of the moment when the migrants paused to rest during the migration; women in this image are seen feeding their babies, clearly exhausted and frustrated.

As has been discussed in the previous sections of the first pole of this study, the 'people of the land' lost land and an economy. Their loss was however not limited to that alone; they also lost all the moveable property they could not easily carry with them as they left. Just like the Assyrian picture depicted above, I submit that these people could not carry certain of their property. In addition to important personal belongings, they had to also carry food and water to see them through the desert and semi-desert terrain they had to endure. Little children were carried on shoulders; some were held by hand and had to walk like their elders. Those that had wagons could use them, but not everyone did. Whenever possible, women had to stop and breast-feed the little children. It was certainly not an easy experience.

Under the circumstances, they carried only that which they could at that time easily take with them. This situation is comparable to that of farmers and farm workers in the Zimbabwean Land Reform, as we shall see. Farmers left farming equipment and household furniture as they left at gun point, and farm workers could only take along that which they could carry with them at the point of being forced to leave. Most farm workers (my own father being a typical case) owned no carts or wagons; goods had to be carried by head or at least by bicycle. Children were carried on shoulders by men; those old enough to walk were held by hand. Women had to take charge of small babies and had to feed them while on the way. Just like in Judah, and as we shall see in greater detail later on, it was not an easy time.

After being forced to migrate, the 'people of the land' in Judah had to trek for we do not know how long. We do not know to which land they were banished. With children, the sick and the elderly, who themselves could not walk long distances, the migration was a painful one. Their walking must have been slow, with women carrying children in their arms often pausing to feed them here and there. They likely migrated to where they would be least affected by the influence of the community returned from exile, thus they are likely to have traveled long distances lasting a considerable time.

In migrations caused by conquest by an empire, the migrants were often reviewed before leaving their cities. Battini (2022 p. 54) says reviews were often done in order to ensure that the people designated for travel were in good health, could walk and had the best chance to survive the trip. Women in an advanced state of pregnancy were often discarded. After long distances, migrants often were in a state of extreme weakness, some even febrile. The weather often spoilt their appearance and the mountains exhausted them.

However, in the case of the 'people of the land', none were vetted for fitness for travel. Whether feeble, frail or fecund, they were all not wanted. The old, the sickly and the pregnant suffered the most, and were often a burden to those that were fit enough to give them help. None could be left behind, they were family. I am not here suggesting that they left in one group in a single direction, they probably made plans as families. This likely further compounded the problem in that each family had to see to its burdens. Almost in the same fashion as farm worker families in Zimbabwe had to each see to their own situations during the FTLRRP. My own family looked to our father for guidance and support during this hour of crisis.

Under such problematic conditions, it is reasonable to assume that some among the migrants were depressed. Battini (2022 p 54) says medical science confirms that depression is linked to external and internal stressors: inflammatory disease and psychological reasons. The tedious trip of the migrants raises questions about hygiene measures during movement. We do not know if their circumstances allowed the changing clothes as they moved from one place to the next. Not changing clothes may have led to avoidable infections, especially for mothers and breastfed babies.

Bob et al (2010 p. 231-234) suggests that infections can cause depression, as well as significant physical fatigue. People experiencing sadness instigated by the obligation to leave native lands, the loss of land, an economy, personal belongings and individual freedom, the cruelty of losing a loved one during the migration or just seeing someone die along the way, can lead to serious depression. The depression itself can bring new complications such as illness, difficulty in sleeping and eating, among others. Thus, the situation of the 'people of the land' was likely dire.

They likely had to seek accommodation in areas that already had other people, either of a similar or, as was most likely, of a different culture altogether. Cultural and religious clashes are common (in non-homogenous areas) social tensions, and tend to endure long. Effective counter actions that should have been considered by those that were forcing the 'people of the land' to leave Judah include organizing risk prevention, reducing vulnerability, increasing resilience, providing safeguards and resources, compensating losses and minimizing competition and tensions.

It can generally be assumed that when a group of people are forced to migrate, certain general impacts can be expected. The dislocated people had to face the losses of different (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) capitals, there is a collective social impact on the community or other levels of human organizations (clan, family tribal, and village communities to well-developed urban areas) (Berlejung 2022 p. 161).

The accusations against those that were forced to migrate were varied. Among others, there was the view that most of them were foreign and also that those that were at least Judahite had a religion that was not purified by exile. On matters of religion, Torrey (1970, p.285-314) suggests that after the exile, the first development by those that drifted back to Jerusalem was the establishment of a temporary place of worship on part of the old temple site. To Torrey, the destruction of the temple, the removal of the high priests and the royal family did not change the religious infrastructure that made society possible.

He suggests that people even worshiped as they did before (Jeremiah 41vs.5). However, the returnees felt that they had a faith refined by persecution in exile and those that had not gone into exile did not have true Judaism. Thus, apart from being labelled foreign, the 'people of the land' were also seen as a group that did not worship the true God of Judah.

On the question of the foreignness of some of the 'people of the land', Ezra 9, 10 and Nehemiah 13 are instructive. The book of Ezra (9-10) documents the expulsion of women and children considered to be foreigners by the leadership of the returning community. This forced migration was likely in the process of trying to preserve the identity and culture of the Jews returning from exile (Smith-Christopher 1994 p. 123, Dyck 1996 p. 100). Or, as Dyk (1996 p. 102) and Farisani (2004 p.20) observe, some of the returning elites felt that the intermarriages threatened the economic stability of the province of Yehud by threatening its land base and therefore necessitated the social reforms to reduce pressure of land and create more land available for allocation to those returning from exile.

Usue (2012 p. 158) does not believe that the men, women and young children expelled here were foreign, as is suggested in the accusation against them. His argument is that study of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant codes would exonerate them. He suggests that while a surface reading of Ezra-Nehemiah gives the impression that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant codes concerning foreigners justify the expulsion of this so-called group of foreigners, a closer reading of the same shows that this expulsion was based on a partial or narrower view and interpretation of Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants concerning foreigners. He argues that these people who were forced to migrate were not foreigners but simply Jews who did not go to exile. I will turn to consult and share his views here.

Usue suggests that immediately following the coming of Ezra into Jerusalem, he noticed an anomaly among the 'alleged holy race'. The alleged anomaly was intermarriage. According to Usue (2012 p. 159), the alleged problem was:

1. The people of Israel (Golah community) had joined the 'people of the land' in their abominations.
2. That they had also mingled the holy seed with the 'peoples of the land' by intermarrying with them. (Ezr. 9 vs.1-2).

In relation to this intermarriage problem, Usue identifies three groups of people. These were:

1. The returning exiles, who viewed themselves as the holy seed.
2. The Jews who did not go into exile and were supposedly defined as non-Jews.
3. Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Amorites, Moabites, Egyptians and Ammonites, mentioned in Ezra 9 vs.1-2.

Use (2012 p. 160) points out that from the description in Ezra (9 vs 1-2) it should be noted that those who are labeled as 'the peoples of the land' are different from the third group which was comprised mostly of Canaanite groups. He suggests further that what is alleged to have been the problem is that the practices of the 'people of the land' had been similar to that of the third group (Brenman 1993 p.148). In other words, the second group is not considered part of the third group, but it is just likened to the third group, thus the members of the returning community who married the 'people of the land' are alleged to have adopted the lifestyle of 'Canaanites'.

It was also not that the returning exiles had married the Canaanite groups, but that they had married the 'people of the land', those Jews that did not go into exile. This was deemed sinful by Ezra and associates, leading to the forced migration of the 'people of the land' and their children. Usue says this was based on a narrow interpretation of the Mosaic and Abrahamic codes. He suggests that the 'people of the land' were unfairly forced to migrate because they were actually Jews who did not go to exile (p.160).

On the basis of research done by Clines (1984 p. 119) and Blenkinsopp (1989 p. 175), Usue observes that Canaanite groups mentioned in Ezra 9 had ceased to exist by the time of the Ezra reforms. The conclusion above finds support in the research conducted by Eskenazi and Judd (1994 p. 266-285) on the sociological and theological classification of the strange women in Ezra 9-10. Their conclusion was that these women were not foreigners, as presupposed by the editor or author of Ezra, but rather were part of the Jewish community that did not go to exile. Grabbe (2000 p. 15) also says these women were Jews who did not go to either the Babylonian or Assyrian exile.

Thus, it may have happened that early returning Jews saw these women as appropriate marriage partners because they were Jews or had been part of the Jewish community for several decades. Even Ezra 9 vs. 1-2 does not recognize these women as Ammonites or Canaanites because they were not. It appears that the process of redefining the identity of true Israelites during the early post exilic period may have made these women, some men and the children among them, to be considered or labeled as foreigners.

During a confession ceremony instituted by Ezra (10 vs.3), every man who was alleged to have married the so-called foreigners was required to completely separate not just from the women but from the children born of such a marriage. Many complied (Ezra 10 vs.10-15), and sent their families away. By this time many of the male children born during the exile had grown and possibly some had families of their own, thus I argue that in these forced migrations not just women and children were sent away, but also men, family heads who had to look for a new dwelling for their families.

The narrative leaves the reader even pondering about the families that had been separated. What was the fate of the babies and the women that were left without a male supporter and vice versa? Would such children deal with the reality of being separated from their families, Klein (1999 p. 746)? A handful are recorded to have declined sending their families away. We do not know what became of these, maybe they were allowed to remain in Judah but with limited access to certain resources and activities of Jewish life. On the majority of the population however, the process of divorce and forced migration took its painful toll upon the alleged foreign women and their children (Ezr. 10 vs.18-44).

It is likely that in instituting this instruction Ezra and associates may have consulted Deut. 7 vs. 3. Blenkinsop (1988 p. 200-2001) postulates that Ezra likely reinterpreted this passage in a particular way in order to support this social exclusion. It is evident from the context of Deuteronomy 7 that idolatry was the reason for the prohibition of intermarriages. Nowhere in the Pentateuch do we find prohibition of intermarriage without the worship of foreign deities as the main reason for the prohibition. Foreigners that accepted the God of Israel were allowed to marry Israelites.

At the return of the exiles, we see a redefinition of God's people, the true Israel, to include only those that came from exile. This inevitably rendered those that had not gone into exile as outsiders, resulting in many among them being forced to migrate. Use (2012 p. 164) says Ezra's concept of holiness (cf. Ezra 9vs.2) concerning the returning community is irreconcilable with other passages like Deuteronomy 9 vs.4-6. Both pre-exilic Israel and the returning community had possessed the land, not because of their own righteousness.

Deuteronomy suggests that it was because of the wickedness of the nations that were to be driven out of the land of Canaan. In this instance, those that were forced to migrate, women and children included, were not reported as wicked. Nothing is specifically said negatively about the women and children except that they were not members of the redefined community.

Use (2012 p. 159), proposed an inclusive and holistic understanding and interpretation of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. He summarized his views as follows:

1. The God of Israel had described himself as the God of all Israel (Gen 17 vs.7-8).
2. The same God gave Abraham as the father of all nations (Gen 17 vs.5).
3. The circumcision of Ishmael and all the male servants in the house of Abraham points to the inclusion of outsiders in the Abrahamic covenant framework (Gen 17 vs.10-14).
4. The blessing of other nations through Abraham suggests that foreigners were inevitably linked to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12 vs.3;18 vs.18; 22 vs.18; 26 vs.4; 28 vs.14).
5. Food provision for foreigners and aliens living among Israel makes it clear that the God of Israel cared for foreigners (Ex. 23 vs.10-11; Lev 19 vs.9-10; 23 vs.22; 25 vs.1; Dt 14 vs.2829; 24 vs.19-21; 26 vs. 1215).
6. Foreigners were allowed to participate in Sabbath keeping, drawing home the importance of Sabbath rest for both foreigners and Israelites.
7. Aliens were allowed to take part in the feasts of Passover, Feast of Weeks and Tabernacles, pointing to an inclusion of foreigners in the spiritual life of Israel (Ex. 12 vs.17-20, 28-49; Nm 9 vs.14; Dt 16 vs.10-14).
8. On the basis of a common faith, a number of successful marriages between Israelites and foreigners are recorded in the Hebrew canon to have taken place (Tamar Gen 38 vs.6-30; Moses Nm 12 vs.1-2; Ruth Rt 1vs.16-17; 4 vs.13-22; Rahab 6 vs.22-23 and Bathsheba 2 Sam 11vs3, 26-27;12 vs.24-25).
9. Cities of refugee were open not only to Israelites but even to foreigners also (Num 35 vs.14-15).
10. Foreigners could also offer sacrifices and offerings (Lev 22 vs.17-20, 25; Num 15 vs.13-16).

Given the background above, it is unfortunate that some of the 'people of the land' were forced to migrate and to suffer the pain associated with forced movement. It is likely that the returnees used a narrower interpretation of the Deuteronomic code in their actions to expel deserving members of the community.

A near similar comment can also be passed of farm workers of foreign origin like my father who were banished from farms because of their foreignness. A historical study of the peoples of Southern Africa shows that all these people were products of Bantu migrations. At some point they were once closely related. The understanding is that they should have viewed and treated each other as brothers, but that was not the case during the FTLRRP.

Besidies their Bantu roots, I also argue that during the struggle for liberation in Southern Africa, political leaders collaborated and cooperated with each other. A god example is the known historical fact that Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia then) had training bases at Chimoio and in other places in Mozambique. Thus, appealing to this historical relationship, foreigners, especially Mozambicans, should not have been treated as outcasts in land allocation and reallocation. This of course shall be the subject of the second pole of this study.

Down to the present, the image of the Babylonian exile has largely been shaped by the notion that the exiled Judeans persevered, isolated in joyless, mournful memory, and desperately clinging to far off Jerusalem, until they were allowed to return to Jerusalem following the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Biblical texts such as Psalm 137 constructed a memory of the life of the deportees in Babylonia with this view (Berlejung 2022 p.166).

Berlejung however suggests that from extra biblical sources, from the countryside of Babylon, from sites such as A-Yahudu, Nasar, Bit Abi-ram, dating to 572-477 B.C.E., and from the archives of Murasu around Nippur (dating 455/5- 404/3 B.C.E.), a different picture emerges. He argues that the real life of the Judean migrants was neither passive nor lethargic but quite dynamic and pragmatic. He argues that elite migrants were settled in pre-existing urban societies and that the low-profile deportees were settled together in newly created social units in the countryside (Berlejung 2022 p.166).

He asserts that this settlement for the deportees involved three actors: the central Babylonian administration, the host population and the displaced population. The central government, according to Berlejung (2022 p. 167), made an investment into the low-profile Judeans migrants by giving them survival rations until the harvest and later integrated them into the Babylonian economy and entrepreneurship, possibly as part of a royal decision regarding deported people.

He argues (Berlejung 2022 p.167), though providing no evidence, that there was probably a census of the population and a plan of transfer arrangements to transport the migrants to the arrival area, a budget and arrangements on how to distribute the new settlers and where to settle them. He suggests that the Babylonian authorities settled the Judeans in freshly created social units in the countryside that needed community assets, first in homogeneous groups according to region of origin. They could if need be contact each other and mobility was possible.

The forced migrants were accommodated into the Babylonian land service system receiving a portion of 'royal land' or 'quiver fief' (Jursa 1998 p. 238-240). The migrants were given the status of semi-free people, this status thus enabling them to act as creditors, debtors, witnesses, contractors, partners of land leasing; marriages, business activities and inheritances were possible.

The main objective of bringing them to Babylon was to develop the neglected Babylonian countryside economically. This was envisioned to eventually boost Babylonian wealth. Berlejung (2022 p.166), assumes that the Babylonian authorities provided the arriving deportees with access to common resources (canals and reservoirs for farming) and basic resources for survival. These included irrigation, and horticulture (seeds/offshoots/tools) as start-up packages. The new settlements were close to canals, embankments, and dams. We do not witness the same kind of preparations when women, children and men were forced to migrate from Judah by the arriving population or from Zimbabwean farms by government sponsored groups as we shall see in the second pole of this study.

Berlejung (p.172) suggests that there was cooperation between the migrants from Judah and native Babylonians. The inhabitants of the Babylonian countryside were not a homogenous group. They included Edomite and Arabic Egyptian individuals among others. In a sense, the displaced Judeans of 597 also became a host population to Judean deportees that would arrive in subsequent years (587 and 582 B.C.E.). The host population provided information, skills, credits, help for the arriving groups to find their way.

The arriving Jews were provided by the host population information regarding the agricultural calendar, seasons, floods, harvest, flora, fauna, soil conditions, weights, measures, skills about processing crops, medicine and health and treatment of local diseases among others. The possibility is that as a result of this interaction, some Judeans adopted Babylonian customs (Peace and Wunsch 2014 p,324).

With the appropriation of Babylonian information, practices, skills, rules, language, and script, the involuntary resettled people of Al Yahudu reduced their vulnerability. The willingness of the 'hosts', native Babylonians and non-Babylonians, to cooperate with the arrivals and to include them into the Babylonian economy and business system, paved way for the Judeans to regain resilience and their lost capital. Over time, though rare, Babylonians are attested to have acted as grooms in intermarriages with the forced migrants while intermarriages with West-Semitic people of the same social stratum were more common (Abraham 2006 p.198-201).

The cross-cultural and common interests, interactions between the Judeans and their hosts, were characterized by pragmatic creativity. Well-known are the local solutions to compensate the lack of cattle and plow equipment with the rental of animals for a limited number of years (Wunsch 2013 p. 247-260; 2022 p.526), or only in the harvest season, joint purchases of leasing of animals, and other kinds of joint ventures on behalf of profitability.

The texts do not mirror a rivalry between the new comers and the neighboring inhabitants of the area regarding access to common resources and services. The arrival of new human resources was more welcomed than contested as overcrowding. While the impression of the conflict-free situation in the multi-cultural Babylonian countryside and of the unproblematic successful involuntary resettlement of the displaces could be the result of the selective character of the studied sources, there are suggestions that the Jews were hosted fairly well. We however do not see them extending the same favor to those of their brethren that had not gone into exile.

As I have already pointed out, the forced displacement of the 'people of the land' had had a set of impoverishment risks. The low-profile deportees who were resettled experienced the loss of their economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, group hierarchies and expertise; however, their recovery and integration potential in the country-side seems to have been quite high.

Having taken over government, the returning Jews could have counteracted the losses suffered by those they sent away by:

1. Compensating the loss of capitals and proving resettlers with startup packages and decreasing social stress, their risks of death and impoverishment.
2. Integrating them into the Babylonian – Judahite economy (e.g. by giving loans).
3. Allowing them (at least) to regain from the loss and pushing them to acquire some new economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital.
4. Settling them permanently (especially regarding the long-term perspective of palm date breeding).
5. Decreasing any possible social stress or resource competition with the population.

This chapter concludes the second pole of this study. The next chapter presents the second pole. The problems of land, the economy and migration that I have raised in the portion of the first pole discussed in this chapter are analogous to the discussions of the second pole, that is, what we find in Zimbabwe in the years 2000-2002. These, as we shall experience in the second pole of this study soon to follow, were a source of trauma and social injustice. After the conclusion below, I take the reader through the second pole of this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my discussion centered around the question of land, the economy and migration in Judah during the time when those that had gone into exile returned. The general picture established in this chapter is that the land of Judah was not completely deserted during the years of the exile. As the reader would have noticed, the destruction by the Babylonians was directed toward the central foci of the land of Judah, in this case Jerusalem.

The empires that raided weaker states, the Babylonians included, hardly carried out wholesale devastation of the countries they raided. In this chapter, the reader came across that, while the destruction carried out by the Babylonians was catastrophic, it did not target the whole land. Many people remained in the land and the area of Benjamin became the centre of those who remained in the land.

At the return of those that had gone to exile, there was dispute over land between those that had gone to exile and those that remained in the land. A cursory survey of the broader perspective of land ownership and real estate in the Ancient Near East showed that land holding at this time could be divided into three. That is, private land ownership, priestly property and royal property. These forms of land ownership in the Ancient Near East were also observable in Judah.

In Judah one could own private land by many means, but one key one was through participation in the conquest according to the canonical narrative of the occupation of Canaan. Royal property traced its origins to King Saul (1 Samuel 9 vs.3, 11vs.15).

Priestly land on the other hand, was only open for use by the priests. This type of land was usually attached to local sanctuaries, as opposed to ownership by individuals. It included land vowed to the Lord as well as that which was allocated for use by the priests.

Those that remained in the land during the exile had acquired land through some of the processes outlined above. Some of them had been allocated land by Gedaliah in and around the area of Benjamin during the time of the exile. These were in the land up to the time the returnees came. The land on which the returnees settled were in towns and villages associated with the land of Benjamin or land previously allocated to the children of Judah. As this chapter would show, these are the same areas were those that did not go into exile were mostly concentrated.

This chapter shows that the returnees could only have settled where they did through the displacement of those that that were already residing there. While the numbers of the returnees were lower than of those that were in the land, the returnees were able to win over those that remained because they were backed by the Persian government in many ways, including financially.

In the process, those that were found on the land suffered prejudice in the area of land. However, as this chapter has revealed, the loss did not end with land. The 'people of the land also suffered the loss of an economy at the hands of those that returned from exile. This economy, as the reader has observed from the chapter, had been built over a long period of time under constraining circumstances.

The ideological understanding that those who did not go into exile were not truly Jewish led to the exclusion from land of the 'people of the land' by those that were returning from exile. Land in this case was their primary source economic source. This is because Judah was mostly an agrarian economy. This chapter revealed that subsisted from agriculture among other economic activities.

Among other agricultural products that were prominent in Judah at this time, were the olive and the vine. From these they got grapes, wine and oil. None of these products could grow in Mesopotamia and hence this made them priced products for importation into Mesopotamia and other lands. The demand for these products both domestically and outside the boarders was very high. In the late Iron Age (around 550 B.C.E.) olive industries prospered in Judah.

The economy of Judah during the years of the monarchy was a high risk/high gain specialised, region-based economy. This, coupled with the specialised nature of the economy of Judah stimulated the development of a highly specialised system of administration. This admin catered for markets, transportation and fair exchange. Thus, apart from agriculture as an economic activity, this chapter revealed that trade was also a significant arm of the economy. Trade was both within and without the general boundaries of exilic Judeah. This trade opportunity would, just like control over agriculture, be lost at the coming of those that had gone into exile.

Apart from the loss of land and an economy. This chapter also discussed the complications associated with forced migration on the part of the 'people of the land'. As those that returned took over land, those that were resident ion the land had to make way. The returning community did not however make any safety net for those that were excluded from the land they had called home for years. They simply instructed them to move without necessarily making provisions for their lives after. This resulted in serious complications.

Observable in this chapter are such complications as destitution, desperation and distress. Women and children were exposed were left without shelter and had to brave the seasons. Some of them were born in this land, some among those that had not necessarily been born in this land had long lost ties with the lands they came from such that when they were left not only homeless but also stateless.

This chapter closes by suggesting that there are a number of interventions that the returning community could have implemented to lessen the burden of those that were in the land in the face of loss and migration. Among the interventions suggested is the thought that the returnees could have considered compensating those they disposed or at least allowing them to stay on integrated into the new political system.

Chapter 4: The People of the Land in Zimbabwe

4.0 Introduction

This chapter, which takes up the contextual (second) pole of my tripolar theoretical approach, has three sections in addition to this introductory section. While this introductory section gives a general background of the broader Land Question, the other three key areas of this study focus on the existential reality of farm workers in during and following the 2000-2002 Land Reform exercise in Zimbabwe. This introductory section will give some historical background to the Land Question in Zimbabwe, and discuss farm workers who are a key participant in discourses on land in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe.

In this introductory section, I set out the broad context in which the Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (hereafter FTLRRP) was implemented in post-colonial Zimbabwe. I identify the several distinct phases of the Land Reform exercise leading to the FTLRRP. I pay particular attention to the last phase which was a phase of spontaneous land occupations by government sponsored groups. This was the phase immediately preceding the land invasions that were in turn followed by the FTLRRP itself.

After the introductory section, the reader will meet the first section of my study. In this section I provide an overview of the reality of the presence of farm workers on farms from periods before colonialism in present day Zimbabwe to the year 2002. My central foci are the years 2000-2002, a period during which the FTLRRP is believed to have peaked. In this section, I give general statistics on farm workers during the FTLRRP, paying a brief attention to their demography. I also share information on the presence of some farm workers that were of a foreign origin. These, I generally identify as migrant workers in this work. I will not discuss their fate in full in this section, I will just present a synopsis and then give them much wider attention later on in the study.

In the second section, I look at the effects of the FTLRRP on the farm workers in the area of access to land. I consider in this section, whether or not farm workers benefited from land allocations following take overs by government sponsored groups. I also look at the implications of not receiving land for this group of people. Farm workers highly depended on the farm land for almost every aspect of their lives; I also discuss the effects of the acquisition of farms on social infrastructure and services such as schools and health centers that had been set up on farms.

In the third section I look at the impact of the reform on farm workers' economy. Drawing extensively on field data from the provinces; I here assess how the decline of commercial farms that were fully functional led to a large slump in employment. I discuss how this slump in employment impacted the livelihoods of farm workers as it led to a termination of regular incomes. Apart from this loss of incomes, I also discuss the loss of other incomes that the farm workers suffered. These sources of income include unpaid severance packages, income from the sale of fire wood, vegetables, fish and part time work among others. I hasten here to advise the reader that I will be deliberately autobiographical in this chapter. This I will do because I will in this chapter be telling experiences that are personal to my family.

The chapter will conclude by discussing migration complications that resulted from the forced displacement of farm workers from farms by the new owners. In this final section, I pay particular attention among others to one of the most vulnerable people groups among the farm workers, the migrant population of which my father was one. I also discuss the effect of the forced displacement on women, the sick and the elderly. The FTLRRP being an occurrence that came after Zimbabwe got its independence, I wish to advise the reader that my theoretical orientation as I study this subject in this chapter is post-colonial. Having shared the scope of this chapter, I turn now to the general background of the Land Question in Zimbabwe.

4.1 Colonial Land Grab

For more than ninety years Zimbabwe was a British settler colony. The colonial era officially came to an end with the attainment of independence in 1980. During the colonial era, land was the major economic resource that was expropriated from the indigenous people right from the inception of colonialism in the 1890s. This expropriation continued until the 1950s and even into the 1960s according to Lloyd Sachikonye (2003 p.20); John Weller and Jane Linden (1984 p. 57) and Ezra Chitando (2005 p.186).

During the colonial era, land dispossession was symbolic of colonial subjugation. Colonialists mainly targeted occupation of fertile large tracks of land as a starting point for further exploration. With the exception of few African countries (Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa) there has been no other country that experienced expropriation of land at such a massive scale as Zimbabwe. Independence for Zimbabwe and most African countries therefore was expected to lead to the recovery of this prized resource. From such a background, and, as would be expected, the structure of land ownership and use in Zimbabwe was clearly inequitable at independence and needed redress (Sachikonye 2003 p. 20).

Around 6000 white commercial farmers owned 15.5 million hectares, while 8,500 small-scale farmers possessed about 1.4 million hectares, according to Sam Moyo (2004 p.6) and Sachikonye (2003 p.20). The remaining indigenous communal farmers, about 700 000 households, subsisted on 16,4 million hectares, according to the same authors. Ridel (1978 p. 5) proposed that by early 1977 there were around 675 000 cultivators and an adult population of about 1887 000 people. He adds that if there were at least two adults per family, then there would be at least 500 000 landless adults in the communal areas. Near similar views are also expressed by Lawrence Tshuma (1997 p.30).

Paul Gundani (2003 p.468) shares similar observations to the ones made by Sachikonye above; he however expresses himself differently. It is his view that as the colonial period was coming to an end, about 6 700 settler farmers occupied 47 percent of the farmland under free hold tenure. On the other hand, around 8000 black small holder farmers occupied about 3 percent, and around 700 000 communal farmers were on 49 percent. However, this was mostly unproductive lands, and also accounted for less than half of the country's agricultural land. Of particular significance was that 75 percent of the land owned by communal farmers was in agro-ecological regions 4 and 5, which are drier and less fertile. There was therefore a keenly felt sense of historical injustice and deprivation on land as Zimbabwe went towards its independence in 1980 (Gundani 1003 p.468).

The adoption of discriminatory land policies by the colonial administration and the alienation of the fertile well-watered land to European settlers resulted in oppression, marginalization and impoverishment of indigenous black people. Most of them were removed from fertile land and concentrated in what were known during those days as Reserves or Tribal Trust Lands (TTL).

These according to Gundani (2003 p.468), were 'teetering on the edge of an ecological disaster' as a result of overpopulation. The same land would after 1980 be known as communal areas. These communal areas, as we shall see in this study, would form the fallback residential plan for some of the indigenous people that moved to work on white run commercial farms.

The white settler community at that time occupied land suitable for farming and other important income generating activities. It is in these good farming areas that Large Scale Commercial Farms (hereafter LSCF) would develop and it is in the Reserves or Tribal Trust Lands that labor for these farms would be sought.

As farming grew in the LSCF, the demand for farm labor increased, especially in those areas where tobacco was farmed (Toendepi Shonhe et al 2021 p. 81). As a result of the unfair nature of land seizure and distribution at colonization however, many within the black native community were reluctant to offer their labor services on these white run commercial farms. Apart from the afore mentioned, the indigenous people also refused to take up work on the farms because the working conditions were not very favorable. This was despite manipulation of markets, imposition of several levies and a series of other measures put in place in an attempt to coerce the indigenous people to accept working on the farms (Phiminister and Pilossof 2017 p.215-227).

This refusal by natives to work on the farms forced the white Large Scale Commercial Farmers to recruit labour from neighboring countries, such as Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, (Shonhe 2021 p.81). This recruitment from foreign lands resulted in over 70 percent of the total farm workforce in the 1940s and 50s being of foreign African origin. Sachikonye (2003 p.23) shares a similar view, adding that until the 1960s, most farm workers were imported from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. As we shall see though, the number of workers of foreign origin would decline after independence, but still remaining very significant.

This formed part of the background to the popular and highly contentious Land Question in Zimbabwe. Which question would reach a tipping point in the years 2000-2002 with the government FTLRRP, otherwise known as *Jambanja* or third Chimurenga. Hammar and Raftopoulos (2003 p.24) suggested that more than any other phrase associated with Zimbabwe's colonial and post-colonial history, 'the Land Question triggers a pavlovian response of knowing heads.' It attracted not just local but also worldwide attention and became popular. As has been suggested above, it dates back to colonial times and the year 2000 became just a climax of a problem that had been perpetuated for years. We look at it now in greater detail.

4.2 Land Reform

Like many of my literary predecessors on this subject, I admit that there are many issues surrounding the Land Question in Zimbabwe. Here I do not claim to provide answers, but rather to offer my intellectual views on this widely discussed and scribed subject. This study is yet another contribution to the several debates on the question of land in Zimbabwe, hence an evaluation of the same subject from a tripolar perspective. In this study I offer a distinctive analytical perspective, focusing as I have highlighted earlier, on farm workers in general and migrant farm workers in particular.

It is my view that the dimension I focus on in this work is unique in current academia. In the process of carrying out this task, I compare the Zimbabwean land situation to the biblical text that I have already discussed and then draw resonances between these two texts of literature.

My theoretical orientation as I carry out this task is post-colonial, tripolar to be particular. As a child to a former farm worker of foreign origin, my views are not neutral. My appreciation of the significance of the Land Question is from the perspective of dispossession and forced eviction. I am very passionate about the subject, and risk being biased, thus I balance my submissions here with views from senior literary predecessors on the subject.

I view it as a fact, attested to also by several scholars, that during the first 10 years of independence, by African standards Zimbabwe was a very prosperous country. Howard-Hassmann, (2010 p.890) attributes this success to the commercial farming sector, largely run by white farmers. I also agree, on the testimony of various scholarship, that towards the end of the 1990s, there was an economic meltdown which Maundeni (2004 p.189) attributes to the Land Reform exercise by the government of Zimbabwe.

Before I discuss the Land Reform exercise of the year 2000, it is important that I remind the reader that the prosperity of commercial agriculture in pre-and post-colonial Zimbabwe referred to above rested on a shacky foundation of a skewed land distribution. Through historical dispossession, according to Sachikonye (2013 p.17), the majority of Africans were assigned to inferior and largely overcrowded land while the settler community, who themselves were not too many, owned and controlled about 15.5 million hectares of arable land in the best agricultural ecological zones of the country.

Prior to the year 2000 Land Reform, in an attempt to correct land imbalances between the white farming community and the indigenous people and as part of its liberation promises, the government of Zimbabwe introduced a series of agrarian reform measures (Kensey 2004, p 1672). These Land Reform measures between 1980 and 2002 were in three stages. All three phases according to Gundani (2003 p.467) were symptomatic of fundamental flaws in the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution (LHC) presented and negotiated from the 10^{th} -15^{th} of December 1979.

Gundani (2003 p. 469) observes that this constitution failed to address the injustices perpetrated by the colonial government against the black majority. According to him, the constitution achieved this by entrenching private property rights and thus protecting white citizens at the expense of their black compatriots. Before I discuss the stages of the Land Reform in greater detail, I find it necessary to briefly comment on the Lancaster House meeting and the resultant Constitution. This will help the reader to understand the broader implications of this constitution on the Land Reform attempts by the Mugabe administration after Independence in Zimbabwe.

Given the background of land disputes in the history of Zimbabwe, the Land Question featured prominently in the Lancaster House conference which ran from September 10 to December 15 in 1979. The underpinnings of the constitution and results from this conference on the Land Question did not however bring relief to the landless natives in the Communal Areas (CAs) of Zimbabwe, worse still the farm workers (indigenous and foreign) in the commercial farming areas.

As Tshuma (1997 p.43) puts it, first the adopted constitution was a modification of the Westminster Constitutional Model (WCM) that the British proposed for their colonies. This constitution was widely viewed as a safeguard of continuity of policy between colonial and post-colonial states (Gundani 2003 p.469). Secondly, Zimbabwe had a significant settler population that had acted as a link between the British government and the colony of Rhodesia.

This was given serious consideration in the making of the constitution. The outcome was that despite political power being handed over, certain colonial guarantees were maintained. This constitution thus resulted in a serious proscription of the power of the new state. Critical clauses to note were those that fostered protection of private property, including land, from compulsory acquisition by the state (Gundani 2003 p. 470). Provisions of this constitution could only be amended after a 100 percent vote in parliament, with 20 percent of the seats in parliament being reserved for white citizens from the previous administration.

Gundani (2003 p. 470) shares that under this constitutional provision, the state could only take up derelict and or under-utilized land for resettlement. Even this came with conditions attached to it. These conditions included that:

1. The government was to pay immediate and sufficient compensation for the land.
2. The money received by the seller could be remitted to any country of the seller's choice.
3. The sum total of the land was to be paid in foreign exchange
4. The seller could take the state to court if he/she were not happy

Gundani (2003 p. 470) posited further that, delivering the promise of land to natives, most of whom were working as farm workers, while meeting the demands of the legal provisions of compensation to the seller as enshrined in the constitution became complicated for the post-colonial state. Apart from the above, there was a constitutional provision requiring the government to acquire land on a willing buyer – willing seller basis. With such a provision, even some of those farmers that had fled the border during the war (July 1964 - December 1979) started coming back. There was protection of their land against acquisition by the state.

The decision by many white commercial farmers who had left to return to Zimbabwe, or for those that had not left to stay on, was further strengthened by Robert Mugabe's policy of reconciliation. This policy came into effect after independence, where Mugabe chose to bury the past and start on a fresh page. This policy was good; however, it generated so much confidence in the once threatened commercial farmers that almost immediately the possibility of finding land that was 'abandoned, derelict or unproductive' (Gundani 2003 p. 475) became almost non-existent.

Thus, less and less land became available for allocation to the natives that were either in Communal Areas or serving as farm workers. Bakare (1993 p.56) pointed out that the consequences of this policy had significant bearing on the hopes and expectations of the black citizens who had primed themselves for the takeover of the farms, or restitution of stolen land.

While under these constitutional provisions Zimbabweans were now 'equal' before the law, they became equal under different economic circumstances. Those who had, could not lose and those who had not, could not easily gain. For the landless natives, especially farm workers, life became entrenched in poverty. In order to buy any land, they had to do so in forex, which forex they had no access to. Their situation became as Tshuma (1997 p.43) aptly observes, one of having to 'import their own land.'

Having looked at the provisions of the Lancaster House Constitution, a question remains; how did the Mugabe administration try to navigate this difficult terrain? We now look at the process of land redistribution in Zimbabwe. As I have put across earlier, it was in three stages.

The first one; The Land Reform and Resettlement Program Phase (LRRP1) was in the years 1980-98. It was the first post-independence effort to bring equity between black and white citizens on matters of land. As I have stated several times before; around 16 million hectares of the best, most fertile land, in the best watered (agro-ecological) zones of the country were occupied by the white Zimbabweans, as observed by Fortune Sibanda (2002 p.71). However, due to constitutional constraints, this first attempt at Land Reform could not target this land in particular.

This first stage was based on land abandoned during the war, but later extended to white run farms that government could acquire on a willing buyer willing seller basis. From 1980-92 the program targeted resettling 18 000 families on at least 1.1 million hectares (Gundani 2003 p.477). Gundani reports in the same article that by the end of this period, the government of Zimbabwe achieved the resettling 6 400 families (p.477). The program peaked by mid 1980s.

The targeted group for resettlement between 1982-85 was 162 000 families on 9 million hectares and the government achieved 35 000 resettlements by the end of this period according to Gundani (2003 p. 477). After 1985 however, the number of families resettled was to decline to a very low number compared to the set targets, such that the majority of black people on white run farms and in communal areas remained without good and productive land of their own. Between 1985 and 1990 only 9600 families would be resettled. When I add the figures shared by Gundani above, around 50 000 families out of a total possible 162 000 families were resettled over a period of 10 years.

As I have pointed out earlier, the independence constitution tied the hands of the government by entrenching strict property rights, so that only under-used land could be compulsorily purchased. Even, so, purchase involved immediate payment of full value in foreign exchange. This significantly limited the government's ability to maneuver and make real progress on the Land Question. Acquiring land for redistribution had become a very expensive exercise on one hand and on another very few of the white land holders were willing to let go of the land they possessed (Sachikonye 2003 p. 17). I believe that they were emboldened and encouraged to hold on to the land they occupied by the protection accorded in the provisions of the Lancaster House Constitution which did not allow a comprehensive Land Reform programme.

Apart from this, Bakare (1993 p.67) suggests another reason; he says the new black ruling class also amassed large tracks of land. Quite contrary to the socialist principles they purported to up hold, they did not distribute much of the land that government took back (Bakare 1993 p.67). The acquisitive tendencies of the leading black elite were 'appalling', says Tshuma (1997 p. 66). Palmer (1990 p. 170) published shocking statistics of graft associated with land for agricultural purposes. His claim was that over one million hectares of land changed hands among senior members of the government and the ruling elite even before the end of 1990. Fortune Sibanda and Richard S Maphosa (2014 p.55) shared almost similar sentiments before calling these elite Zimbabweans black land barons that 'hijacked the whole process'.

This was the structural context in which the post-independence government embarked on a Land Reform programme whose centre piece was resettlement of the landless and poor on newly acquired land. The program's overall objective was to resettle 162 000 households on 9 million hectares. That would have represented a transfer of about 23 percent of the families crammed in communal areas. Owing to resource and other constraints, this did not take place as planned, only about 48000 households had been resettled by 1989 (Sachikonye (2003p.21).

What distinguishes this resettlement exercise from the (FTLRRP) that would occur post the year 2000 was its peaceful and orderly character. The process of selecting black settlers was by and large peaceful although not many among the Communal Area community benefited. In addition, it was also accompanied by the provision of inputs such as seed and fertilizer, and infrastructure such as roads, clinics and schools. This was well calculated to give the newly resettled farmers capacity not just to sustain their farming activities but to also take care of the farm workers they would take up to work with.

The second phase of Land Reform was between the years 1990 and 2000. During this period, a number of factors changed. Gundani (2003 p.479) aptly suggests that this phase needs to be understood in the context of changing geo-political, ideological and economic environments within and outside Zimbabwe. Having gone past the first 10 years of independence, the government was supposed to show by way of constitutional amendments that it was committed to a more progressive process of Land Reform.

During the second 10-year period since independence, economic fortunes began to fail for the new government, especially after the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme recommended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It is also during the same period that a multi-party system was born within the Zimbabwean political arena. For the first time, there emerged an opposition movement, Zimbabwe Unity Movement or ZUM) under Edga Tekere. During the same decade, Apartheid ended in South Africa and regional attention began to shift to Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki.

Under growing pressure, the government introduced some Constitutional Amendments. The Constitutional Amendment (No. 11), Act No 30 of 1990 was particularly introduced to speed up the process of acquiring land for the purpose of settling landless people. Under this Act, Gundani (2003 p.480) suggests that the government could or sought to:

1. Acquire any land they wanted even if it may have been efficiently used.
2. Legally authorize the acquisition of any land they wanted for any purpose including resettlement.
3. Extend time during which they could pay for any land they had acquired.
4. Take any land, provided they had given sufficient notice to the owner.
5. Pay for any land acquired using local currency.

This amendment did away with the ‘willing buyer willing seller’ provisions of the Lancaster Constitution. The government was now a little freer to act on matters of land. Following immediately after this amendment was the National Land Policy (1990), which proposed compulsory acquisition of 5 million hectares of land to resettle 110 000 families (Gundani 2003 p. 480). This was subsequently put into law with the passing of the Land Acquisition Act of 1992, legally authorizing the acquisition of any land the government wanted.

This put in place; the ground was set for the land takeovers that were planned for the year 1998. The major setback though in these land takeovers was that only the black elite in politics and their friends in business were benefiting. It just ended up being a case of reverse discrimination rather than a case of empowering those really in need of land. This also explains why the British government pulled out from funding land acquisition which they had earlier proposed in the Lancaster meetings.

According to Nhara (2002 p.6), however, the mistakes were not institutional, but rather a result of the covetous, and greedy nature of some of those in political leadership who decided to allocate themselves, their wives, children and unborn children large tracks of land while the better part of the general population was deprived of that commodity. They displayed, he argues further, a nature reminiscent to the same colonialists they sought to replace (p.6).

Rugwiji (2017 p.19) says evidence of ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front) insincerity in the land project manifest itself in widespread elite manipulation of the whole process of land redistribution and allocating land mostly to themselves. The elite wrestled among themselves to acquire land. Rugwiji (2017 p.19) argues that Cabinet Ministers, City Council officials, showered themselves with farms they were not even using afterwards. Landless people remained landless and some among them were forced to cultivate on over used and unproductive soil. This is mirrored in the biblical text of Ezra-Nehemiah where the nobles allocated themselves land previously occupied by others, as I have already discussed in the previous chapters.

According to Mangena (2009 p.78), while it can be admitted that the colonizers took land from the natives fraudulently, the redistribution of land after takeovers by the post-colonial government of Zimbabwe was equally not just.

Although the proposed plan was to resettle 110 000 families. The number of the indigenous people given access to land was less far less than that. Around 20 000 new settlers received land between 1990 and 1997, a significant slow-down in land reform as compared to the exercises of the past. By 1997, a total of 71 000 households had been resettled on 3,6 million hectares, a far cry from the target of 162 000 households that had been initially earmarked for resettlement according to Sachikonye (2003 p.22).

The official explanation for the slowdown in the reform in the 1990s was that land acquisitions through the 'willing buyer willing seller' approach had become too expensive (Sachikonye, 2003 p. 22). This was much the same reason as between 1980 and 1989. The approach also fell far short of matching land supply and demand and as Sachikonye (2003 p. 22) puts it, standing out even in the small numbers that got an allocation of land is the fact that farm workers were not considered, they remained a marginalized group.

In 1998, government adopted the Land Acquisition Act which had been passed in 1992. This Act provided the framework for the second phase of the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (LRRP II). The Act had a provision for compulsory acquisition of land by the government of Zimbabwe, but still had a provision for compensation on all acquired farms. Under this phase, the government of Zimbabwe recorded that 4697 families were resettled, again a much lower figure compared to the masses of the black community seeking land (Waeterloo and Rutherford 2003, p.547).

The impetus for a comprehensive Land Reform programme came in the year 2000. This was the third phase of the Land Reform exercise. The Fast-Track Land Reform became the result. In the aftermath of significantly high rejection of the new draft constitution in February 2000, with the coming of the year 2000 parliamentary election and on the background of the formation of a formidable opposition party (The Movement for Democratic Change) to challenge the ruling party in this election, land became again an important national question. Predictably, the ruling party again heralded its commitment to give people land.

This process, they began by reviewing some of the 1992 Land Acquisition Act provisions to allow an accelerated land acquisition and redistribution without the obligation to compensate (Shonhe et al 2021 p.76). Just as in the case of Judah that I discussed earlier, the political leadership saw no need to compensate those it did not believe owned the land they were using. The ends of the leadership were to be met and no eye was to be turned on the effect of meeting such ends upon those actually surviving from the land at that time.

The years 2000-2002 thus saw government backed ex-combatants and ruling party militia virulently reclaiming land which had been taken during colonial times as government sought land on which to resettle restless black masses. This became the third phase of Land Reform, (widely known as the expanded phase of the second Land Reform and Resettlement Program or simply the FTLRRP) (Shonhe et al 2021 p.76). It ran from June 2000 to around October 2002 (although signs of the same process remained visible until 2004). It is important to note that the last two of the three phases are overlapping.

According to Waeterloo and Rutherford 2003, p.548, the most far-reaching effect of this programme became the acquisition of approximately 90 percent of commercial farms formerly run by mostly white farmers. This particular land reoccupation is my focus because of its direct impact on my focus group, the farm workers.

The FTLRRP transferred around 10 million hectares of land, formerly managed by around 4,500 mostly white farmers, to around 145,000 small holders and 23,000 medium scale farmers between the years 2000 and 2004 (Shonhe et al 2021 p.76). Government claimed to have completed this by August 2002, however as Shonhe et al have just suggested, the programme was still running by the year 2004.

While Shonhe and others (2021 p.76) suggest a transfer of 10 million hectares of land, Sachikonye (2003 p. 17) puts the hectarage at 11 million. He arrives at this figure after surveys that he carried out in 2003 just after the year 2000 peak period of the Land Reform Program. While the figures he gives are different from those suggested by Shonhe, it is important to note that no one had precise figures of this exercise. They all worked with ranges depending on the information at their disposal. It is possible that the figures were much higher than what the scholars suggested.

Sachikonye (2003 p.17) argued that the programme was marked by considerable coercion, violence and disorder. The immediate consequence for the farm workers was an untold loss of jobs, land, and economy and general livelihoods. Many lost regular incomes and access to basic social services such as health and education. They became vulnerable to the acute food shortage that affected roughly 6 million Zimbabweans in 2002, as reported by Sachikonye (2003 p.17).

Some like Pilossof (2018) and Hartnack (2016) have argued that the new farm owners acted as new employers to the farm workers albeit under conditions that were no better than the cases of physical violence, racism and long working hours that characterized the farm work space superintended by white commercial farmers. Others (Chiweshe and Chabata 2019 p.66-67) have suggested that new labour arrangements emerged for the displaced farm workers. These new labour arrangements are argued to have fostered greater flexibility, increased autonomy, thus granting greater freedom and bargaining power to workers.

I say that this polarized debate however fails to see the impact of the Land Reform on the farm workers in the area of land access, the private economy that farm workers lost on being displaced. It also fails to acknowledge the complications that came with being forced to migrate from farms. In this study therefore, I seek to fill that chasm, examining and exposing how a more differentiated understanding of the lived experiences of farm workers at the wake of Land Reform helps to us to understand the net effect of the Land Reform on the 'forgotten person', the farm worker. I will deliberately also lean on the experiences of my father, because he was one of the affected farm workers.

Overall, in this chapter I ask: who were the farm workers at the time of land reoccupations of the year 2000-2002 in Zimbabwe, and did they get land in the allocations of the same period? In what ways were the farm workers economically affected by the land re-occupations of the years 2000-2002? To what degree did the land re-occupations lead to a migration crisis among farm workers between 2000 and 2002 in Zimbabwe? I begin the process of engaging with these questions by exploring the reality of farm workers (alternatively identified in this work as the 'people of the land') on Large Scale Commercial Farms (or simply put LSCFs) during the FTLRRP.

4.3 The People of the Land (Farm Workers)

In this section of the second or contextual pole of my study, I treat farm workers as one group. I however wish to point out from the onset that this group comprised of indigenous Zimbabweans as well as those that had migrated from other countries within SADC. As a group, I will name them, the 'people of the land', because they are analogous to 'the people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah discussed above.

The 'people of the land' (farmer workers) occupy a peculiar space within the debates on Land Reform in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Chiweshe and Chabata (2018 p.56-7) argue that this peculiarity needs to be understood within the context of a curious colonial history in which farm labour was the backbone of white extractive capital. Despite being the backbone, farm workers did not benefit much during colonial times and arguably even beyond. While employing their lives to move the economy, their plight remained largely in the shadows. In this section I examine their case from a post-colonial perspective, this is an ideal way of reading because one of its key provisions is the transformation of post-colonial communities.

Changing political power, from white settler government to black majority rule, did not do much to alleviate the situation those farm workers that made it to post-colonial times. Promises by the post-independence government to consider them in land allocations are acknowledged, but by and large the farm worker generally remained a forgotten man. This is despite being present on farms in large numbers and for a long time.

Sachikonye (2003 p.17) points out that the land reoccupations of the years 2000-2002 provide evidence of the presence of thousands of farm workers on white run commercial farms. Sachikonye suggests that for many years commercial farm workers were the largest segment of the workforce in Zimbabwe's formal sector. According to him, their numbers fluctuated between 300 000 and 350 000 or between 20 and 25 percent of the national workforce, (Sachikonye 2003 p. 17). Munashe Chiweshe and Takunda Chabata (2018 p. 56) suggested that the farm labour force consisted of 26 percent of the total wage labour force in Zimbabwe by 1999.

This made the agricultural sector a significant employer, particularly of the black population. As would be witnessed during the post 2000 Land Reform, any negative adjustments to this critical sector would put the lives of millions of people who depended on this sector to jeopardy. Not only were the farm workers dependent on the farms for employment, they also depended on the same for accommodation and general provision of the necessities of life.

The employment opportunities in the farming sector were a testimony of the role played by that sector in the greater economy of Zimbabwe. Until the year 2000, the average annual contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Zimbabwe was between 16 and 18 percent. The key agricultural activities that contributed to this were tobacco and horticulture (Chabata 2018 p. 56). I view this as a very significant contribution. Overall, the work of farm workers on individual farms collectively contributed about 40 percent of the country's total foreign exchange. This is outside the support that agriculture rendered to other sectors of the economy locally.

The manufacturing sector for example, derived more than 60 percent of its raw materials from agriculture. The farmers were able to produce a surplus and also a variety of goods for the consumption of the general economy. This made the role of farm workers critical, not just to the farms where they were stationed, but to the national economy as a whole. As a result of the demand of agricultural products both at home and abroad, the farming sector arguably employed the largest workforce compared to other areas (Sachikonye 2003 p. 17).

Despite forming the largest stratum of the working class, farm workers remained poorly paid, ranking lower than people doing menial jobs at companies. They were also not able to come together and voice a concern for better income. Among other reasons, this was because farms were very big and often the distance from one farm to another was considerable; as a result, they were not able to organize themselves.

They were also hardly noticed by the media or pressure groups until the 1970s. In fact, since colonialism, the growth of the agricultural working class was generally couched in voicelessness and invisibility (West and Rutherford 2005 p.399). Even scholarship did not pay much attention to them. Farm workers were thus generally characterized as a forgotten people, invisible, voiceless, illiterate, powerless and poorly organized.

Waeterloos and Rutherford (2004 p.537-52) propose the reasons for this scenario to include discrimination of the farm workers, lack of general interest from policy makers and a general lack of pro-activism from this group. Most literature portrayed farm workers as existing on the margins of the social, economic and political society of their time, generally bound to their employers due to their high levels of illiteracy, especially in the period before independence (Sachikonye 2003 p.18, 23).

Moyo et al (2000 p. 181) summarize the societal position of farm workers during the colonial era as follows:

> During the colonial period, farmworkers were not considered as a relevant category in discussions of the racial land division in Rhodesia. Instead, the concern was balancing the needs of European farmers with those of 'natives.' Farmworkers, most of whom were foreign born or - descended, were viewed as completely tied to the farm(er)s.

In terms of government policy, farm workers were generally left to see to their own development and also to the discretion of the individual farmer. On some farms, farm workers were relatively well off, being provided with free housing and having access to subsidized foodstuffs, education credit facilities as well as health care. A good number of these important services were available at the farm where my father was employed in Goromonzi. Some farm workers were able to shift from farm to farm until they settled on the one that met their needs the most. The workers were generally viewed by the government as the responsibility of the farmers (Sachikonye 2003 p.18, 23).

Farm workers lived as families or singles within the farm compounds. Compound houses ranged in size and quality. In some farms there were proper brick and mortar houses, ranging from a single room to four rooms. In others, they were nothing more than shacks built from grass with mud plaster, or made from wood. Overall, housing for farm workers was not very appealing. Housing conditions were appalling and not well serviced with proper toilets or running water. In the majority of cases, they only had access to pit latrines and water sources were usually one common compound tap in a central place, or wells dug within the compounds.

I resonate with compound life, because I was born and bred in one. Before going back to the discussion, I am pursuing above, I will share a brief except of our compound life in just two paragraphs, just to give the reader a glimpse into our farm lives. Our compound was one of many such compounds dotted around the farm. Each of these had a unique name and ours was called The New Farm compound. Our houses were built in lines, each line having six three roomed houses, each house housing a family or two families on a sharing basis. We did not share but we were a big family, ten of us in that house (two parents, seven children and one extended family member). Each of these houses had a pit latrine at the back which doubled as a toilet and a bathroom, some families would build a make shift bathroom made of thatch.

Rows of about six houses shared a common tap in a central place. The water was supplied from a borehole somewhere on the farm. When there was no power, or the boreholes broke down, then we had to get water from the nearby farm dam, often this water was not very safe to drink, so we had to boil it first before using it for drinking or cooking. Each of the families in those houses also made a makeshift kitchen made from either thatch or disused metal sheets. Here we did our cooking using wood and also sat around the fire in winter to keep ourselves warm when it was not yet time to retire for bed.

The poor working conditions in colonial Zimbabwean farms initially deterred locals from farm work. A shift was however to be observed from the 1960s, when more and more locals started joining the farm labour class which prior to this had largely been a preserve of Mozambicans, Zambians and Malawians. Sachikonye (2003 p.23) posits that although the proportion of indigenous farm workers did increase post the 1970s, the conditions of work for farm workers in general did not improve that much.

Zimbabwean post-colonial scholarship on farm workers showed that not much had changed on their conditions of living and service. They generally remained a forgotten and invisible man. This time however, their lives had slightly improved. The improvement had been brought about by the intervention of government in setting a minimum wage for the farm worker, as well as advocacy for empowerment of farm workers through better working and health conditions, improvement in food security and access to education as well as an assurance of security of tenure once one secured a job.

In spite of this however, in post-colonial Zimbabwe farm workers were generally seen as still lagging behind other social sectors. The life of farm workers remained that of low-wages, poor housing and amenities and surviving vestiges of quasi-feudal and paternalistic relationships between land owners and farm workers (Sachikonye 2003 p. 23). They were generally a forgotten and invisible stratum of the Zimbabwean working class.

It was in the 1990s that the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) launched a 10-year plan to improve farm workers housing. There was discourse at this time on the general welfare and rights of farm workers. This progress was to change for the negative post the year 2000, when farm workers began to be viewed as aligned to the opposition and to their white employers (Mlambo 2010p.10-14). It was in this year, as I have already discussed, that the Land Reform received greater emphasis. The discourse on farm workers became polarized between those that supported the government sponsored Land Reform and those that did not.

Farm invasions at this time sought to discourage political participation by farm workers. Farm workers were at this time subjected to intimidation and violence and were a deliberately marginalized group in land resettlement (Rutherford 2001 p. 1-17). The powerlessness and underdog role of farm workers which had started in colonial times persisted and was played out more strongly during the FTLRRP.

As I have severally highlighted already, they were largely of a foreign origin because locals had historically been reluctant to work on the farms due to the conditions they were exposed to. Sachikonye (2003 p. 23) suggest that in the 1940s and 50s the total population of foreigners among farm workers was beyond 70 percent. Although the population of indigenous workers rose from the 1970s and afterwards, the presence of farm workers of foreign origin or descent remained significant. Not all farm workers were of foreign origin; many were indeed indigenous people. However, they were all generally treated as falling short of being true locals. This situation played out again in Judah when the exiles returned, the ‘people of the land’ were viewed as one group that was not fully Jewish, hence their claim to land was not considered.

To get an idea of the population of farm workers of foreign origin, we turn to a study documented by Mlambo (2010 p.10-14). In this study, Mlambo was looking at the trends of labor migration to Zimbabwe. From this, I will extract those migrants that can be classified under farm workers. Mlambo argues that porous borders between Zimbabwe and other Southern African countries facilitated the easy movement of workers into Zimbabwe (p.10). Migrant workers into Zimbabwe were mostly from Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi, as I have highlighted earlier. Some of these migrant workers were coming to settle in Zimbabwe while others were using Zimbabwe as a conduit enroute to South Africa were new mines and plantations were also a significant employer.

Apart from porous borders, foreign farm labour was largely encouraged by the general reluctance of local Africans to enter the colonial labour market. The labor shortfall created by the reluctance of locals to join farms was thus met with recruitment of foreign labor from neighboring countries. The main recruiting grounds being Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

Between 1903 and 1933 the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB), a government agency, recruited and supplied 13000 foreign workers. These came through an organized system; however, some foreign farm workers found their own way to Zimbabwe.

The colonial state assisted employers in securing labour by signing labour agreements with countries such as Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia. These included the Tete Agreement (TA) in 1913 with Mozambique and the Tripartite Labour Agreement (TLA) with Malawi and Zambia which took effect in 1948 (Mlambo 2010 p.11).

The movement of labour from Malawi was boosted by the introduction of free transport in 1927. This enabled foreign workers to travel to and from Zimbabwe at no cost and it also came with free accommodation and rations for sustenance. Naturally this made workers from Malawi comprise the majority of foreign labour in Zimbabwe at that time (Mlambo 2010 p.11). I will later on share how my family also found themselves in the farm areas of colonial Zimbabwe.

In 1946 the colonial government established the Rhodesia Native Labour Supply Commission (RNLSC). Its mandate was to recruit foreign workers directly for the farming sector. An average of 14 000 workers per year migrated to Zimbabwe in the years that followed. From the years 1953 to 1963, the Central African Federation (CAF) was formed; among other provisions, it allowed workers from Malawi to come with their families and also allowed them to settle in Zimbabwe after their stipulated tenure of service. This encouraged permanent settlement in the farming sector. In 1956 foreign farm workers in Zimbabwe accounted for 12 218 male and 1027 female (Zambians); 57 226 male and 4315 female (Malawians); 54896 male and 8441 female (Mozambicans) according to Mlambo (2010 p. 12).

Mlambo (2010 p.12) estimates that about 150 000 Malawians and Zambians took this opportunity to settle for a long stay in the country. He further suggests that in 1958 around 123 000 Malawian men out of a total of 169 000 then outside the country were in Zimbabwe. The number of male labour migrants from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia continued to soar over the years. While my focus is on those that then became part of the farming sector, it is important that I highlight that foreign labour was represented in all sectors of the economy. There was however very little barrier to movement from one industry to another. Approximately 200 000 foreign workers formed part of the 890 000 total Africa labour force in the country by 1973.

Of these 200 000 workers of foreign origin, approximately 119 000 of them were working in farms by 1974, representing 33 percent of the commercial farming work force at the time according to the study by Mlambo in 2010. This was a huge decline from 1956 were workers of foreign origin accounted for 60 percent of the total workforce on farms, as I highlighted earlier. These figures were to drop significantly by the year 2000. I assume this is because more and more locals were beginning to take up farm work.

From the submissions by Mlambo above, I observe that the colonial government policy encouraged the economic migration of foreign workers. This environment allowed workers of foreign origin to consider settling in for a long stay. I assume that some may have built houses, intermarried and considered themselves equal to locals.
Given the support from government at this time, many among them may not have envisaged any negative changes in the future. For that reason, they may have made plans for permanent residence. It would interest the reader to know that these are the exact same conditions that would lead to the birth of the current writer. My father being a Mozambican migrant worker, married and settled for a long stay. We all would be born, my father hoping that we would receive acceptance and treatment as full citizens. However, as the reader will see later on, it was not to be so.

Sachikonye (2012) pays special attention to the portion of these farm workers that was made up of blacks of foreign origin. He estimates that about 30 percent of these were migrants from other countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) such as Mozambique, Zambia, and Malawi (Sachikonye 2012 p59). Blair Rutherford (2001 p. 1-17) sheds light on this group in his comments on a 1995 survey by the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union, which suggested that about 20 percent of the total national population was of workers on farms.

This survey, according to Rutherford, suggested that a sizable number of this statistic traced their origins to neighboring countries. These, especially those from Mozambique, migrated into Zimbabwe just after independence. Mlambo showed that during colonial times, Malawians were the largest group, while Rutherford (2001 p.1-17) reckoned that in post-colonial Zimbabwe, Mozambique contributed the most. This is the country from which my father, a lifetime farm worker, came from too.

Mozambicans generally flocked to Zimbabwe because when Zimbabwe got its independence, Mozambique was still struggling from internal wars. I compare this drift of people into Zimbabwe to that of foreigners that drifted into Judah from the north, south and other areas. Interestingly, those that drifted from the north in Judah were products of war, fleeing Assyrian aggression. In the Zimbabwean case, many from Mozambique were also products of war.

The return of peace to Zimbabwe led to a migration of many refugees from places like Maputo and Beira among others in Mozambique into Zimbabwe. Waeterloos and Rutherford (2004 p.537-52) state that, 'Although most farm workers were born in Zimbabwe which until 2001 had conferred citizenships to them, there are some who came immediately after independence when many war refugees from Mozambique entered the country.'

Mlambo (2010 p.12) describes this migrant labor force as quasi-citizens with limited access to government services, lowly schooled, highly job insecure and historically foreign labor force. What stands out in his comment is that he views a good number of the farm workers to have been of a foreign origin. While many of the problems faced by farm workers were the same despite their country of origin, migration complications after government sponsored land reoccupations affected the foreigners the most. The question of migration complications will be looked at later on.

Outside the figures of migrant workers, the overall contribution of agriculture to national employment was significant. The figures are telling. The agricultural sector's contribution to national employment rose from 8799 workers in 1904 to 83 000 by 1936, 220 162 in 1951 and 314 965 by 2002, according to Pilossof (2014 p. 346). Closely related figures are also given by Phimister and Pilossof (2017 p. 220).

I wish to draw the reader's attention to the farm worker community during the years of the FTLRRP. Shonhe et al (2021 p. 83) give some very important statistics regarding the same. It is their testimony that by the late 1990s there were around 300 000 workers on commercial farms in Zimbabwe. Only half of these however are reported by the same authors as permanent. The rest were casual workers, often women, moving from communal areas to farms.

Chiweshe and Chabata (2018 p.58) suggest the same figures for permanent and seasonal workers. Their view is that by the time of the FTLRRP, the commercial farming sector in Zimbabwe was host to between 300 000 to 350 000 permanent and seasonal workers. Scoones et al (2018 p.7) did not separate between permanent and temporary workers. They argued that before the year 2000 there were an estimated 350 000 permanent and contract workers on farms, further highlighting that the loss of permanent worker status after the FTLRRP was wide spread.

Hartnack (2005 p.174) proposes that by the year 2000, farm workers and their dependents accounted for nearly two million people, almost 20 percent of Zimbabwe's population at that time. This is not surprising because farm workers often had large families. I am myself am the 6th child in a family of 7 children. This is beside some extended family members from my mother's family side that my parents took in to live with us in the compound farm house that we stayed in. If my father had not been a migrant worker, we likely would have had more extended family members from his side living with us. Thus, I believe that the numbers of farm workers above are not surprising.

I assume that these were still the numbers of farm workers on farms by the year 2000 as there was no major farm labour shift between the years 1998 and 2000. I admit however that we do not have exact numbers of farm workers employed on commercial farms in Zimbabwe during the years of the FTLRRP (2000-2004). The estimates provided in this section however, give us very helpful ranges. They are also not very far from the correct figures as they are corroborated by many scholars.

In separate studies Shonhe at al (2021 p.83) and Scoones et al (2018 p.7) conclude that following the FTLRRP, around 70 000 farm workers continued to reside and work on the remaining farms. While around 25 000 were displaced in situ (that is, being forced out of their livelihoods, homes, and general routines of life but remaining on the farms) and the rest had to move from the farms. These figures are largely an estimate, but they give a picture into how the farm labour and land allocation was reconfigured following the Land Reform exercise.

A study carried out across six land use categories many years after the FTLRRP and documented by Shonhe at al (2021) revealed the following for the areas studied. In terms of origins, overall, most farm workers identified as Zimbabweans (77 percent), while others identified as from Mozambique (9.6 percent) and Malawi (8.7percent). Foreign workers were associated with permanent jobs. They were mainly concentrated in the LSCFs (Large Scale Commercial Farms), 46 percent, A2 farms (medium to large scale farms) 43.2 percent and A2 JV farms (medium to large scale Joint Venture farms) 39.6 percent (p. 83).

Variant from the findings of research carried out by Chiweshe and Chabata (2019 p.59), 91.3 percent of the farm workers dwelling in the compounds self-define to be of Zimbabwean origins. This is not surprising because most of the compounds were taken over by the new settlers who could not fit in the existent farm houses. These settlers were largely indigenous individuals that were backed by the ruling party.
This is almost the same case played out in the story of Judah when the exiles returned. The exiles, a group that I view as analogous to the government backed groups that took over land in Judah upon their return from exile, replaced the groups that were resident in Judah during the exile. As I have pointed out earlier, many among them were of foreign descent, but had lived in Judah for a long time.

I observe from the above that the percentage of foreign farm workers had dropped to 23 percent by the year 2000 from about 30 percent in 1974. I assume this is because over the years those that could return had returned and also that as some had retired. It is possible that these were then not replaced by new groups of foreign workers. It is also not surprising that foreign workers were associated mostly with permanent jobs. This is because most of them came to settle for a long stay, as I observed earlier. Some among them (my father included) had no plans to return home from the first day they set foot in Zimbabwe.

This (Chiweshe and Chabata 2019) study was also carried post 2004, thus as I have mentioned earlier, it gives information on roughly around 100 000 workers that remained on the farms, either still employed (70 000) or displaced from livelihoods but remaining on the farms (24 000). This study does not comment on approximately 200 000 others who were forced to leave the farms. On information regarding these 200 000, I shall consult a different scholar and discuss their fate later on, but for now I continue analyzing the ones discussed above.

Across their sample, permanent employment represented about a third of all cases (33.6 percent). The LSCFs had the highest proportion of permanent workers (35.9 percent), compared to A2 (16.2 percent) and A1 farms (15.4 percent). Men dominate the permanent workforce on A1 (94.4 percent) and A2 (90.9 percent) farms. While Communal Areas households employ most women (477.4 percent). The ages of the work force averages between 30 and 40 with older workers being replaced by younger workers (Shonhe at al 2021 p.83).

The same authors suggest further that seasonal work averaged 14.4 percent and was seen to be most common among men in A1 farms (42 percent) and in A2 (30 percent); their monthly wages remained relatively low. Work on LSCFs generally became seasonal in nature. I submit that this is significant. Firstly, because seasonal work was highly unstable and paid way less than permanent work; secondly, because, prior to the FTLRRP, most farm workers on LSCFs were permanent workers. This marked a significant shift in the livelihoods of those farm workers forced from permanent to seasonal work as I shall discuss in sections that follow (p.83-84).

In terms of employment by gender, the study showed that there were generally more men (72.5 percent) than women (27.5 percent) employed. Women were however more commonly employed as temporary workers (31.7 percent) as opposed to permanent (26.5 percent) and (14 percent) were on seasonal arrangements. For men, more are employed in key decision-making positions, as well as in skilled positions that include such professions as tractor drivers, management positions, workshop work and foremen among others (Shonhe at al 2021 p.84).

Post FTLRRP the lives of farmworkers became precarious, although some scholars beg to differ. Hartack (2009 p.357) argues that farm workers were not mere victims of the Land Reform but remained important actors with the agency to respond and innovate around their set of circumstances. His argument is that while they had been shaken by the reform, farm workers used their ingenuity, skills and resourcefulness to manipulate the farm system to their own advantage.

I argue against the foregoing; in my view, such an argument turns a blind eye to the ever-present and consistent precarity of the lives of farm workers after the Land Reform exercise that began in the year 2000. As I have highlighted from scholarly work above, only a small percent of farm workers remained employed on the farms.

Having established the presence of farm workers during the FTLRRP in Zimbabwe, we turn now to the process and its implications. In what follows, I highlight how farm workers were excluded and left to wallow in poverty. I provide a nuanced analysis of the various complexities within which former farm worker livelihoods occurred. My aim is to highlight their everyday experiences as a group on the margins. Overall, the precarity arising from poor job conditions and the often-temporary nature of employment meant workers had to seek other sources of income beyond wage labour. Gaining access to land was crucial, as I will discuss below.

4.4 Farm Workers and Access to Land during the 2000-2002 Fast Track Land Reoccupations

Farm workers were in two categories in the Zimbabwean farming sector, that is, permanent and casual or seasonal workers. Permanent workers usually lived on the farms, in the compounds. While some seasonal or casual workers may have resided on the farms, most of them came from nearby farms or communal areas. A good number of the permanent workers were of foreign origin. These depended mostly on farm compound accommodation. They hardly had any place to call home outside the farm compounds. This is one of the reasons why they stayed on the farms and served as permanent workers.

Chiweshe and Chabata (2018 p.58) observed earlier on that there were 300 000 to 350 0000 permanent and casual workers working in the Zimbabwean commercial farming sector by the year 2000.While some farm workers were forced to migrate from the farms, as we shall observe later, Chiweshe and Chabata (2018 p.58) suggest that the bulk of commercial farm workers with a permanent status remained in the farm compounds. Here, they offered to work for the black community that had taken over the farms on government support. They argue that most of these workers, just like those that were forced off the farms, were excluded from land allocations. Thus, they also fit in the category of those that lost land, as I seek to argue in this chapter.

Machingura (2012 p.262) suggests that the government took over farm land through native weapon wielding war veterans and youth gangs. These youths and war veterans were ruthless, brutal and beyond prosecution as sometimes they were aided by government institutions such as the police force. The farmers and their workers were not strong enough to withstand such a force. The best that the farmers could do was to report to the police, however as the police were sometimes complicit, many cases went uninvestigated.

The aims of the programme, as reported in pro-government media, included among three other objectives, ‘to reduce the intensity and extent of poverty among rural families and farm workers by providing them with adequate land for agriculture use’ (Government of Zimbabwe 2000 p.2). According to this objective, farm workers were to benefit from the land reoccupations and resettlement processes. Reports on this program after its implementation, as we shall see later, are however not very reassuring.

According to Chiweshe and Chabata (2018 p.58), the ‘outside’ identity underpinned the othering of farm workers even during the FTLRRP. They particularly were mistrusted by the ZANU PF government for their connection to the white commercial farmers and thus faced persecution during the FTLRRP. The majority of them were excluded from land allocation following the Land Reform. I am going to look at this further below, but for now I need to draw the reader’s attention to writers whose views are contrary; those who do not agree with the idea that many farm workers were excluded from land allocations following the FTLRRP.

On the face of it, it is not an easy task to identify the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the fast-track Land Reform exercise of the year 2000. The beneficiaries largely consisted of an estimated 300 000 small holder settlers who received land under the A1 model and around 30 000 native commercial farmers who took up land under the A2 model.

Apart from the white commercial farmers who were forced off the land, the major loser in this exercise where the farm workers who lost jobs and were not allocated land (Sachikonye 2003p. 25). Sachikonye further suggests that less than 5 percent farm workers got an allocation of land under this programme. Their major crime was the suspicion that they sided with their bosses on the 'Land Question' and in the elections that took place in the year 2000.

Shonhe at al (2021 p.86) express a different view. They were of the view that farm workers benefited significantly from land allocations following the Land Reform. They suggest that across all land allocation categories, farm workers had access to land after the FTLRRP. The various land categories that were created following the Land Reform included, A1, A2, A2 JV (JV meaning joint Ventures as I have indicated earlier) as well as LSCF.

Shonhe at al followed their argument by suggesting that the land sizes allocated to those that took land were not homogeneous. Their argument is that farm workers occupied (73.5 percent) of A1 farms and (72.1 percent) A2 JV farms. They also reported that farm workers with land holdings were most prominent in CAs (Communal Arears) (99 percent), followed by the LSCFs (89 percent), the compounds (87.1), and A2 farms (78.9 percent). Outside these, the same authors also argue that some farm workers got access to land through leasing arrangements where they rented land for farming purposes. These leasing arrangements were for those that did not get land during the allocation, and those that had land through allocation but wanted more land (Shonhe at al, 2021 p.86).

They argue that almost everyone got a piece of land and that those in communal areas got access to land through allocation by local leaders. They shared a testimony by one of the compound-based farm workers as follows:

> We were excluded from the Land Reform because we were perceived as part of the opposition and enemies of the state. However, due to limited work opportunities after the towns, many of us now rent-in land from those who benefited. The new pieces of land we used to get through an allocation from commercial white farmers have now been allocated to the new settlers. To get it from them, we have had to use various means, including payment of cash, the supply of farm inputs and supply of labour during the farming seasons. Unfortunately, the government does not include us in the agricultural input support programs and therefore we have to find a way to get the inputs on our own. Some have managed to access tobacco contract farming though.

The testimony above actually testifies to how difficult it was to obtain land. I observe the following from the assertions by these scholars: the scholars argue that farm workers now have access to land for maize and tobacco production. They include those that are using personal means to access a piece of land in their statistics of people who benefited from the Land Reform exercise. The scholars suggested that their study revealed that the yield levels were relatively high for tobacco and maize, thus reflecting the intensity of production on small plots as well as the skills of these workers. The maize they produce is argued to meet the security needs of the families as well as to provide a surplus for sale.

I find parts of the narrative by these scholars hard to believe. I here contrast the views by the Shonhe at al and views expressed by Sachikonye (2003 p. 18). Sachikonye estimates that between 180-200 000 farm workers, if not more, lost their jobs. In the majority of instances this loss of jobs came with the loss of entitlement to accommodation, land and subsequently subsidized food and basic social services. As we shall discuss later, others were forced to move off the land to make way for A1and A2 small holder farmers.

According to Gundani (2003 p.493) about 350 000 A1 and about 52 000 A2 peasant farmers moved in to take over land. If these numbers are true, it would be commendable that such groups got land, however this was at the expense of the farm workers that were already resident on the farms. Thus, unlike the picture that Shonhe and colleagues try to paint, that holders of some of the farms were former farm workers, these were actually part of the government sponsored groups that took over land.

Hartnack (2005 p. 178) carried out research at one of the farms in Zimbabwe on what became of farm workers during and after the FTLRRP. His findings are instructive. I will share some of them as a sample of the general situation for farm workers at this time. Although he studies only one farm, the situations did not vary greatly. However, to give a more representative picture, I will also share results from a country wide study carried out by Sachikonye in the year 2003. I believe that these two studies gave near precise information because they were carried out in the heat of the reform process when evidence had not been distorted by time.

According to Hartnack (2005 p. 178), on one farm that had 48 permanent workers, 30 seasonal workers and their families as well as 10 pensioners living in various types of accommodation, war veterans and other government supported groups moved in and forcibly took over the farm. This was around April 2002. An estimated 300 people were displaced by the new farm occupants. They were forcibly evicted from their homes being given ‘five minutes’ (actually a couple of hours) to gather their few belongings and leave the farm just as their white masters had.

This arbitrary eviction led to skirmishes as some of the senior workers and young men resisted. This exposed those that resisted to physical retribution at the time of being forced to migrate off the farm. Guns, chains, and clubs brandished by the farm invaders did the work. As they left the farms, they left behind the land they had called home for years, some of them since birth. Here again we find this report to be in direct contrast to the picture that Shonhe et al (2021 p.86) attempt to paint.

Chiweshe and Chabata (2019 p. 59) argue that while there were some black farm workers that got land, they were very few. The majority not only did not get land, but were actually evicted from farms by the war veterans and other government supported people groups. They share a case of farms in Mazowe, where they stated that while there were no specific farm workers that were allocated land, beneficiaries were encouraged to set aside land for farm workers as former farmers used to. The extent to which this call was heeded is debatable. Chiweshe and Chabata (2019 p. 59*)* note:

> There are four former farm workers who were given plots on the farm of 2.5 hectares each. A number of small plots of 1-3acres were left out during the pegging of plots, and these were given to the four workers by the *Sabhuku* (Headman) to use.

> The four held senior positions under the white farmer such as assistant manager, mechanic and irrigation supervisor. The A1 farmers thought it wise to retain such staff so that they would help the new farmers with the skills they had acquired.

Chiweshe and Chabata note, however, that the tenure of these farm workers was precarious because they did not have any permits or documentation to regulate their land ownership. They also note that out of many farm workers on the farm, only four were given farms. That only four are recorded to have been given land here indicates that the programme brought the loss of land to the farm workers in general. This again paints a different picture to the one that Shonhe et al (2021 p.86) give.

In this section of the chapter, by way of summary, I argue that farm workers lost land during the FTLRRP. This argument is backed not just by research but by personal experiences also, as we have seen and will continue to see. I argue further that the loss of land came with a loss of dignity, identity and social standing too. Farm workers faced a complete overhaul of their lives. Even though we do not have the exact numbers of farm workers employed on commercial farms in Zimbabwe between years 2000-2004, agriculture was ranked the highest employer by the year 2000 in Zimbabwe (Rutherford 2001 p. 1-17; Sachikonye 2003 p.18).

To gain insights into the number of black people employed on commercial farms, I rely on estimates made by different organizations. One of these was given by the Commercial Farmers Union. In 1995 the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union estimated the number of farm workers at 2 million, that is 20 percent of the then national population (Sachikonye 2003 p.19). A good number of these workers traced their origins to neighboring countries thus reflecting an agriculture related labor migration.

These farm workers, whose composition has briefly been commented on in the previous section of this second pole of the study, fell victim to the land reoccupying groups. Sachikonye (2012 p.59) noted that the people who came out the worst in the land takeovers were farm workers. Thousands of them were thrown out and their most basic of human rights (the right to land) violated with impunity. Moyo and Rutherford (2001a, 2001b) in Sachikonye (2003 p.19) suggested that farm workers got little or no land because the government saw no need to allocate land to them.
They stated:

> …a combination of foreign descent and working for white farmers in a subservient position has led to the widely held sentiment in Zimbabwe, particularly in the ruling party, that farm workers lack the capacity to work as independent farmers and are strongly beholden to white farmers and thus should not receive resettlement land.

In a study on a few farms given to farm workers under the A1 scheme, Marongwe (2003 p. 8) stated that the few that were considered in land allocations were the ones deemed loyal to the ruling party. Even these were given small portions of arable land because farm workers were considered by government to be unwilling to become fully fledged farmers in their own rights.

Several reports on the last phase of the Land Reform and Resettlement Program (LRRPII) suggest that farm workers lost their jobs and were subsequently driven off the farms according to the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ, 20001). Farm workers on occupied farms pending acquisition were often chased away by new farm owners and went without their payments from the previous owners.

A survey on 2016 farms in early 2000 by the same organization showed that about 47 percent of permanent workers and 67 percent of seasonal workers lost their jobs and were forced off the land by new owners (Waeterloo and Rutherford 2003 p.537-42).

The General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ, 2002) stated that over 70 000 farm workers had been forced off farms after losing their jobs by May 2002.This was 5000 above the latest figures by the Farmers Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ, 2004). According to the Farmers Community Trust of Zimbabwe, over 65 000 farm workers had lost their jobs and had been displaced by the end of the year 20002. The same organization stated that government figures show that less than 2 percent of 114 901 households resettled between June 2000 and March 2002 were headed by a farmer worker. Land was thus allocated to mostly non-farm workers.

Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2009 p. 114) expressed an almost similar view, stating that farm workers were driven off the land together with their white masters leading to the post 2000 economic meltdown, which meltdown subsequently dislodged Zimbabwe from its 'bread basket of Africa' status (Nurnberger (2003 p.504). Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2009 p. 114) posited that most farm workers could neither be given land nor be allowed to stay on as they were accused of being supporters of the then recently formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The same thought is expressed by Shonhe et al (2021 p. 79) earlier on in this chapter. They were therefore seen as enemies of the state, especially given the fact that the ruling party had lost a referendum to this newly formed party, arguably after receiving significant sponsorship from white commercial farmers.

As white farmers were chased off the land, the government sponsored groups saw no need to spare their native farm workers. The two were viewed as one group in different skin colors. Rutherford (2001 p.1-17) points out that thousands of farm workers lost the land they had called home for years. This is in spite of the fact that Mugabe often spoke of land having been given to benefit the natives. In one of his addresses to Catholic Church leaders in Chishawasha, Mugabe is quoted by Chitando (2001 p.182) to have said:

> The goal and struggle for self-determination and sovereignty which you supported, even at great personal peril for some of you included, in fact rested and depended on our sovereign right, access, control and use of those natural resources which God in his infinite generosity gave us, the land. All creatures great and small that crawl on it, the plants, the rivers, and streams of water clear or dirty, the soils, the pebbles, rocks, hills and mountains. All that, God gave us all who belong to this land to use (Mugabe 2001 p. 37).

The expulsion from land that farm workers experienced had had varying effects on the farm workers across Zimbabwe's commercial farming sector. Chabata and Chiweshe (2019 p.56) observe that instead of tacking an inclusive trajectory as enshrined in the 1998 Land Policy of the government of Zimbabwe, the FTLRRP not only excluded many farm workers from land allocation, but also turned a blind eye on their existence. I argue that these farm workers were excluded not just from land allocation but also from the land they lived on and from various commercial farms.

For those farm workers that remained on the farms after the land takeovers, their relations with the new farm owners were not always cordial. Sachikonye (2003 p. 69) reports that this coexistence created uncertainties because, in a sense, farm workers had acted as some kind of buffer between the white farmers and the black settlers. They acted as hostages of the situation who ended up without land. Moyo et al (2009 p. 108) suggest that there existed mistrust between farm workers and the new settlers.

The farm workers were perceived as anti-Land Reform because many of them were not very willing to work for the settlers on farms. As a result, farm workers had to leave the farming areas, some going to communal areas, others to squatter camps. Those that remained were displaced in situ.

This shift in land holding caused other complications in the lives of farm workers. Speaking of my family; As a marginal and poor group, we, farm worker families, had often lacked food security. We often relied on the farms and farmers for material support. Generally, farm worker incomes were for covering food expenses. The years 2000-2002 brought a challenging turn of events. A devastating drought which negatively affected harvest coincided with the expulsion of most farm worker families from land (Moyo et al 2009 p. 108). The country did not experience good rains and farm production did not reach anticipated levels, particularly in those areas where production depended mostly on annual rainfall. There was an unprecedented slump in the production of food, especially maize as a staple. With no food, no income and no land, I argue that the farm workers' situation became even more deplorable.

Beside the drought, I argue that food security was compounded by the effects of the Land Reform. As I have discussed in this research earlier on, there was a general reduction in production due to the Land Reform. The reduction in production meant also the reduction of output per farm. Faced with the threat of losing their investments, farmers generally either stopped or reduced production. They could not continue ploughing resources where the future was uncertain. Government was not giving any assurance of a turn of events. Court cases against land seizure either dragged on, or those cases that were won by the farmers had no one to enforce the judgements.

An interesting resonance between this case and that of the 'people of the land' in Judah is that those of the 'people of the land' that tried to appeal to imperial powers to stop the takeover of Judah and Jerusalem by the returnees were on the whole not successful either. Letters written by Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah to the Persian Court did not result in overall victory. They resulted in briefly stopping progress on the reconstruction of Jerusalem, but this would be overruled not long after. It is also not surprising that those of the 'people of the land' that tried to appeal for their right to remain in Jerusalem did not succeed either. As in the Zimbabwean case he who had support of the political leadership had power.

The police were either afraid to enforce the judgements or completely powerless to do so. In some cases, they were even accused of complicity. It is beyond the scope of this research to look at the farms that were taken over by law enforcement agents themselves, but a thorough study might reveal that there were some farms actually taken by police chiefs.

Farms failed to produce as they used to thereby negatively affecting the food security of the farm workers. For most farm workers, the main resource with which to obtain food was cash. However, due to massive layoffs, loss of income and failure to access severance packages (as we shall see later), farm workers were left without available means to acquire food.

The other resource that had supplemented cash to bring food on the table for farm workers were the pieces of land that had been allocated to them by commercial farmers. These pieces of land were taken over at the same time that farms were taken over by the government sponsored groups. The plots of land allocated to farm workers had varied in size depending on the farms and farmers. In Mashonaland West for example, Sachikonye (2003 p. 53) reported that 40 percent of farm workers were allocated plots of land ranging from half an acre to an acre to farm crops for their personal consumption. While the pieces of land were relatively small, the produce was usually relatively favorable owing to the farming expertise that most farm workers had. In a few farms, the farmers assisted their workers with inputs, either as part of work benefits or on loan basis. For this reason, farm workers were generally able to subsist.

I recall that my father did have some portions of land allocated to him on the farm that we lived it. I may not be able to give an estimate of the land size but we were generally able to subsist on these portions of land. It is on these pieces that we grew maize, sweat potatoes, pumpkins, cassava, round nuts among others. We were generally able to get by from one harvest season to the next all things being equal.

As I have already pointed out, these pieces of land were already small. They however still counted for some kind of access to land. With the Land Reform exercise, this already meagre access to land was withdrawn from many farm workers with dire consequences. Not only had the farm workers lost inputs that they used to get from their employers, but also access to cash to buy some for themselves. In addition to this, their quasi-paternalistic arrangements for land access and subsidized maize came to an end. This led to a spread in food shortage, particularly in early 2001.

In Mashonaland West province, the staple food situation on all farms surveyed by Sachikonye (2003 p.46) was found to be very critical. In Manicaland, unemployed farm workers were in dire need of food aid because they no longer had income to sustain themselves or access to land to grow their own crops. The case was the same for Mashonaland Central (Sachikonye 2003 p.46).

The situation became even more dire towards 2003. In the Matabeleland provinces, 87 percent of houses sampled had experienced food shortages during the course of the year. The numbers of those needing food aid were similarly high in the Midlands province as well as in Masvingo. In urban and shopping areas, queues for maize and bread became a routine. The vulnerability of farm workers to starvation became acute as a result of their loss of access to land. They lost not only the pieces of land they initially had but also suffered exclusion when land was reallocated following take overs (p.46).

The amount of food that farm workers ate fell drastically between 2000 and 2002. 18 percent of farm workers in Matabeleland South, 39 percent in Mashonaland East, 21 percent in Mashonaland could only afford one meal a day in October 2002. The proportions in similar circumstance in Masvingo and Midlands were worrying (Sachikonye 2003 p.46). This speaks to the consequences of the loss of access to land. It speaks to the effect that loss of land is not just loss of a piece of ground, it is the loss of security; security in the form of shelter to guard against the adverse effects of the weather, and security in terms of food. I say a person who has nowhere to lay his head often has nothing to eat either.

The land issue remained a significant issue among farm workers because an insignificant number among them were allocated land and government did not do much to help the situation. Instead of being a genuine instrument for poverty reduction, the Land Reform became a tool to perpetuate and initiate poverty among farm workers. The political will to address the plight of farm workers on matters of access to land was nowhere in sight.

Gundani (2003 p. 487) contributes an interesting Jewish dimension to the question of the year 2000 Land Reform in Zimbabwe. Drawing from a Catholic writing, The Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace (hereafter PCJP), (1997 p.45), which pronounced the year 2000 as the year of Jubilee according to Old Testament tradition, Gundani suggests that the spirit of Jubilee should have been felt in Zimbabwe during this time.

His argument is that the Catholics suggested that the year 2000 was the year of Jubilee and Zimbabwe, being largely a Christian nation, should have shown indications of observing the Jubilee. According to the document that Gundani draws from, the issue of equitable distribution of land is central to the Jubilee tradition of the Bible. He suggests that the spirit of the Jubilee urges an end to many individual or collective sins that bring intolerable situations of dire poverty and injustice. The biblical roots of the jubilee call for the protection of the 'weak and of their right as children of God, to wealth creation' (PCJP 1997P.46).

Gundani suggests that the understanding of this biblical teaching was supposed to help Zimbabwe as a largely Christian nation. His argument is that this should have been particularly easy for Zimbabwe because most of its leaders had been educated in Christian Mission Schools. This Christian background should have influenced the leaders to restore social justice through equitable distribution of land ownership, according to Gundani (2003 p.487) and also Chitando (2005 p.193-194). Gundani suggested further that that this teaching was a key teaching which was largely ignored by Christian politicians in Zimbabwe and the Christian Church leaders in Zimbabwe did not do much to remind the politicians of the plight of the poor and landless either (Gundani 2003 p.487).

Borrowing from Mupunga et al (2002 p.2002), Gundani suggested that many among the Christian leaders in Zimbabwe sacrificed prophecy for self-interest and self-preservation thus did not point out the injustices they needed to have pointed out (Gundani 2003 p.487). As a result, the Christian values of love of God, God's relief to the poor, freedom for the oppressed, were not felt among farm workers, just like in the Old Testament setting described in the previous chapters where also care for the widow, the fatherless and the stranger was not practiced (Ex. 23:11; Lev 25:6; Lev 19:9a; 23:22; Lev.19:9b;23:22).

The Christian Leaders in Zimbabwe remained non-committal on the crisis that forced communities such as the Svosve, Nyamandlovu, Chiweshe and others to forcibly repossess white commercial farms that had been taken from villagers more than a hundred years before (Ecumenical Support Services 2000 p. 24). These invasions by the just mentioned communities according to Gundani (2003 p. 490) were prompted by:

1. Delays by government in resettling the landless
2. Lack of clear information on how they were directly going to benefit from the government's Land Reform initiative.
3. Political manipulation of landless peasants by pro-ZANU-PF war veterans among others.

However, the effect of the FTLRRP on the farm workers is not limited to access to land, it also includes the negative effects of the same on the farm workers' economic life, as I discuss below. In the next section, I engage with wider debates on the aftermath of the FTLRRP on the farm workers' economic lives. I look at the diverse and fragmented class of labour on farms, where farm laborers made a living not just from their regular wages but also other extra economic sources such as a commoditized farm lifestyle, fishing, market gardening and selling firewood among others. I seek to look at how precarious their lives became as the effects of the FTLRRP set in, where the remaining forms of livelihood became heavily informal and sometimes illicit and illegal, with limited possibilities of expansion and accumulation.

4.5 Fast Track Land Reform and the Loss of an Economy among Farm Workers

What were the implications of the FTLRRP on the economic lives of farm workers on commercial farms? What patterns of economic suffering are observable across the whole spectrum of farm workers whether divided by gender, age or employment type? How can the economic life of individual farm workers on farms be perceived and defined? What happened to their jobs and regular incomes? These are important questions if we are to understand the effect of the Land Reform exercise on the economic lives of individual farm workers.

The main picture that emerges in the year 2002 in Zimbabwe is that most commercial farms had exchanged hands from the white commercial farmers to the new native farmers under the A1 and A2 models. As a result of this transfer and other factors, Sachikonye (2003 p. 43) suggests that production generally halted in most of the farms that he studied. Sachikonye suggests that in Mashonaland West, of the 30 farms that he surveyed, 90 percent had been acquired by government and 60 percent of these had completely stopped all farming activities.

In Manicaland he reports that only 10 percent of the farms still had some kind of production. A similar pattern was reported of Mashonaland East; out of the 24 farms that Sachikonye covered, he reported that 10 percent were operating fully, 20 percent had scaled down operations and 70 percent had completely halted operations (Sachikonye 2003 p. 43).

In Matabeleland North and South, a total of 30 farms were studied. Of these, 80 percent had been turned over to resettlement and production on the remaining farms is reported to have fallen by an estimated 70 percent. In the Midlands, Sachikonye surveyed 15 farms. The emerging pattern on these was that 12 had been affected by the Land Reform and had completely stopped production. The only farms reported to have been spared from acquisition are the large estates specializing in timber, tea and sugarcane. These generally maintained their production (Sachikonye 2003 p.43).

This acquisition and consequent reduction or stoppage in production had its effects on the economic lives of farm workers. The reduction in production came with massive job cuts on the part of the farm workers as the new farmers could not sustain such a heavy wage bill at a time when production was at an all-time low. In the second quarter of 2002, before the exodus of many white commercial farmers, a survey of 235 farms established that 40 percent of farm workers in Mashonaland East had lost their jobs, 46 percent in Mashonaland Central and 33 percent in Mashonaland West (FCTZ 2002b).

With the decline in production at several farms, many farm workers no longer had a regular income. This is arguably the greatest factor that affected their livelihoods as they lost the capacity to sustain themselves.

As I have highlighted earlier, farm workers did not receive very substantial incomes to start with, but the little they got was important in sustaining the lives they led. As Sachikonye (2003 p.46) suggests, these little incomes made a difference between starvation and survival, extreme poverty and access to the basic things of life. The income they received enabled them to escape becoming the poorest of the poor.

In a field study carried out by Sachikonye in 2002, it was found that most farm workers earned a minimum wage of Z$4,300 with some earning more than that depending on their grade in the farm work system. In Mashonaland East and Manicaland, Sachikonye reports that the grades were higher than the stipulated minimum. In these areas, some seasonal workers were reported to be earning as much as Z$7,800, permanent workers earning Z$8,500, while some drivers and clerks went up to as much as Z$15,000.

This meant that a considerable number of commercial farmers could pay more than the basic stipulated wage of $4,300 (Sachikonye 2003 p. 44). The level of these incomes fell as a result of the drastic reduction in farm production following the FTLRRP. One estimate was that the annual wage bill paid to farm workers was Z$15 billion per year, and following the Land Reform there was an estimated loss in income of Z$13 billion, (Financial Gazette 17 October 2022).

The statistics above reflect job losses on the part of permanent workers. These were mostly male and had large families. Job losses on temporal or seasonal workers were even higher; these were mostly women and some of the being single parents. Measuring the Mashonaland provinces alone, Sachikonye (2003 p. 44) reports that about 50 per cent of seasonal workers lost their jobs. Beyond 2002, Job losses continued and increased. In the Midlands province it is estimated that Job losses went up to as much as 70 percent by the end of 2002 (Sachikonye 2003 p. 44).

In the same vein, 90 percent of farm workers in Mashonaland West had lost their permanent status by the end of the same period. In Matabeleland provinces, data suggested that the farm workforce had been cut by 65 percent. An estimated 80 percent of workers in Mashonaland East province no longer had permanent employment. In Masvingo province, large layoffs of farm workers were reported and like in other provinces, these were without severance packages (Sachikonye 2003 p. 44).

Table 3.1 Pattern of farm workers' job losses, 2002.

Province	Estimated number of workers affected
Mashonaland West	18,300
Mashonaland East	11,260
Mashonaland Central	15,000
Manicaland	2,260
Total	46,820

Source: Sachikonye 2003 p. 44

The overall picture is thus of massive job losses even before the commercial farmers had left their farms en masse. Sachikonye suggests, based on the report by the Commercial Farmers Union dated 2003, that a total of around 200 000 workers had lost their jobs before the end of 2003 (Sachikonye 2003 p. 44). This figure is not precise; the figures of those that had lost their jobs could be higher than that. However, even working with the figures proposed in the Sachikonye research, analysis shows that the job losses were significant.

The loss of permanent worker status on the farms was widespread and quite dire. The new farmers were financially weaker and did not have the ability to carry the wage bill that had been sustained by the previous farmers, especially the one for permanent farm workers. As I have already highlighted, the conditions of farm workers even before the Land Reform exercise were already less than the desirable. The negative turn in their incomes due to loss of jobs or permanent statuses on the farms following the Land Reform exercise made the situation even worse.

Interestingly, this situation shares resonances with that of Judah before the return from exile. As I have highlighted in the first pole of this study, the economy of Judah was agro-based. The return from exile led to the expulsion of many farmers as land was taken over. These farmers were considered not fully 'Jewish', just like the white commercial farmers were not considered fully 'Zimbabwean'. As farmers left, their employees lost a source of income from their regular wages. Some of the new farmers brought workers of their own, as I have highlighted earlier that some of the returning Jews brought in their slaves from Persia.

The new farm occupants that did consider employing from the group among the 'people of the land', likely brought in a completely different set of working conditions. After all, their leaders gave orders that some of 'the people of the land' must completely vacate the land. Job losses for the 'people of the land' in Judah affected both permanent workers and those that took up seasonal works to augment income from their own trades. The situation was not all that different in the case of Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, a nationwide survey of farm workers in 2001 established that about 35 percent of farm workers were either contract workers or seasonal farm workers. These were also known as casual workers (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, 2001). These were left in hopelessness on the farms as they were not clear where to go. Most of them moved from one farm to another in search of employment. Termination of such opportunities meant that they lost the little income that had helped them get by.

For those farm workers that retained some kind of employment, there was an increased casualization of labour status, thus negatively impacting the workers' ability to earn. The new farmers generally failed to pay benefits traditionally associated with permanent work. This was largely due to under capitalization. I assume this to have been the case with some of those that took over land in Judah after their return from exile too. They could not have all brought in enough capital to finance startups in business and maintain or improve the way business previously operated. Surely there were some changes in the process of transition, especially in the status of workers that may have been retained. A casualization of workers status must have occurred, just like in the case of Zimbabwe currently under discussion.

Scoones et al (2018 p.7) made the observation that the loss of permanent worker status after the FTLRRP in Zimbabwe was wide spread. They argued that before the year 2000 there were an estimated 350 000 permanent and contract workers on farms, but post 2000 this number was brought to about 70 000, with 25 000 being displaced in situ, that is remaining in the farms but initially without work and the rest being forced to move to other farms, Communal Areas or to nowhere in particular, thereby ending up in shack settlements.

This employment status was to a great extent replaced by contract worker arrangements, reflecting the fluid situation on those farms that remained operational. This also spoke to the magnitude of the loss of an economy on the part of the farm workers whose work status changed. This loss also directly impacting on their usual earnings. Influenced by the limited farm operations post-2000, and reliance on rainfed cropping for many farms, labour absorption and employment patterns became very low, Scoones et al (2018 p.7).

This resulted in workers suffering long periods of unemployment and consequently reduced incomes. For those that remained working on the farms, wages continued to go down, making farm workers some of the lowest paid and least protected worker groups in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Hanlon, Manjengwa, and Smart 2013 p.194).

The overall decline, as observed in the Scoones et al (2018 p.7) research, amounts to 34 percent for male permanent workers, and a much higher drop of 45 percent for seasonal male workers. This can be compared with the Sachikonye (2003 p. 44) study carried out in the first quarter of 2002, which showed a decline in permanent worker status by 25 percent in Manicaland, 32 in Mashonaland East, 40 percent in Mashonaland West, 79 percent in in Mashonaland Central.

There was a much-pronounced drop from employment among seasonal workers. By virtue of their status, they had less access to secure sources and opportunities of income. When breaking the same data by gender, it is clear that the loss was greater for both permanent and seasonal female workers. Some 51 percent and 55 percent of permanent female workers respectively lost their jobs. This may be compared with 30 percent and 33 percent for permanent and seasonal male workers (Scoones et al 2018 p.7).

Land Reform has therefore had a differential impact on the economic lives of male and female workers, with female workers being much worse affected. This would typify what Abogunrin (2003 p. 1-13) observes in the theory section of this study when she describes the Feminist theory. Earlier I noted that she makes the observation that feminism comes as the response of women to a male dominated society which has largely been unjust to women.

Some female seasonal workers belonged to the households headed by male workers. For these, the situation was much better because they still had a male in the house to run a round and supply the family. Others did not, thus the females had to do the work that both the mother and the father of the household had to do. It would appear that male workers somehow held on to the few remaining jobs on the farms at the expense of female workers. The impact of job losses on women was acute because a large proportion of them were single, single parents, widowed or separated.

This situation brings to mind the case from Judah that we studied in the first pole of this study. I have highlighted in the case of Judah that there was a command for women of foreign origin to vacate the land.

This resulted not only in the loss of their marriages but also of the jobs they occupied and the income they earned; thus, their suffering, is comparable to that of the women among the 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe. I shall discuss these similarities in greater detail in my next chapter, but for now we continue with discussions on the Zimbabwean case.

Shonhe et al (2021 p. 88-90) made a different observation from that made by Scoones at al or by Sachikonye. They have suggested that farm workers had other sources of income outside wage employment post the 2000 Land Reform. Their argument suggests that farm workers, especially younger men, engaged in extra sources of income that include artisanal mining, brick making, poultry, market gardening, buying and selling of agricultural commodities along main roads and also got income through remittances from relatives that were not on the farms.

They suggest that their study shows how access to land and increased opportunities to diversify into off farm activities now undergirds farmworker social differentiation. It is their view that the farm worker community, by the time of their study, consisted of those who were capable to accumulate new productive asserts such as cattle, ploughs, scotch carts, water pumps, tobacco curing barns and some households using television run on solar power (Shonhe et al 2021 p. 88-90).

I do not share in the conclusion that Shonhe and colleagues arrived at after their study. I submit that in reality post Land Reform farm workers were a fragmented class of labour relying on often very poorly remunerated activities, combining in a complex struggle for livelihoods. These diversified livelihoods, Bernstein (2006 p.449) would observe, emerged and operated under highly precarious conditions.

For the farm workers, losing the only land that sustained their lives was not just losing a piece of ground, it meant so much more. By being moved off farms, farm workers lost a full economy which offered such services as farm run schools, health facilities, and farm transport services to town, clinics and other places. They had fields on which they grew crops to see them throughout the year. Leaving the farms meant leaving the fields behind. Some of the crops grown on these fields were sold for extra income. This too was taken away, and thus the Land Reform interrupted an economy on which farm workers subsisted.

Hartnack (2005 p. 185) mentions a senior farm worker who had been forced to vacate the farm where he worked. He had been serving as a mechanic and a tractor driver. Being a skilled worker, he earned a better salary than many of the farm workers at the farm. His valuable skills enabled him to get extra jobs after normal working hours at the farm. At displacement, his family managed to rescue a number of their belongings but where not able to rescue what was of great importance to this skilled worker, that is, his tools.

These tools included a full set of spanners and toque wrenches that he had bought to do part-time jobs after his normal working hours. Not only did this skilled farm worker lose his well-established high-ranking job at the farm; he also lost his personal economy, an enterprise that used to give him extra income through part-time side jobs. He is recorded by Hartnack (2005 p.185) to have described himself as a diviner who had lost his divining bones and thus his ability to read the future. His opportunity for extra income got lost at the same time that he lost his regular income. This was just one example among many that had lost both their regular incomes as well as opportunities for earning an extra.

In brief I will describe Arajo Foromoz Chambalama (my father). Apart from being a general hand in the irrigation section of the farm, he also had a skill of making mats from reeds that grew by the river sides. I am not sure whether he had learnt this skill by the time he left Mozambique or it's a trade someone taught him after he had already come to the farms. Whatever the source of this skill, my father was really good at it.

There was a weekly demand for this product from my father's hand. People within and without the farms bought this product for different reasons. Some bought whenever a person died because it was one of the key accessories during burials at farms. Others bought for ritual purposes, often a sangoma would demand one such mat as part of his payment. Yet others bought for regular home usage such as for sitting on when relaxing or for sleeping on at night, most people at the farms had no beds. This important product allowed us extra income that helped our family get by.

The coming of the FTLRRP brought an end to the sale of this product among other misfortunes. While our banishment from the farm did not last that long, under the new rules at the farm, my father could no longer harvest the water side reeds without authority from the new farm owners. Even if they had allowed him to freely continue, I should mention that the new normal at the farms during the FTLRRP destabilized my father's market such that those that remained no longer had extra income to spend on what my father was selling. In this vein, apart from the regular income, we also lost an extra source of finances that would have made our lives better.

The economic life of the farm workers was shaped by commoditization on the commercial farms, Hartnack (2005 p.185). Cash was only needed for some food items, school fees and a few luxuries. This lost, farm workers had to now spend money for everything in their new lives. Many of them resorted to wood cutting for personal use and for sale. For those however that had health challenges, this option was totally unfeasible, and on a grand scale it had its effects on the sustainability of the natural environment.

At the farms, farm workers were often provided with vegetables, subsidized mealie meal and sometimes meat, especially toward the end of the year. Many among the farm workers also kept such things as chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs. They ate fruits from the farm orchards, and as I have mentioned earlier, they had access to a patch of land where they could farm a few crops or for market gardening. All this formed a significant component of the farm worker economy. It was all lost as new owners took over farms and changed the rules.

It is worth noting that farm workers had limited capacity to engage in alternative livelihoods, resultantly they were overly dependent on farm employment. This left the workers very vulnerable at the termination of employment that came with the FTLRRP. Many among them were then forced to engage in short term and often illicit forms of livelihood.
These included sex work, illicit beer brewing and gold panning. These were harmful and had a stigma attached to them. They were also very unstable and could not give the farm workers a fair income. The new farmers rarely called them for work and the daily wage was often around USD$3 for each full working day for those that were called. This was not sufficient to cover their daily expenses. Unlike with the previous commercial farmers, the farm workers had lost any guarantee of employment.

They were now called as and when the new farmers wanted them, often at a very low income as I have just highlighted. The farmers picked only those they considered hardworking. This opportunity was mostly available to men. One casual worker, recorded by Chiweshe and Chabata (2019 p.62), lamented:

> He handpicks his friends all the time and claims that they are the ones who work hard and don't give him much trouble. We are black sheep at this farm. We have to do a lot of begging to get listed or else we go the whole farming season without jobs and with no income. I have a wife who also can work but she never gets a job except when its harvesting time when more hands are required. My four children are all out of school now because I can't raise enough for their fees. This life is a misery.

The above speaks to the economic shift on the lives of the farm workers at the end of their work for their former employers. This was however not the only loss in economic terms. They also lost key opportunities of extra earnings, as indicated. Some of these included:

1. Market gardening

It is an established fact in Zimbabwe that subsistence farming is known for providing livelihoods for many families not just in the farm worker but in other communities too. The main crops are: *chibage* (maize from which they grind maize meal that is used for making *sadza*-thick porridge), *nzungu* (groundnuts), *nyimo* (round nuts), *mbamabaira* (sweet potatoes), *manhanga* (pumpkins*)*, *muboora* (pumpkin leaves from which they make relish), (Rugwiji 2017 p.16).

Aside from using our produce for household consumption as farm worker communities, we could also trade at the market or among ourselves to get cash for buying other essentials such as salt, tea leaves, bread, soap, sugar and cooking oil among other needful items. Market gardening was thus one of the most popular economic activities on farms. After work or on off days, some farm workers often worked in their own gardens to grow vegetables for sale. They used the farming skills learnt from commercial farmers and worked on the small plots of land often allocated to each worker by the farmer. They did not need fertilizer for this. At the farm where my father raised us for example, there were dairy cows that were kept in paddocks, and we were allowed to access manure from these paddocks for our own gardens.

We were, like other farm workers, able to grow such vegetables as covo, cabbages, okra, carrots, onions, tomatoes and so on. The income from this extra activity made life so much easier for farm workers. After the Land Reform, so much changed in this area. Farm workers were evicted from the farms and thereby denying them access to this important economic activity. For those that remained, this aspect of their economy did not continue to blossom either.

On the farm we lived at for example, there were many boreholes that gave us access to water for watering our gardens. When the new settlers arrived, the boreholes in our compound began to break down and gardens died. People had to now walk for almost four kilometers to get water just for daily sustenance. The new settlers did not have the capacity to repair the boreholes. They suffered for water pretty much the same way as we did.

2. Piecework

The ploughing season often presented an opportunity to earn extra. This was often available for wives of farm workers, older children or the farm workers themselves during off days or after work. The types of jobs that farm workers at the farm where we grew up would carry out ranged from skilled to non-skilled piece work. Some were hired to construct tobacco barns, wells, blair toilets, and fowl runs among other things. Ploughing fields and planting crops was also an often available extra.

These sources of extra income either significantly reduced or dried up completely leaving farm workers unable to meet their daily needs. Thus, the FTLRRP destroyed an economy around which the farm workers subsisted.

3. Selling fish

On farms that had or were situated near large dams, rivers or lakes, like the one on which we lived which had a large dam, some farm workers were allowed to catch fish for food or for sale at controlled rates. My family though did not catch fish that much, my father did not eat and we generally had little interest. Other families though often engaged in fisheries at the farm to augment not just their income but also their nutrition. Apart from being an important source of nutrition, fish also allowed for extra income in families.

With the coming of the new settlers, many farm workers were chased off, forcing them to locations where some of them no longer had access to the areas where they used to catch fish. For those that remained on the farms, some of them were denied access to their fishing spots by the new settlers. On being caught, they could be arrested or beaten up, losing their fishing rods and nets in the process. This does not just describe episodes at the farm where we were living but also at neighboring and other farms too.

Given the new attendant restrictions, some former farm workers resorted to fishing at night. This exposed them to dangers from aqua predators, such as crocodiles, which could not be easily detected in the dark. Having to steal their catch also meant that they could not sell their fish publicly in the farming areas, as this would lead to their immediate arrest or persecution by the settlers. I contend therefore that farm workers lost an important contributor to their personal economic lives.

4. Selling firewood

On the farms, particularly those on which compounds had no access to electricity like the one on which I was raised, firewood provided much needed energy. In townships or high-density suburbs, these were also sought after. These townships and suburbs became an easy market for the people working on the farms. It became a natural resource-based livelihood option. This option however went drastically down in the period following the Land Reform exercise of the year 2000.

As with the farm water engines and boreholes that were either vandalized or broken down without repair, the electricity-based machinery equally failed at the hands of the new settlers. They resorted to cutting wood for farm use. Uses that would previously rely on either coal or electricity now had to depend on firewood. These included such things as drying onions and curing tobacco among others. As a result, forests became depleted in a very short time.

What used to be heavy thickets are now bare ground. For those that remained on the farms, finding wood even for household consumption became a serious challenge.

5. Small livestock farming

Where it was allowed, farm workers often kept small livestock such as rabbits, hares, chickens, guinea fowls, pigeons, and in some rare cases, pigs, goats and sheep. My own family owned a couple of rabbits, chickens and ducks. These could be used for supplementing the family diet, providing relish when there were special visitors or for earning extra income when the need for cash came up.

If situations such as sickness, death or the need to raise school fees came up, these could easily be disposed in exchange for cash. The forced migration from farms also closed this window of opportunity for the farm workers. They not only lost an important aspect of their nutrition but also an aspect of their lives which could generate income or also be used as a measure of economic worth.

The above are just a few examples. Outside these, farm workers lost other routines that had given them a sense of security. They had a cocktail of other economic activities that assured them of additional income. The Land Reform of the year 2000 bequeathed on farmworkers a condition of poverty and powerlessness which some of them have to contend with to this day. Their economic losses were not limited to the above. They were spread across other activities related to the farm life.

Another key economic loss among farm workers was the loss of incomes, allowances and severance packages in the wake of the Land Reform exercise. In 2002 the government tried to reduce the economic loss on the part of farm workers by instructing commercial farmers to pay severance packages to all farm workers on farms that had been taken over. The instruction was that each worker was to receive a severance package equaling their full wages for three months before termination of employment. They were to also receive wages in lieu of notice under the contract of employment, an amount equal to twice the employee's monthly income for each completed year of continuous service with the employer (Sachikonye 2003 p.46).

An additional Z$5000 relocation fee for each employee that was displaced, the gratuity of termination of employment as stipulated at law, the cash equivalent of vacation leave for all days accumulated in the year in which the contract was terminated were also to be paid. These amounts were to be met by each commercial farmer whether or not they had received compensation from the government for the land that had been taken from them (Sachikonye 2003 p.46).

While some farmers are reported to have complied with this government instruction, the majority did not. This means that in the majority of cases the result was that the farm workers lost a significant part of their economy, not just in the general loss of income but also in the loss of severance packages.

The fact that farm workers did not receive their severance packages is attested to by scholars such as Sachikonye. He reports that a significant number of farm workers did not receive their severance packages. An explanation for this being possibly that some commercial farm workers were waiting to pay out these amounts upon receiving compensation from government.

As a result, however of the fact that the government compensation processes for seized land were very cumbersome, farm workers were at the receiving end. Only an estimated 22.8 percent received their packages, with about 74.55 percent going without this much needed package (Sachikonye 2003 p.47).

Some of the coping mechanisms of farm workers after losing out on the farms included turning to piece work, gold panning, informal vending, fishing and hunting. In sum, there were and are fewer opportunities for supplementary income generating activities following the Land Reform exercise. Apart from these, some of the farm workers turned to such activities as selling of second-hand clothes, molding bricks, making mats and selling vegetables among other things.

I argue therefore that the Land Reform exercise led to a significant loss of economy on the part of the farm workers. This loss was significant; it compounded other problems associated with the Land Reform such as the process of migrating from farms for evicted workers as we now discuss in the last part of the second pole of this study.

4.6 Fast Track Land Reform and the Migration Question among Farm Workers.

Much of the theoretical literature on what happens to people who have been displaced was developed in the framework of Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR). This was displacement often as a result of big projects such as new cities, dams and so on. An understanding of this kind of displacement was widely published by Michael M. Cernea during his work for the world bank in 1988 (World Bank 2000 p. 11-55).

Doing work for the World Bank, he mainly looked at people who had been forced to move because of larger developments projects in the 20th and 21st centuries. These included such projects as large dams, water reservoirs, or mining. Usually, planners of these projects would have seen it as unavoidable to have encroached into residential areas or spaces previously used for other activities.

In the same way as migrations as a result of natural disasters, civil strife, and wars, these Development Induced Migrations have significant social impact, mostly because the populations being moved may have resided in the same place for generations, established themselves and having a deep connection with the area. For example, their loved ones may have been buried in graveyards in the same area. In an African sense, there is a deep belief in a spiritual connection between the living and their dead loved ones. Movement, even if it is for development, would mean severance from this important connection.

In Zimbabwe a classical example is the mass movement of people to pave way for the construction of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam which was completed and commissioned in 2016 in Masvingo. Whole villages had to be moved to a different area as construction commenced. This movement is also documented in Zimbabwe in relation to the construction of the Kariba Dam, which was completed sometime between 1955 and 1959.

How people cope with displacement can often be studied and patterns suggested. Comparative studies of human movement can provide useful insights into analyzing the impact of forced migration and involuntary resettlement of people groups. After reviewing several displacements and resettlement processes, Scudder (1993 p.131) developed a model providing insights into how people cope with displacement. He suggested that mass movement of communities often has risks associated with it. His studies were meant, among other areas, to address the need to minimize risk.

To reduce the risks associated with movement, there is need for forethought and planning before movement is implemented. Scudder suggested that processes visible in planned displacements include the following.

Planning and recruitment (Scudder 1993 p.131)): This is the stage during which displacement for a project is decided on. The time it will take as well as the necessary resources to run the project from start to complete are discussed. Often it is at this stage that the new potential site for the masses to be moved is decided on. In well-organized movement, the budget for moving the people is put in place. This budget may also include the costs of developing the new site to which people are to be moved. Amenities such as sanitation, schools and health centers are considered or constructed. Roads are serviced and water facilities are put in place. People with the desirable skills for the potential movement are recruited and given a mandate.

The transitional adaptation stage: This stage describes what happens to people at the time of their physical removal. Naturally this is a very difficult and stressful stage. It is a time when people are forced to adapt to new surroundings, new neighbors, new patterns of living. At this stage people experience a shift in their power relationships as old leadership structures are lost. Scudder (1993 p. 131) says that at this stage, people become inward-looking, kin-focused, risk-avoiding. They cling to the familiar as their community struggles to come to terms with change. They experience psychological stress resulting from the risk of increased morbidity/ mortality. If not well planned, food and water shortages are experienced, contributing to increased cases of malnutrition and disease. Outbreaks of diseases such as dysentery may lead to death, especially of children and the elderly.

In this stage people are vulnerable to impoverishment. The impoverishment risks associated with this stage include unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, marginalization, food insecurity, loss of access to common property, erosion of health status and social disarticulation. In this research I argue that farm workers during the FTLRRP exercise in Zimbabwe went through experiences similar to the description of Scudder's second stage of displacement. This is because there was hardly a plan in place for displaced farm workers.

The stage of economic development and community formation: At this stage those that have been displaced or forced to migrate are expected to be start accepting their reality. They begin to come up with adaptation and coping mechanisms, find new ways to survive in the changed environment, thus abandoning or modifying old ways of life.

The handing over and incorporation/ integration: At this stage, those that have been relocated are expected to have stabilized. This stage aims at rehabilitation to the level that existed before the displacement. Anything that did not match or surpass the previous state of affairs meant that the resettlement had been unsuccessful (Terminski 2015 p.552).

By its nature and whatever its kind, displacement generally dismantles the patterns of social organization around which existing livelihood strategies are based. It forces people to adopt new strategies in the desperation to avoid impoverishment. As I discussed in the first pole of this study, displacement/ migration can either be forced or voluntary. While I have already in detail discussed these two concepts, I will briefly take a look at them again to establish context. The publications of Berlejung (2022 p.155) for forced and voluntary migration are seminal in this quest.

Repeatedly in her 2022 work, Berlejung stresses that there are differences between forced and voluntary migration. I will not define voluntary or forced migration here as I have already done so in the first pole of this study. I however point out that in discussing this subject, Berlejung gives the example of refugees, and suggests that they do not fit in the group of people groups that have been forced to move. Her argument is that, they, refugees, still have an option of self-determination. She further argues that different to refugees who try to escape natural or man-made disasters or migrate to make a better living and who can decide themselves freely when to leave, where to stay and who cannot count on any kind of infrastructure during their trail, or for their resettlement, forced migrants often are not given an option. Their fate is decided by those planning and executing their movement.

Berlejung (2022 p.155) emphasizes that, the people who experience a forced migration due to a governmental development project do not have any choice. They are included by force into organized deportation and resettlement programs with their given schedules and planning. For this kind of persons, there is neither spontaneity no self-determination nor any voluntariness but planning from outside without any say in the matter.

Voluntary migrations (including flight), a category in which Berlejung fits refugees, would usually attract people in the early stages of life who have the hope to succeed in the new location. On the other hand, involuntary programs take the entire population away and resettle them in the same quandary at the same time on to a limited resource base. Involuntary migration is usually planned and implemented by a body outside the moving group, such as a government or other powerful entity, and is usually long term. On the other hand, voluntary migration is planned by the moving group and it is in their power to determine for how long they want to be at the new site (p.155).

Berlejung (2021 p. 157) advises that governmental displacement policy is more efficient and successful in terms of later social and economic stabilization. It usually aims at enabling the deported population to full rehabilitation, giving a long-term solution to the problems being faced by the people. Therefore, the governmental resettlement programme include allocating people land, the means for a long-term survival, forging ties to what would become their new living places which could even profit from a win-win situation (Terminski p.320-366). Governments can settle the relocatees on land where they could benefit from agricultural programs not only as compensation for their losses but as development programs for the destination area.

The script for the FTLRRP reads differently when compared to the above understanding. Clearly, its implementation was based on government policy and the migration of farm workers off farms was largely consequential. It is clear that no prior thought had been considered for those that would lose land at the settlement of those that took over land.

As has been highlighted earlier in the views expressed by Scudder, the receiving/ hosting population also goes through challenges when a group of new people arrives. In the Zimbabwean case, the coming in of war veterans and other government sponsored groups to take over land in farms resulted in the forced migration of some of the people that were already on the farms. Clearly showing a completely different picture from the arguments expressed by Berlejung. Here, the government had no plan for the people it was forcing to move. The four stages by Scudder are not traceable, but the second which is one of stress and struggle for the affected masses is discernable.

Movement of people by government usually follows a clear plan. It is not a spontaneous decision, but a result of previous political decisions that were preplanned and embedded in central organization. This planned change often occurs with very little consequence. Evidence for this kind of pre-thinking is not there in the FTLRRP. Farm workers in Zimbabwe at that time suffered most if not all risks associated with unplanned migration or displacement.

In a general sense, what are the impoverishment risks that attend displaced people, I ask? Cernea (2002 p.280) suggests that there are nine risks for the Development Induced Displaced People or, in other words, for those that have had to move involuntarily. According to him, this form of displacement would leave people landless, homeless, marginalized, faced with food insecurity, at risk of increased morbidity/mortality, with loss of access to common property/services. This is coupled with social disarticulation and with education loss. All these, as I have already pointed out and shall further discuss, played out in the lives of farm workers after being forced off the land by government backed groups in Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP.

Cernea (2002 p.280) correctly pointed out that not only the forced displaced must cope with these impoverishment risks but also the host population which previously resided in the area where these people will be coming to. This is particularly true of my study here; the farm workers suffered from the burden of new comers that came into their space. As I have highlighted earlier, they suffered pressure on available land, they lost an economy and eventually many of them were forced to move. At moving, they moved to informal settlements that already had their inhabitants and most of them were not received well because they caused pressure on available resources which were already in short supply.

This, as I contended earlier, this is also reflected in the case of the 'people of the land' in the land of Judea during the return from exile. When the elite that had gone to exile returned, they found those that had not gone into exile living in the land. Their coming exerted pressure on available resources, resulting in some of the 'people of the land' being forced off land, losing an economy and suffering migration complications in the process. Where these migrants were banished to was a land already inhabited, thus where they went, they caused their own pressure on the host populations of the lands they migrated to.

I argue that in matters of forced migrations, there are different risks and risks intensities for the displaced, depending on site circumstances, sector (urban or rural), season of removal, mobile economic capacities, social, cultural and symbolic capitals and skills, gender, and age. And there are also different risk and risks intensities for the host population. They are confronted with such factors as increased demographic pressure, higher health risks with possibilities of new diseases, and more competition for resources, scarce social services and employment.

A forced migration of farm workers during the FTLRRP caused stress both on the people being moved as well as the population that hosted the displaced thousands. For this reason, it was important for government to plan well before people were moved to farms, causing the movement of other people already at the farms. Government should have calculated the risks and put in place mitigation measures before implementing the FTLRRP. It is clear that these measures were not put in place before the FTLRRP.

Effective counteractions to avoid risks that should have been put in place include organizing and mobilizing for risk prevention, reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience, providing safeguards and resources, compensating for the losses and minimizing competition and tensions between those that were allocated land and farm workers who were already on the land.

It is evident that the government of Zimbabwe had not planned for those that were later forced off the farms. The areas to which fate banished them were not ready to receive them. As I have argued several times, the authorities failed to provide such basic essentials as adequate tapped and clean water to these communities of expelled farm workers (Raath 2008 p.6; Pazvakavambwa (2011 p.176).

Cernea (2002 p.280) proposed a very helpful model called the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model for Resettling Displaced Populations (IRR). He proposed this as a standard model of risks affecting displaced people. A synopsis of this model can help one appreciate what risks organizers of the FTLRRP could have anticipated and what mitigatory measures they could have put in place. I am not here proposing this models as a solution, but I intend to use it only as a mechanism to expose what risks confronted the forced migrants during the FTLRRP.

In this model, Cernea suggests that before any movement of people takes place, there is a check list that must be followed. The reason is to counteract lasting impoverishment and risks and in order to result in successful resettlements and not failures. The check list contains:

1. Basic information for planning

Information on the departure area: Cernea (2002 p.280) says, the demarcations of the rea must be very clear. Part of the process of getting clear information on the people includes conducting a census. This is to get not just numbers, but to also have a correct understanding of the demography of the population in the area. It is not just people that are important but also the value of their assets. For this reason, an inventory of the property lost is taken and a value attached to it.

Information and design for arrival area: The information about the people group to be moved allows for any analysis of the destination area, checking on its capacity to accommodate the population to be moved. In order to appreciate the capacity of the new area, a survey of the host population is carried, taking into consideration the resources in the host area and what group they can comfortably sustain.

2. Definition of policy and legal frame works

Definition of resettlement policy: The objective of the development is determined. This is done taking into consideration the legal rights of the population to be moved. Overall, in the development process the rights of the community to be displaced must be respected, at least to the best extent possible. At no point must there be an overlooking or evitable violation of the rights of the people group to be moved. They must be treated with dignity from beginning to end of the process.

3. Organizational capabilities for resettlement

Designation of department responsible for resettlement: This stage recommends that a specific team if individuals be assigned that are responsible for carrying out the resettlement process. Assigning a specific department or people ensures that there be specific people to take responsibility for actions that surround the resettlement of people. Apart from the idea of taking responsibility, it also ensures that there is clear coordination of events, record keeping and proper hand over take over in the event of a change of personnel responsible.

Leadership and internal staffing among resettlers: It is critical that the resettlers themselves participate in the process that leads to their movement. This step recommends that individuals be selected that are able to provide leadership or general staffing among the community earmarked for migration or movement. These individuals are also critical in ensuring a smooth exchange of information between the department responsible for the movement and the people group being moved. Their presence also ensures influence; this will assist in ensuring cooperation and dealing away with any resistance or sabotage that may have the potential of counteracting the risk minimization process.

4. Resettlement plan for new sites

As Cernea (2002 p.280) would observe, development objectives for displaced groups: If the objective of the migration of a population is development induced, then proper development must take place, not just on the site where the people are being moved to, but also where they are being taken from. As I have highlighted earlier from the works of Scudder, successful resettlement must see the migrated masses restored to a life they were living in their previous station or improved to an even higher standard of life.

Part of the necessary development in the area where the population is moved would include facilities that ensure agricultural intensification. These include proper irrigation systems, reclamation of land for agricultural purposes, preparation of land for farming activities, providing conditions that are friendly for livestock production such as paddocks or clearly designated grazing areas. There should also be provision of proper homes for the moved people as well as structures that ensure that development of social organization, ensuring that the leaders among the people are given their places.

Development packages proposed for new settlements: Where resources allow, it would also be necessary to plan for urban development. This will call for development of proper roads and proper town planning. Areas should be designated for schools, shops, clinics, recreation among others. With the development of an urban set up, provisions must also be put in place to ensure environmental protection and to ensure a sustainable use of the environment and resources in general.

A closer observation of the FTLRRP shows that this part of the check list was either not there or not considered by those that were responsible for implementing this process. I say so because it is observable that after the white commercial farmers were chased from the land together with their native workers use was made of farms in ways that were not friendly to the environment and that completely did not consider any measures that fostered sustainability.

Observable in those farms that continued to grow crops such as tobacco after the new settlers moved in is a sad story of massive cutting down of trees to cure tobacco. Previous farmers had used coal or other curing mechanisms, but the new farmers not affording buying coal resorted to cutting trees and using them as a source of energy. Forests were depleted. What used to be dense forests with substantial wild life became almost desert situations. Some trees became extinct while others became endangered. This cutting down of trees was without any concerns towards sustainability. Animals lost a habitat, moved further where they could still live peaceably, otherwise were hunted and killed by the farm settlers as they sought to augment their diet.

Smoke from wood powered tobacco barns became a common sight during the tobacco drying season. It is important to note that at this time Zimbabwe was one of the largest tobacco producers in the world. As the new farmers attempted to maintain the record set by commercial farmers, more and more trees were cut, dried and burnt. These efforts however resulted in increasing global warming, polluting the air, depleting forests and causing more and more forests to become dry, bare ground. The contribution of this destruction of the environment to global warming is an area Zimbabwean scholars may need to study in the future.

As irrigation equipment got old and worn out, the new farmers were not able to replace them. This resulted in farming near areas where water could be closely sourced. Farming near river beds and dams became common, resulting in silting and drying up of water sources that previously could water farms all year round.

The need to supplement diet and to earn an extra income also led to intensified fishing in those farms that had access to this resource. Previously there was fishing, but on a regulated scale as the farmers helped to control the harvesting of this important resource. After the Land Reform there was minimum control on fishing, leading to some using nets and even catching small fish in large numbers. This was unsustainable and led to the depletion of this important resource among other resources I may not be able to mention. It is for this reason that I argue that considerations suggested by this part of the checklist where not made during the FTLRRP.

5. Transfer arrangements

During the transfer period: At this stage in the relocation process it is critical that information dissemination be managed. The moving population must be informed of how everything is to take place. If they have any feedback, it must also be taken into account. Not only should they be kept well informed, but must also be provided with other essentials to keep their situation livable and manageable. These provisions include such things as sufficient food, wood for warmth and cooking, fodder for their animals, among other necessities.

Logistics and Roads: The movement logistics must be managed and not left to guess. Plans must be made for teams that are tasked with specific assignments to manage, not just the logistical concerns directly related to the specific movement of the people groups, but also what they own. It must be ensured that the roads for them to use are in place and passable. The route they will take in the relocation process must be defined well in advance.

6. Timetable and budget

Critical time table: This time line suggests that within ten years of relocation, there must be a restoration of the resettled community to their previous life. Alternatively, their lives must be better than they were before relocation. To achieve this, a clear timetable must be crafted with clear timelines detailing what will be done at what time. This checklist must be religiously followed and reviewed. As I have highlighted earlier, a failure to restore the previous lives of the migrated community equals a failed migration and resettlement process.

Cost estimation: Cernea (2002 p.280) says, the time table above must have a budget attached to it. This budget must detail what costs each stage of the rehabilitation will require. This budget must be measurable and realistic. Before the migration is undertaken, it must be such that this budget can be met satisfactorily.

The basic assumption from this model proposed by Cernea (2002 p.280) is that involuntary displacements and resettlements are considered less as a salvage or welfare operation but rather as a reconstruction of systems of production and human settlements that represent a development. This is usually carried out when certain developments make human movement inevitable. Implemented well, this model suggests that people should be restored to their previous stable lives within a period of not more than 10 years. It aims at reconstruction and even improvement of lives for resettlers. The resettlers are given the opportunity of becoming self-sufficient economically.

Apart from the above, the IRR also considers the following six facets (Cernea 2002 p.280):

1. The risk of landlessness and joblessness has to be compensated by land-based reestablishment and reemployment, homelessness by house construction.
2. Social disarticulation has to lead to community reconstruction. The reconstruction must focus on group structures within the society, social cohesion, and formal and informal structures.
3. Marginalization must be avoided by fostering social inclusion.
4. Expropriation has to lead to the restoration of community assets and services.
5. Food insecurity has to lead to adequate nutrition, while increased morbidity can be avoided by better health care.
6. The loss of education has to be avoided by corresponding school programs.

This model promotes a double focus: on the risks to be prevented and on the reconstruction to be implemented. It can generally be assumed that for actual as well as for historical studies, when resident people are forced to move, and experience involuntary resettlement and relocation, certain general impacts can be expected. The dislocated people have to face the loss of different (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) capitals and there is a collective social impact on the community and on other levels of human organizations (clan, family, tribal, and village communities to well-developed urban areas) (Berlejung 2021 p. 162).

The model above is an example of well-organized migration and resettlement of populations. The migration problems associated with the FTLRRP that I seek to expose in this chapter were so because guidelines and precautions as suggested in the model above were not followed.

I am not here suggesting that the Zimbabwean government should have made use of the instrument above in their year 2000 resettlement exercise, rather I am suggesting that they should have taken time to carefully plan this exercise, taking into consideration the risks associated with resettlement.

There is very little evidence of any forethought on what was to be the impact of the masses they moved to the farms on the host populations that were already resident on the farms. As has been one of my key submissions in this study, many among those that were already resident on the farms were forced to migrate and seek resettlement elsewhere. This amounted to displacement that had untold complications for them and their families. In what follows, I detail some of these challenges.

Hartnack (2005 p. 175) describes those farm workers in Zimbabwe that were forced to migrate during the period in question as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This is because unlike refugees, many of them were not forced to cross an international boundary. He shares a borrowed definition of such people:

> Person or persons who have been forced or obliged to flee their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and, and who have not crossed any international boundaries. (Korn 1993 p.13)

I here argue that farm workers in Zimbabwe in the year 2000 tend to fit in this description. They were exposed to a situation I would describe as of generalized violence. This violence was mentioned and protested by many scholars. Rugwiji (2013 p.32) aptly suggests that Mugabe's revolutionary machinery was deployed to torture, subject, marginalize, exploit and oppress his own black people believed to be against the agenda of the state. Kriger (2003 p.407) chronicled that guerilla veterans of Zimbabwe liberation war were particularly at the forefront of beating up farm workers together with their white employers.

In a case study by Hartnack (2005 p.178), in one day workers and their family members were made to gather up what belongings they possibly could collect, taking them to an open piece of land at the borders of the farm. Those families with larger numbers of family members present were able to gather more than those that had fewer people available. They were able to move larger items such as beds, tables, wardrobes and lounge suites.

This was a normal functional African community, so obviously all groups of people were represented. From the young, sick, to the old. They lost a lot of valuables, particularly those items that were big or heavy. This was particularly compounded by the fact that the invaders did not allow them to return once they had left the farm. Just as was the case with the farm houses, the items that were left behind were looted, kept or sold by those that had taken over the farms.

A case is mentioned of one farm on which the new farm owners violently evicted farm workers. The workers carried their belongings to open spaces on the border of the farm. They had to move such things as beds and tables among others. Those who were sick, old or absent were not able to move much. Some of the them carried children and old people rather than belongings, as such, many belongings were left behind.

Those things they left behind were either looted or taken over by the new farm owners leading to extensive loss according to Maudeni Zibani (2004p.174).

The invaders were particularly violent to those farm workers that they knew were against them. Many young men were severely beaten that day (Hartnack 2005 p. 179). In the process they lost much. Apart from housing and pieces of land, the farm workers also lost items such as beds, wardrobes, chairs, pots, tables, blankets, personal belongings such as clothes, tools, bicycles, radios, poultry, rabbits, fruit trees and many more. Losses for low-ranking workers were less than those incurred by higher ranking ones. Senior workers may have lost more than seasonal workers because they earned more and highly likely had accumulated more.

Many of the farm workers that had been forced to migrate to the open spaces stayed together for several days assessing their options (Hartnack 2005 p. 179). At this time, they were surviving from rescued food and handouts from farm owners and well-wishers such as churches. Only a few of the forced migrants could leave and stay with relatives who worked and lived in nearby compounds. Most of the people stayed in the open spaces for weeks as they sought potential accommodation options.

Hartack (2005 p. 180) says that those that could not find a cabin to rent, with no relatives to accommodate them, stayed in the open spaces for up to three months. The ability of the farm workers to pick themselves up after the forced migration and displacement depended on a number of factors. These included their social networks, their employment status on the farm and their skills. Those with relatives living nearby were able to get help from their relatives. However, many of the families and friends of the displaced were not able to assist because they themselves may have been facing the same at the farms where they were staying, or simply because of the complex economic situation in the country at the time.

Many of the casual workers as well as the old were particularly vulnerable. This is because many of them had no income at the time of migrating from the farms. Some young men and those with skills were able to find alternative employment in a short time, thus alleviating the situation and providing a little bit of security to their families during this difficult time of landlessness. This was not so with the vulnerable portion of the farm worker community. For them this period was characterized by a lot of insecurity, confusion, tension and stress.

Some were ill at the time of the displacement, some of those already sick died. Migrants (particularly forced migrants) notoriously suffer from stress-related ‘resettlement illness’ (Fahim 1983:116). Some of the workers studied by Harnack (2005 p.180), particularly the old, and previously sick, died following the displacement.

There is a possible relationship between the stress of the forced migration and the illnesses and deaths that followed the forced migration. At this time, it is important to note that there was generally a high occurrence of HIV-AIDS among farm workers, making them particularly vulnerable to opportunistic stress related illnesses and deaths, (Hartnack 2005 p. 180). Farm workers were caught up in the HIV-AIDS epidemic that had ravaged Zimbabwe from the 90s. Due to relatively high illiteracy levels and below adequate availability of contraception, farm workers were among those most affected. Food shortage and insecurity worsened the conditions of those living with this virus. Deprived of reasonable income, access to decent accommodation and safe water, households lacked capacity to care for their own who were sick at the time of the Land Reform.

There is no comprehensive data on the affected group. A reasonable estimate would be that about 25 percent of the sexually active farm workers were affected, with infection being higher in casual and seasonal workers. This resulted in several orphans on the farms by the time of the forced eviction. I make this estimate following suggestions made by Sachikonye. Sachikonye (2003 p.65) reports there being at least two AIDS orphans on each farm. This estimate amounts to about 14000 orphans on farms at this time nationally.

While 65 percent of the children on farms attended school by the time of the Land Reform, the number significantly dropped of the children that attended school after many among them were forced to leave the farms for distant squatter camps that were poorly serviced, hence having no schools (Sachikonye 2003 p.65).

Many of them resorted to squatter camps. There however, these problems were further compounded. These squatter camps were semi-formal settlements on the outskirts of farms which were very poorly serviced. The shelters in squatter camps were a combination of cabin houses, plastic shacks and some made of grass, wood and mud. They were all less than an average decent shelter for a human being. Those with large families had either to build several shacks or live crammed in one or two.

Sachikonye (2003 p. 18) documented the situations of these forced migrants. He wrote suggesting that those displaced by the reform were often stranded on the outskirts of the farms or else they had to trek to the fast-growing informal settlements where social conditions were usually quite desperate.

Joining or constructing informal settlements was one of the ways in which farm workers sought to cope with their desperate situations. Such settlements mushroomed and grew during the period following the Land Reform. They were set up in areas that included Chihwiti and Gambuli near Chinhoyi as well as many others in Concession, Macheke and Porta Farm near Norton. These formed some sort of last-minute escape for farm workers after they were forced to migrate to the outskirts of the farms and were desperate on the road sides for days (Sachikonye 2003 p.18).

These settlements became the homes to landless people. They housed a significant number of former farm and mine workers. In these communities would be found children that had dropped out of school and even some without parents to take care of them. At the Macheke settlement, about 50 percent of those that lived there were migrant workers according to Sachikonye (2003 p.18).

Life was difficult for all, but the challenges were worse for vulnerable groups of the farm worker society. One single lady born of a Zambian father and a Mozambican mother struggled severely. Hartnack (2005 p. 183) records that at the time of the displacement, she was forced to flee like everyone else, losing her chickens, two umbrellas and six cups. She was one of those who had nothing essential to lose, and managed to carry her pots, blankets and clothes. She and her children stayed in the open for three days before, at the help of her brother, she found a cabin house to rent. After this, she survived by wood cutting and selling.

Wood cutting was a backbreaking work. A much easier but more risky work for her and other single women was to earn money through boyfriends. Many single women among the evicted and displaced farm workers resorted to this kind of work. This increased the risk of broken marriages and diseases in the farm worker community.

HIV-AIDs had to this time been mainly associated with the shanty towns that the farm workers formed or joined after their displacement. Life for those infected was not easy at all. Thus, migration from farms brought about sever challenges for those forced to move.

Hartnack (2005 p. 184) mentions one single mother who had contracted the disease but lacked health care. She was already very sick by the time of the forced migration. As a result of her health condition at the time of being forced to migrate, she was not able to carry much among those the things that she owned. As she was the only adult at her house, she carried only the portable items. With stomach aches, chest pains and sores on her legs, she became weak and could not walk properly after the tedious migration. Coupled with the stress of a forced migration, her health deteriorated heavily. This was the case for many. Vulnerability was however not limited to these only.

Another vulnerable group was that of the elderly retired farm workers who normally remained on the farms until they passed away. There was no social safety net for this group. Many of them had communal homes to trek back to, but some among them did not, which is one of the major reasons why they stayed on the farm until they died. For those that were forced off the farms but without a communal fall back, life became very difficult as they migrated to wherever they could find shelter, largely to informal settlements.

Here, they would live to die not so long after, because there was no life support. They were too old to be accepted for work anywhere. Thus, the shanty towns became their only option. Among other problems, here they had no access to proper food, there were limited options for food compared to the farms.

In the farms they could get wild vegetables, glean the fields after the harvests or receive nominal support from the farmers. It was not much, but they could get by. In the event of death, in the farms like the one we I was raised at for example, farmers could assist with food to feed the mourners, a coffin, transport and a spot at the farm graveyard. This allowed for a humane burial, but with forced migrations all this was lost. When my first sister (Nyarai) died, we received such aid and it made the burden so much bearable.

Women, being the bulk of non-permanent workers, constituted another vulnerable social group among farm workers. They accounted for less than 10 percent of permanent workers on commercial farms. According to a study carried out in 1999 but the Central Statistical Office, there were 152790 permanent male workers amounting to about (90.3 percent), and 16,460 permanent female employees (9.7 percent). Female employees were concentrated among casual workers (Sachikonye 2003 p.18-19).

Female workers lost out either as a result of their sex or their origin. Outside this, they also got left out because of the polarized situation between white farmers and the government. The majority of female farm workers were caught in between and were subsequently forced off the farms (Magaramombe 2002 p.19). The majority of them were not seen as workers in their own right. They were often considered as part of a male headed household and so their rights were often not considered. This was also compounded by the fact that female workers on farms tended to be single and so many among them had no voice to speak their issues on their own behalf. On being forced to migrate from the farms, they trekked alone or together with their husbands to wherever they could find sanctuary.

Movement during the migration for them was burdensome. Some of them having to breastfeed along the way. The stress of the forced movement, the unavailability of proper food during the period of the migration most likely affected milk supply. None the less, many among them still had to breastfeed whenever they could. The health of many among them deteriorated (Magaramombe 2002 p.19). In my view not a few among them likely got depressed.

It is my view that the uncertainty and insecurity generated by forced migrations during the Land Reform created a difficult environment for children and young people in farm worker households. Many of these, upon being forced to migrate off the farms, dropped out of school. The places to which they moved mostly had no schools. This is because these places were still new and had not yet been serviced. Some of the children and young people were then exposed to dangerous vagaries such as alcoholism, prostitution, drug abuse and crime. Being uneducated, they just grew up to be adults with no skill and who were not employable in any job beyond general work.

As I highlighted earlier, the farm worker community was multi-ethnic and very fluid. The farm workers were one group with two groups within, the non-migrant farm workers and those that had migrated from neighboring countries in Southern Africa. Mlambo (2010 p. 1-16) stated that migration to Zimbabwe resulted from the uneven development of capitalism in Southern Africa, which created a key agriculture and economic center in Zimbabwe. At this time locals were reluctant to work for colonizers' commercial farms. White farmers then relied on labor from other countries. The main recruiting grounds being Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

Mlambo (2010 p.13) says by 1912, there were more than 10 000 Malawians alone working on farms. He suggests that by 1956 there was an estimated migrant farm work force totaling 137 330. This figure was broken down as 63 337 Mozambicans, 13 245 Zambians and 61 541 Malawians in Zimbabwe. This number would rise to 11 4693 by 1970 and 19 000 by 1974. Sachikonye (2003 p.18-23) noted that around 1992 about 140 000 migrant Africans were in Zimbabwe seeking employment on farms, this figure showed a significant increase in farm workers that were of a foreign origin.

How vulnerable have migrant farm workers been following the FTLRRP? To what extent did their lack of a Zimbabwean citizenship contribute to the challenges they faced? I here seek to wrestle with these questions. First, they like many other farm workers did not benefit from land reallocations following take overs. Less than 5 percent of farm workers were granted land; in October 2001 only, 2 percent had been resettled (Mlambo 2010 p. 13-14).

It is not easy to determine what happened to workers of foreign origin, but it is not far-fetched to assume that none of them got land allocations. Here I will use the case of my family. We did not receive any allocation. My father did grab a small piece of land when everyone else was grabbing pieces of land. In not so long however he was flagged for being foreign, it did not take long for government sponsored groups to come over, pitch tents on the land and ask my father to 'disappear'.

Arajo Foromoz Chambalama was at that time a very strong-willed man, natural to his nature, he attempted to resist. His resistance did not yield much as he was not supported by any of the systems backing land grabbers at that time. Neither the government, the ZANU PF party or the security forces saw the need to support a foreigner. His cause became a lost cause immediately, and the land was taken back with ease and reallocated to a ruling party faithful.

This is because being of foreign origin, people like him had no Zimbabwean citizenship, hence did not have equal rights with those that were local. Many foreign farm workers lacked documentation of any kind. Many of them lacked even the most basic things such as birth certificates or national identification cards. My father was one of these. As I have highlighted earlier, the circumstances of his migration were precarious. They did not allow him to acquire any such documents before his hurried migration. At that time also, systems of registry were not yet advanced enough to document all people within Mozambique. In order for him to get any kind of identification documents, the Mozambican Embassy had to intervene later on in his life when systems had improved.

The question of their identity also played out at this time. At this point in the political development of Zimbabwe, polices towards the regularization of the citizenships of those foreigners that wanted to become permanent residents were not yet clear. Even though there was little hope for many among the foreign farmer workers to go back to their countries of origin, it was also very difficult for their citizenships to be regularized. As a result of this, not only were they considered ineligible for land allocation, but they were also left out in other key aspects of citizenship life such as the right to vote and contribute meaningfully to the political discourse (Mlambo 2010 p.13).

In order to fully establish the challenges that workers of foreign origin (like my father) experienced during the Land Reform as a result of not having Zimbabwean citizenships, it is necessary that I discuss here the broader scope of the citizenship question in Zimbabwe.

Farm Workers of Foreign Origin and the Citizenship Question

According to the laws in Zimbabwe, a person of foreign origin can be a fully Zimbabwean citizen with equal rights if they choose to be one (Veritas 20 June 2011). This constitutional provision benefited many and could also have benefited farm workers had it been applied fairly during the time of the FTLRRP. In 1985, through the Citizenship Act of Zimbabwe, the government announced that it would no longer consider dual citizenship, forcing many people of mixed parentage to revoke one of the citizenship statuses. This appeared to be a favorable provision, however there are unique circumstances surrounding many farm workers of foreign origin that complicated the processes.

A case of what happened in 2001 can help to explain this better. In 2001, the government announced that people with dual citizenship must renounce their foreign citizenship if they hoped to keep their Zimbabwean one. Many people, especially those of Mozambican, Malawian and Zambian heritage had to formally renounce the citizenship of their parents. Many however failed to do so because they considered themselves fully citizens of the country.

With increased globalization, according to Mutiwanyika (2012 p.30-38), many among these farm workers had intermarried with other farm workers from different parts of Southern Africa. Many children born in these marriages did not have citizenships of either country that the parents may have been from. These were considered foreign, but they considered themselves locals. When the call to renounce citizenship was made, they either did not see the need or they had no actual citizenship to renounce. These individuals were actually Zimbabwe citizens by birth, though born of foreign parentage.

One case is that of a white woman, daughter to the former prime minister of Rhodesia, Garfield Todd. Her name was called Judith Garfield Todd. She was born in Dadaya in the midlands of Zimbabwe and took part in the liberation struggle. She was a Zimbabwean not just by birth but also by work. Her Zimbabwean citizenship was however withdrawn based on the view that she was aligned to the citizenship of her parents which was from New Zealand (Garfield Todd 2012 p.39).

The Judith Garfield Todd case is similar to the one of those Malawian and Zambian farm workers who came to Zimbabwe between 1953 and 1963 during the days of the Federation (when these three countries were literally one). During this time, these people did not need a passport when traveling to any of these Southern African countries. At this time in the history of these nations, there were no birth certificates or national registration systems (Garfield Todd 2012 p. 40).

The situation was made even more complicated by immigrants from Mozambique; this is because prior to 1980 they were not legally able to enter Zimbabwe. Those that did, had first to go through Malawi or Zambia. Once they were able to reach any of these two countries, no documentation would be required of them. Thus, they freely entered Zimbabwe. These were all deemed non-citizens, although during the days of the Federation, they could enter the country without any problems with no document required.

According to Akokpari (2008 p.93), a citizen is a person who has full rights as a member of a country either by birth or by being granted such rights. Unfortunately, during the FTLRRP, there were some individuals that were actually citizens but were forced to migrate from farms. Their cause was not given attention, because they were deemed foreigners.

Mupondi (2012 p.50), shares a very helpful thought regarding the fate of these 'foreigners' during the FTLRRP. He suggested that farm invasions that started in the year 2000 in Zimbabwe were a response to the year 2000 constitutional amendment referendum that President Mugabe had lost earlier the same year. Most farm workers resisted this occupation of land because that is where their lives depended on. The general belief was that most of them were foreigners. Their resistance to the farm occupations did not go down well with Mugabe and his party. They felt that these 'foreigners' were fighting for white interests and for the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change political party.

All this was not surprising. It had its roots in the search for identity and self-definition that Zimbabwe went through after independence (Werbner at al 1991 p.159-60; Moyo at al 2000xiii; Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003 p.3). The priority of the new government after independence was to reduce and reverse almost seven decades of racially skewed inequalities in the area of land and asset distribution and arguably to restore fundamental human and civil rights on all its citizens (Mupondi 2012 p. 54). However instead of achieving all this, the FTLRRP led to dispossession and impoverishment of the very same people the government thrust purported to fight for. It saw farm workers of foreign origin having their citizenship status stripped, arguably because they opposed the Land Reform exercise.

Using the concept, 'You Do Not Belong Here', Akokpari (2008 p.93), argues that the key principle in the discourse of modern citizenship is for the state to provide equal opportunities to every member of the state or political community. This should be irrespective of 'gender, race, religion or any such basis of identity'.

This mirrors an observation I made on the ‘’people of the land in Judah at the return of those that had gone to exile; the ‘people of the land’ were forced off on the grounds of ‘not belonging here’. People of Malawian and Zambian descent were denied their right to citizenship, land and property, despite the fact that when many of them entered the country documentation was not a requirement. Ironically Mugabe is believed to be of Malawian descent too.

What is surprising though is that people from minority groups in Zimbabwe have represented the country in sports, music and other areas without being labeled foreigners because they were flying the Zimbabwean flag (Mupondi 2012 p.56). A few examples include, Bruce Grobelaar and Benjani Mwaruwari in soccer and Alic Macheso and Freddy Manjalima in Music and Art.

An interesting resonance to the first pole of this study is the idea that the same Jews that were chasing others from the land of Judea had themselves been aided by foreigners such as Cyrus and Artaxerxes, among others. Earlier in the history of their nation, foreigners are also mentioned in their narratives. These include such people as Ruth the great grandmother of King David and people like Uriah the Hittite who was a brave worrier in the Israelite army (Ruth 1vs.1-3; 2 Sam.11; Gen. 15 vs.20).

Tandon (2001 p.249), argues that the people of Zimbabwe owe the farm workers an apology for neglecting their human rights and for inadequate compensation for the losses they endured upon being thrown off farms. Sachikonye (2012 p.59-61) gives a picture of how many of these affected people were of foreign origin. He makes the observation that on the basis of citizenship, almost 88000 workers of foreign origin who together with their families made up a population of almost half a million were left disfranchised (Sachikonye 2012 p.61; Magaramombe and Chambati 2008p. 228).

A significant number of these farm workers were more or less stateless as they had neither registered for citizenship in their countries of origin nor did they have papers to allow them to register for the same in Zimbabwe. Restrictive citizenship policies thus increased their destitution upon being chased from farms.

The foregoing speaks to the idea that farm workers of foreign origin were marginalized during the FTLRRP and reasons given for their exclusion revolved around their migrant status or decent from migrant workers. Their numbers were such that had they been assisted with even small pieces of land, there still would have been plenty land left over. Evidence from writers such as Sachikonye (2012 p.63) shows that migrant farm workers did not constitute more than 25 percent of the total farm proletariat by the year 2000 (cf. Magaramombe and Chambati 2008 p. 232).

While as shown above the farm workers of foreign origin did not receive land, many of them would have preferred to stay on the farms after the land reoccupations because they had no fallback accommodation in communal areas, towns or other farms. Their ties with ancestral land in their countries may have been weak or lost by the time of the reform. This made them one of the most vulnerable social groups. This means that about 80 000 workers, who together with their families would make up a community of nearly half a million, were in limbo following the Land Reform exercise (Magaramombe and Chambati 2008 p. 232).

Some authorities had tendencies of xenophobia when it came to addressing the needs of migrant workers or their descendants in commercial agriculture. One senior party member was quoted saying, 'All your farm workers are Mozambicans, Malawians and Zambians, and can be shipped back home at moment's notice' (Zimbabwe Independent 5 December 1997). The mentality among some of the political leaders assumed that most of the farm workers were of foreign origin and had no rights within the country other than those bestowed upon them by their employers.

This mentality was also reflected in the question of citizenships for those migrant farm workers that chose to stay on instead of going back to their countries of origin. This gap had also been exploited severally to deny these kinds of farm workers access to land, not just in the post 2000 Land Reform program, but also in those reform efforts that had taken place in previous years.

There were reports in 2002 that authorities moved some of the migrant farm workers to the border areas in Mashonaland Central Province, others settled in Manhuwe in Murazabani in Lower Zambezi Valley (Sachikonye 2003 p.59) There was no conscious plan to meet their immediate and long-term needs. The assumption was that being moved to border towns, some of them would eventually move back to their countries.

Waeterloos and Rutherford (2003 p.545-7) documented that a total of about 90 000 farm workers were displaced by the end of the FTLRRP II. The same figure is also attested to by The Standard Newspaper of December 15 2002. This number Hartack (2005 p. 184) says was 50 percent of the total number of farm workers in Zimbabwe, counting both locals and those of foreign origin. Furthermore, Waeterloos and Rutherford (2003 p.545-7) say 74 percent did not have an alternative land to go to. This is because they lived on an exclusive single income in tied housing where the right to abode was tied to employment. Their lives were fully dependent on employment on the farms.

As I have stated above, Sachikonye (2012 p. 65) suggests that a total of 80 000 migrant workers who together with their families made up a population of around half a million were left in limbo. With this group were the elderly, most of the migrant workers had no options to ameliorate their situation. They found themselves having to migrate again, but with very few capabilities to do so. Not only did they not have land alternatives but they also tended to have low levels of formal education for reemployment opportunities.
For several reasons, many of them had lost contact with their parent countries. Most of them resorted to wherever they could find land (Internal migration), 67 percent being reported by Rutherford (2003 p.545-7) to have resorted to squatting.

The displacement process was not always friendly. It was violent and often compounded the migration challenge especially for these workers of a foreign origin. Those that had come from countries such as Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi found themselves in dire straits; they had no communal land to fall back on (Sachikonye 2012 p. 65). Many of them were left destitute. They had a very precarious existence after the Land Reform.

Unlike in normal migration, as I described earlier, where preplanning is made, there was an absence of systematic planning and funding for schools, health care facilities among other associated services. Just like in the case of the migration experienced in Judah, women and children were particularly affected by the absence of such planning.

The General Agricultural Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ) attempted to respond to the challenges faced by farm workers after the displacement. This however did not yield much as those farm workers who had lost their jobs and had been displaced failed to maintain their membership by paying their subscriptions or by participating in the Union's activities. Membership of this Union dropped from about 180 000 at the start of the year 2000 to about 50 000 at the end of 2002 (International Trade Union Confederation, 3 December 2012).

The violence to which many of them were exposed, together with the increasing uncertainty about their future and their inability to sustain their families, loss of access to basic services such as education, health and general security, led to heightened levels of depression and despair among this population (UNDP 2002 p.35). This desperation and despair is comparable to a similar situation among the 'people of the land' in Judah' who were forced to migrate.

My own father, Arajo Foromoz Chambalama, a Mozambican migrant was one of these. Arajo had come to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) sometime in the 70s. He was 19 at the time. This was after an attack near his homestead in Nampula during a Mozambique civil war battle between the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the forces of the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) in the early 1970s.

Some of his relatives died in this attack, and the surviving ones ran for life in different directions, never to unite again. My father somehow survived this attack. He however was never to meet his relatives again. For that reason, I have no relatives on the paternal side. They all died or vanished; no one knows what became of them. My father had to restart life, but this time on his own, without family. The story of the lives of survivors of the liberation wars in Southern Africa remains an area still to be thoroughly explored, in particular the trauma that followed the death of close loved ones under brutal circumstances.

After the attack, my father fled to Zimbabwe, not because there was peace there, but just because in his hour of desperation he needed somewhere to run to. Technically, he had not come to look for work, but he came as a refugee from war. The story of his forced migration was one of walking through the bushes for hundreds of kilometers over many months. He did not know where he was to get his next meal or whether he would be alive the following day.

He slept in trees for fear of wild animals. At one point devoured by hunger, he ate some strange wild fruit not knowing that it was poisonous. He passed out for about two days and only regained consciousness after a long incessant rainfall. A stranger in a nearby village told him when he woke up that the day was Wednesday, but he clearly remembered having eaten the fruit on the Sunday before not knowing what happened after. After months of walking, he arrived at Mr Nijel's farm, generally called Nijo farm by the natives in Harare (Salisbury then). He looked for work and was accepted as a general hand in tomato fields.

This was the best he could get. He had no skill, trade or profession. Worse still, he had no documents of self-identification of any kind. He could not write his name either, he had had no chance to go to school because of the war. Talking to me by the fire side many years later, he would often share how he desired that I excel in school, and do what he could had not been able to do. '*Ndiri bofu/Owo wene nikhala'*, He would say (meaning I am blind). He was not exactly blind. This was his way of expressing that he had not seen the doors of school in his entire life. One of my major reasons for pursuing graduate studies at this level is for the sake of my father and so that my clan in general would not be 'blind'.

Like I have mentioned earlier, on arriving in Zimbabwe, my father got taken in as a general hand at a farm. There he met other Mozambicans, Joao (a fellow teenager), Jinaloja's family and people of other nationalities too, Mr Ngozo (a Zambian), Mr Sendenji (a Malawian who was to become one of his best friends) and several other Malawians too. This is where he would later meet my mother, and over time I would be born among six other siblings. This farm was the only home my father knew. He had no communal fall back or relative to collaborate with in the day of trouble.

The FTLRRP found him in this situation. He was left stuck with nowhere to go with his family of a wife and seven children. None of us had a Zimbabwean citizenship. The challenges faced by those that were forced to migrate from farms that I have detailed above were realities that my father had to contend with. He struggled to keep his family safe and cared for upon being evicted from the land by settlers.

For my father and his family and for every other worker forced to migrate, there was a loss of basic social services. A key resource lost after the forced migrations was farm accommodation. While the quality of housing varied from farm to farm, workers were at least guaranteed accommodation for as long as they worked at a particular farm. With the takeover of farms, accommodation at farms became insecure. Attempts by farm workers to keep their homes sometimes resulted in disputes with the settlers.

It is reported in the Standard Newspaper of 15 December 2002 that war veterans allocated themselves farm and compound houses upon taking over farms and replaced doors and padlocks with their own. This resulted in the eviction of those that used to occupy these houses. Most farm workers lived with their families, the total number of those affected by the evictions was considerable as a result. I will not here go into the figures again as I have already discussed them.

I will add however that large groups were seen in areas such as Hwedza, Mazowe, Chinhoyi, and Esigodini. Some of the workers trekked to informal settlements in Macheke, Concession, Chihwiti, Churu farm near Harare and Gambuli (my mother still stays near Gambuli to this day, though no longer in an informal settlement).

Other settlements were reported to have sprouted in areas such as near Rusape in Manicaland, Mhangura in Mashonaland West, Nyamandlovu in Matabeleland North and near Esigodini in Matabeleland South. The population in these areas swelled during the remainder of 2002 (Standard, 15 December 2002). Housing was not the only resource lost during the FTLRRP.

Another important infrastructure that made farm workers eventually migrate was shortage of a regular supply of clean water. Some farms no longer had access to clean water due to vandalism, leading to those remaining on the farms having to drink water from contaminated sources. On the farm where we lived, our boreholes broke down, there was no one any longer to repair or maintain. Water supply was immediately cut, we had to carry containers of drinking water for over 4 km. That is where the closest source of clean drinking water could be found. In terms of laundry, we had to carry our clothes to the farm dam, wash them, waited for them to dry while taking a bath, then travel back home.

While almost everyone living in the farm compounds was eventually forced to leave, the expulsion did not happen all at once. People left in stages and some were eventually able to return such was the case of my family. Those that were forced to leave the farms and to live in shanty towns that had no access to clean water. People in these squatter camps had to make use of shallow wells. While dealing with the problem, these also paused a health threat of their own. This is because poor sanitation and lack of proper toilets exposed these wells to the risk of contamination. The history of cholera in Zimbabwe shows that people living in such areas were especially at risk (Sachikonye 2012 p. 65).

Two other very key facilities that were affected by the Land Reform program were schooling and health care. I acknowledge that these had already been in short supply on the farms. For example, there was no school at the farm where I grew up. I had to walk for several kilometers to a primary school several farms away from our farm. However, the little there was made life a little bearable for farm workers and their families. As farms that ran schools were affected by the Land Reform and the farm owners evicted, the schools closed as teachers also left after not being paid.

I did my primary school at a school run by a white commercial farmer Mr Jones for children on his and from neighboring farms. While some of the locals did not like him because of his colonial past, I appreciated him. It was through him that a school could be provided within a few kilometers of our farm. Apart from providing us with education, he also gave all students a glass of milk per week, porridge every day and a bean meal once a week to augment our diet. By the standards of the time, this was a good life for an ordinary farm student. Mr Jones however was chased from his farm during the FTLRRP.

He had to leave in a hurry, I hear that he was able to move/sell his cows before being chased, I did see them being loaded in trucks, I do not know where. Aside from this however, he left a well-equipped farm behind and some war veterans took over. While they did not close the school, they chased many teachers that were believed to be supporting Mr Jones. And for myself and fellow students, that was the last time we were to see a glass of milk, porridge or beans. Circumstances changed for the negative.

This fragile service which was serving many in the farm worker community collapsed. The primary school to which I went did not collapse, but we lost the milk, beans and porridge that Mr Jones, the farm owner, donated for our feeding during break and lunch times. When Mr Johns was chased off the farm, the government did maintain the school, but the rations we used to get did not remain.

A survey carried out by Sachikonye (2003 p.50) revealed that in areas like Manicaland some children were not attending school due hunger or inability to pay fees. For those who managed to attend, there was a shortage of books and sometimes of teachers. In Mashonaland West, one school was closed owing to the Land Reform and some children especially girls, dropped out even in areas where schools were still open. Under the constraining circumstances of the time, some parents did not see it fit to use the little resources they had to send the girl child to school. The feeling among many was that girls would just get married.

With the closure of several schools, the remaining schools were either over crowded or located a long distance away from some potential learners. One secondary school was reported by Sachikonye (2003 p.50) to be 60km away, and pupils had to live in shacks in order to be close to school.

The school system in commercial farms generally suffered under considerable stress in the wake of the FTLRRP. This situation was even more complex for those children who were part of the masses that were forced to migrate (Sachikonye 2003 p.50).

As I have already highlighted, the areas that migrants moved to were not serviced. There were no roads, service centers, clinics, water points, irrigation networks, let alone schools. There was therefore no school to talk about. Children just stayed at home and struggled together with their parents. Even if there may have been a school nearby, these forced migrants had no income, hence no capacity to pay even the cheapest of tuition fees.

Just like schools, health care facilities were in limited supply, even before the Land Reform exercise. There had however been very significant progress in matters of health due to the services offered by the Farm Health Worker Scheme. Sachikonye (2003 p.51) reports that his survey showed that about 58 percent of farm workers had access to some farm health worker. In Mashonaland West, he reported that 88 percent of farms, and in Matabeleland North 33 percent of farms had workers offering such a service. The roles of such workers included dispensing drugs for minor ailments and educating farm communities on health and hygiene matters.

Following the Land Reform, it is some of these workers that were displaced. They struggled in the same way as those they had previously assisted. The few clinics that had operated on farms either closed completely or ran out of provisions to take care of farm health needs. These had been a needful resource. They had supported farm workers by treating headaches, fevers, injuries during work hours and so on. They were also key centers for distribution of various kinds of contraception to hedge against unwanted pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases (Sachikonye 2003 p.52).

At the farm where I grew up, the local farm clinic helped a lot in immunizing babies against measles, diphtheria, as well as providing baby weighing services and BCG injections. The effect of the closure of such facilities was felt not just by the few that remained on the farms but by also those that were forced to move. Those that moved went to places where these services where completely unavailable.

For these migrant farm workers that were forced to migrate but had nowhere to go, the Land Reform exercise left them in a condition of abject poverty. I describe their situation as that of poverty because their situation fits in the description of poverty as shown in a study done by Rugwiji (2017 p. 20). To justify my conclusion that they were left in poverty, I will turn now and share views on poverty as expressed in the work done by Rugwiji. I find his work very instructive on this subject matter.

Quoting the World Bank (2001 p.1), Rugwiji (2017 p. 20) defines poverty as a pronounced deprivation of well-wellbeing related to a lack of material income or consumption, low levels of education and vulnerability, exposure to risk, no opportunity to be heard and powerlessness. An alternative definition of poverty is given by Ukpong (1993 p.31), who puts it across as a condition where victims are alienated from access to resources that would enable them to live a fully human life in a society.

I view these submissions as correct because William D, Sunderlin et al. (2003 p. 61-73; 2004 p. 1) then define poverty reduction as successful lessening of deprivation of well-being. As I shall prove, this fits well in the descriptions of the lives the farm workers had to endure after being evicted from farms. They were excluded from land and other basics that ensure a livable socio-economic situation.

As Mzikayise Binza (2007 p.4) puts it, poverty and exclusion are multidimensional phenomenon, leading an induvial to be chronically hungry, perennially needy and pathetic, having very little to no access to economic, educational, political and social resources according to Susan Parnell et al (2002 p.56; Patel et all 2002 p. 31,33). This would be a fitting description of the situation of farm workers after the Land Reform Exercise in Zimbabwe.

As Patel at al (2002 p.33) laments, poverty and exclusion are associated with the pain that comes with too little or no food for some days, lack of shelter and jobs, emotional pain stemming from daily humiliations of dependency, and lack of power. This description fits well the situation of farm workers. When they were forced off farms, as I have already shared, they carried no food with them, even if they may have, they did not have sufficient reserves to carry them for long periods without farm work and other services associated with the same. They were shelterless and had to be by the road sides for weeks after being forced off the farm compounds to the edges of the farms.

Poverty is linked to many causes. Rugwiji (2017 p. 21) identifies a number of factors but I will limit myself to the following.

1. Geography

He argues that the geography of a country determines how efficiently that country can respond to bilateral and international business transactions. He draws an example of Zimbabwe. I will explore this example because I believe it will be very important for the point I will be making later on. He suggests that Zimbabwe's location can affect its productivity. Zimbabwe has no coastline. It is land locked. Thus has no direct access to a sea point, harbour or dock. For that reason, it can be said to be isolated from world markets. The downside in this is that it generally has to foot a higher cost in international transactions compared to other countries such as South Africa or Mozambique.

Apart from the direct cost of an imported commodity, Zimbabwe also has to bear the cost of transporting that product across at least one international boundary. Thus, the total cost of shipping anything into Zimbabwe will have a direct impact on the economic lives of the generality of its population. Now in the case of Zimbabwe, part of this population includes farm workers. I would like to argue that their lives on the farms were already low earning lives. Having lost their jobs and coupled with the challenges associated with the location of Zimbabwe, the cost of many goods was beyond them.

This also comes from the background that from the year 2000, many companies were closing in Zimbabwe, thus forcing an over reliance on imports. These would be very expensive by the time they would reach the final consumer, in this case, the former farm worker.

2. Less Tropical Rains and Draught

Jeffery Sachs and Andrew Warner (1996 p.339) were recorded by Rugwiji (2017 p.23) to have maintained that Sub-Saharan Africa has a high portion of its population living in tropical and sub-tropical climates. They suggest that a casual observation suggests that countries located in the tropics or sub-tropics tend to grow slowly as compared to those in the more temperate climates. They claimed further that in Africa, countries in this climatic space tend to have soils that are more fragile, rain that is less reliable, are more prone to veterinary diseases and all these impede agricultural growth within these regions.

Zimbabwe, being one of such countries, has an unpredictable rainfall pattern. Its agriculture is affected each time there is insufficient rainfall. The case is even worse in areas where commercial farms were not located because the soils were also naturally poor. The farm workers were moved off productive lands and found themselves in soils that were poor, while at the same time they had no resources to supplement soil fertility.

The 2001-2 farming season also did not receive sufficient rainfall. This resulted in a crippling draught being experienced in the country. If the farm workers had remained at the farms, they would have benefited from rations at the farms or other support from their former employers. However, they found themselves in unproductive soils and also at a time when there was no rain. As a result of the circumstances of their leaving the farms, they did not have sufficient reserves to carry them through this difficult period of drought. Thus, they found themselves in poverty.

3. Exclusion

The systematic characterization of a fellow citizen as White, Black, Shona, Ndebele, War Veteran etc.., tends to tends to exclude certain designated groups from certain programs running within the country (Rugwiji 2017 p.23). This is exactly what happened to farm workers during the Land Reform exercise. They were excluded because they did not fit into preferential designated categories, much in the same way as the ‘people of the land’ in Ezra-Nehemiah were excluded because they did not fit certain criteria.

Exclusion in the case under study took the form of some groups being labelled non-citizens (for example migrant workers and their children) and they were deemed unqualified for consideration in land allocations. Some were branded supporters of the newly formed MDC, thus were disqualified from having a share in land allocations among other criteria.

This exclusion was not only found in the area of land for example, as Kriger (2003 p.208) puts it, for guerrilla war veterans and the ruling party worked together closely to gain and retain power and privilege in many strategic positions of the country. The Land Question became one among many examples in or during which exclusion played out. Farm workers were left out of an important resource allocation because they did not fit in the definition of citizenship and patriotism that had been made by the political elite. As a result of such exclusion, the former farm workers, especially migrant workers and their children, found themselves forced off farms and forced to migrate and to wallow in extreme poverty.

I conclude this section by highlighting that statistics show that the percentage of migrant farm workers had significantly declined by the year 2000. These numbers had declined from an estimate of 54 percent in the 1960s to around 26 percent by the year 2000.This was mostly because those that could travel back to their countries had done so as conditions began to change in Zimbabwe.

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare confirmed in their surveys conducted in 1998 and in 2001 that the number of migrant workers had reduced. Mostly because some had died, others had migrated back and most of the people being labeled as migrant workers at the time of the FTLRRP were but only descendants of migrant workers (Sachikonye 2003 p. 57).

By the time of the Land Reform in the year 2000, people of Mozambican origin were 12 percent, Malawian descent 11 percent and Zambian descent about 5 percent of the national farm workforce (Sachikonye 2003 p. 57). Despite this decline however, the effect of the forced migration was heavily felt among the remaining farm workers of foreign origin.

Conclusion

The main focus of this chapter was on the effects of the FTLRRP on the farm worker community. These effects are discussed in this chapter in three categories. These were: the effects of the FTLRRP on the farm workers in the area of land allocation, the economy, as well as migration complications that came about as a result of forced evictions from farm land.

Before getting into the details of these effects, the chapter provided a general overview of the background of the Land Question in Zimbabwe. As the reader would have encountered in this chapter; During the colonial era, the white settler community confined the native black community to unproductive communal areas. These areas were also known as Reserves or Tribal Trust Lands. This left most of the productive portions of the country in the hands of the settler community.

It is in the areas that the settler community resided that Large Scale Commercial farms developed. Production in these areas was highly commercial and large scale and for that reason large numbers of labour were required. The target areas to provide such labour were the Tribal Trust Lands where the native community were confined. The native community was however reluctant in joining the commercial farming areas because the conditions were not very appealing to them.

Their reluctance led for recruitment of labour from surrounding countries. The greatest contributors in this regard were Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi. The conditions at that time led to the coming of these foreign / migrant workers in large numbers. This created a significant community of foreign farm workers in Zimbabwe by the time of the FTLRRP which ran officially from the years 2000-2002.

As the chapter has revealed, the natives residing in communal areas would later on start joining the commercial farm labour community. Over time, this resulted in a blend of locals and foreigners within the farm worker community. This blend created fertile ground for intermarriages resulting in the creation of a third kind of individuals that is, those who had at least one parent being foreign. I am one of these. This was the situation in the farm worker space by the time of the FTLRRP in Zimbabwe.

The chapter has revealed that the FTLRRP was the most volatile of all land reform exercises attempted in the past by the government of Zimbabwe. This exercise as shown in the chapter was carried out by government sponsored groups which included war veterans and other individual who were members of the ruling ZANU PF. This process resulted in most white operated farms being taken over by government sponsored groups and the farmers being evicted. As I highlighted earlier, these land take overs had effects on the farm workers.

First in the area of land allocation, the farm worker community was not considered. Statistics in this chapter show that most of them were evicted from the farm compounds where they stayed. Those among them that had communal homes to fall back on, went back to such homes.

The majority among them did not have. These were forced to retire to existent shanty towns or to create new ones. In these squatter camps, as has been shown in the chapter, conditions were deplorable. There was a general lack of schools, health care facilities, road infrastructure, clean water and general sanitation. Some of these provisions had been available at the farms. Thus, as shown in this chapter, farm workers lost land and this loss came with other attendant losses.

Apart from the loss of land, farm workers also lost an economy that had sustained them for all their farm lives. This economy included their month on moth income, the rations they got from the farmers, the income they got from market gardening and their severance packages among others. All these had been very instrumental in sustaining life for those that were working on farms. This loss was particularly bad because it resulted in a complete change of livelihoods. I personally felt the pain of this economic loss because as highlighted in the chapter, I am a son to a farm worker of foreign origin.

While these land take overs were carried out in the post colony, the brutality and carelessness with which it was carried shared resonances with how land had been taken over during the colonial times. As the reader would have noticed in reading this chapter, there was very little difference between the way things were done in the colonial era and the way the government sponsored groups implemented the FTLRRP. At the end of it all, key land-based resources remained in the hands of a few elites, mirroring the situation that obtained during the colonial period.

The challenges of the FTLRRP on the farm workers however did not end with this loss of an economy that I have just highlighted. The chapter also talks about forced evictions from farms resulting in involuntary migrations. As the reader would have noticed, those taking over the farms associated the farm workers with their white masters.

They felt no need of leaving many of these farm workers resident on farms, particularly those like my father that were of foreign origins. Most farm workers therefore were forced to migrate to the edges of the farms and to find alternatives from there.

As I have highlighted in the chapter, many among them did not have a fallback plan in the communal areas. Many also of the foreign community had been away from their countries for so long that they had lost contact with their former lands. Many of them therefore were left desperate and stranded. Some were forced to migrate during the rainy season and suffered the effects of the weather.

Some among those that were forced to migrate were old, others were sick and a good number were too young. Among the young, some of them were orphans living alone on the farms. The condition of their leaving resulted in them losing a good number of their priced belongings. Conditions of their migration were bad, such that many of them got depressed and suffered many mental health related challenges.

How the FTLRRP played out showed in this chapter that there had not been thorough planning for mitigation against the probable effects of this exercise. The chapter closes by making suggestions of a model that could have been considered by those who carried out the exercise. Such suggested models would have reduced the negative effects of this exercise. The model for example, suggests planned movement and development of infrastructure before movement of people. The result being a safe and sustained movement of individuals which reduces loss and fosters integration of those being made to move into their new community.

Chapter 5: The Dynamic Resemblance Between the Peoples of the Lands

5.0 Introduction

The Chapter makes up the third pole of this study. The function of the third pole is to mediate between the first and the second poles presented earlier on in this study. According to Knut Holter, there are ways in which the biblical text and the African context illuminate each other (Holter 2002:88). The advantage of this illumination is that it brings about an actualization of the theological meaning of the biblical text in today's African context. Justin Ukpong says this actualization of the theological text into the current 'African' life, 'engenders a commitment to societal transformation' (Ukpong 2000a p.24).

Ultimately, the study I am carrying out must contribute to the transformation of the African continent. For that reason, I appeal to the comparison of the biblical context to the African context referred to above. The portion of the African context I chose is the FTLRRP carried out in Zimbabwe as described in the second pole of this study. Just making a comparative study of the two however is not complete on its own. As Gerald West would say, comparison on its own is not complete without a third dimension that connects or entangles the text and the context (West 2018 p.248).

This third dimension is a form of dialogical appropriation that has a theological and praxiological effect, according to West in the same chapter (p.248). In what follows I attempt to compare the narrative of the 'people of the land' in Ezra Nehemiah (biblical text) to the FTLRRP (African context) that I have analyzed in the chapters above. I will seek to dialogue with these two texts using the theoretical frame of African Post Colonial Biblical interpretation, and as the reader will encounter, I will also make use of autobiographical criticism as part of the comparative analysis will speak to my family's personal experiences.

Here the reader will also encounter the African post-colonial theory. As I mentioned earlier, the post-colonial theory in general refers to a critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries, among other things. It also critically examines the political, cultural, aesthetic, economic, linguistic, historical, and social impacts of (generally European) colonial rule, according to Elam (2019 p.1-3). African Post Colonial Biblical interpretation is more specific to Africa as Dube 2000 would put it, it carries out a deconstructive re-reading of the both the biblical text and the African context for decolonization (p. 16-21).

As the reader will discover in this chapter, the story of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah has many similarities to the story of farm workers of the year 2000-2002 Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe. Their stories, although occurring at completely different epochs of time and in lands that are thousands of miles away from each other and involving completely different people, play out in many similar ways. For example, the two groups have an analogous composition. In the biblical text the group is composed of individuals that did not go to exile when others did. In the case of Zimbabwe, the group is made up of those indigenous and foreign black people that were working on white run commercial farms.

Apart from those indigenous Jews that did not go into exile, the 'people of the land' in the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative also includes some foreigners that drifted in from different directions. A good number came from the north, who drifted southwards to Judah and settled there for a long period of time. Some of them intermarried with the Judahites that had not gone into exile. As a result, they suffered exclusion at the return of the exiles.

This group of people can be compared to those Zimbabwean farm workers who had migrated from other Southern African countries to work on Zimbabwean farms, who also, like the indigenous farm workers, suffered exclusion. A typical case shared in this study is that of my father, who migrated from Mozambique and ended up starting a family within Zimbabwe.

In both the biblical and the social contextual texts of this study, the Land Question is central. As the 'people of the Land in Ezra-Nehemiah suffer exclusion from their land, so did the farm workers in Zimbabwe during the Land Reform Programme. It is evident that loss of an economy on the part of the 'people of the land' led to instability in both Israel and Zimbabwe. The land reoccupations in both narratives also trigger a migration concern. The migrant component of the 'people of the land' in both cases is left stranded as there was no place for them in the land reallocations.

In this chapter, the third pole of this study, I will explore these resonances above in greater detail. Not only will I expand on the resonances I have summarized above but I will also mention and explain other resonances between these two situations that I have not mentioned in this introductory section. I will review the three previous chapters and document here the resonances that come out of those chapters; in the process I will dialogue with these resonances using the theoretical tool of African post-colonial biblical interpretation.

5.1 The People of the Land: A dynamic Resemblance

An interrogation of the dynamic resemblance between the 'people of land' in Ezra-Nehemiah and the 'people of the land' (farm workers) during the 2000-2002 FTLRRP in Zimbabwe avails much. It is interesting that, both the biblical text of this study and its social text play out in ways that give evidence of post colonialism. Both texts exude post-colonial attributes.

Commenting on African Post-colonial Biblical interpretation Musa Dube said, sometimes, the biblical text, its readers, and its institutions are instruments of imperialism (Dube 2000 p. 6). It is evident in this study that the elite in Judea were once victims of colonialism by the Babylonians (Finkelstein and Silberman 2000, p.305-307). Scholarship shares the idea that their trip to exile was by force.

Faust shares an important view here. To avoid further revolt, Faust (2011 p.97) says, the Babylonians meted an untold demonstration of power, including unusual cruelty consciously directed not only to those that were forced to migrate but also upon those that heard from a distance just to put them and those that had somehow survived into panic. This terrorism inflicted serious psychological injury especially on those that were being forcibly made to migrate (victims of colonialism).

Such, if we go by the canonical narrative, was the fate of the Judean elite at the hands of the Babylonians. Apart from those forced to migrate, according to the canonical narrative, thousands must have died in battle, or of starvation and disease (Lam. 2vs.11;19-21;4 vs.9). A large number must have also been executed (2Kgs 25vs.18-27), while others (Jer.42) fled for their lives. The population of Judah, which exceeded two hundred and fifty thousand in the 8th century (refer to chapter 2 for population estimates), was vastly affected. All these are attributes of the colonial era, if we are to read the same from the lenses of how colonialism played out in Africa.

The point I seek to make here is that those that went into exile were victims of colonialism. However, as this study would show, at their return, they meted almost the same cruelty on the 'people of the land' that they had suffered at the hands of the Babylonians. As is typical of post-colonies, victims on one day become perpetrators on another. Post-exilic Judah became a typical post-colony, with the 'people of the land' suffering exclusion at the hands of survivors of colonialism.

The same is observable on the Zimbabwean text of this study. The years 2000-2002 in Zimbabwe are a typical African post-colonial scene. The government sponsored groups that invaded land were seeking redress of colonial injustices, Ezra Chitando (2005 p.186). As one would have observed in the introductory portion of the second pole of this study, some of these people that invaded farms in Zimbabwe had themselves been disposed of land when colonialism came to Zimbabwe. They were victims of colonialism, unfortunately they became victims turned perpetrators as their actions led to the suffering of fellow African communities.

During the colonial era, land dispossession was symbolic of colonial subjugation. Colonialists mainly targeted occupation of fertile large tracks of land as a starting point for further exploration. Independence for Zimbabwe and most African countries therefore was expected to lead to the recovery of this prized resource. From such a background, and, as would be expected, the structure of land ownership and use in Zimbabwe was clearly inequitable at independence and needed redress (Sachikonye 2003 p. 20).

However, as those that had lost land during colonial times sought to address this disequilibrium. They created a disequilibrium of their own by themselves being colonizers of their African brothers. In this case also as one would have observed on the biblical text of this study as well, the victim became the perpetrator.

Bakare's views shared in the second pole of this study paint a clearer picture here. He says the new black ruling class also amassed large tracks of land. Quite contrary to the socialist principles they purported to uphold, they did not distribute much of the land that government took back (Bakare 1993 p.67). The acquisitive tendencies of the leading black elite were 'appalling', says Tshuma (1997 p. 66). Palmer (1990 p. 170) published shocking statistics of graft associated with land for agricultural purposes. Thus, as in the colonial era, the post-colonial era created a situation of the haves and have nots.

As one follows this study closer, the similarities become deeper and more pronounced. In the Ezra-Nehemiah portion of this study, we are introduced to the government of Persia under various rulers. These include Cyrus and Artaxerxes Cyrus (Ezr1vs.1-11). This government is documented to have not only issued an edict to reconstruct Jerusalem, but to also support this initiative by authorizing various Jewish leaders to return to Jerusalem together with giving them financial aid and other forms of support. With empowerment from this government, the returning Jews came to Jerusalem and to take over land.

The Persian authorities here compare significantly to the post-colonial government of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. In the second pole of this study, we were introduced to the same also empowering a group of individuals (mostly war veterans and also others) to return and take over commercial farm land previously (during the colonial era) taken by white farmers. Empowered by political, financial and other forms of support, this group of people visits commercial farms to take them over.

In these two cases, as this third pole of the study would establish, the returning Jews and the government sponsored groups in Zimbabwe also share resemblances of their own. They both are empowered by powerful governments. They both have one mandate; to take over land. As they execute their mandates however, they both encounter a similar challenge; the land is not empty (typical of post colonies).

Confronting the returning Jews are the 'people of the land' (Jews and other people groups) and again confronting the Zimbabwean government sponsored group are the 'people of the land' (Farm workers). This again is a typical post-colonial scene, where though liberated, the influence of the former colonizers is still strong and felt. While in Zimbabwe the FTLRRP was not sponsored by their former colonizers, the actions of those that carried it out were supposedly as a rebellion to the actions of the former colonizer.

It is an enlightening exercise to also compare the two 'people(s) of the land(s)'. During the exile, as has been exposed in the first and second poles of this study, there were people resident in Judah who did not go to exile (Lipschits 2005 p. 134). This group of people comprised of those of Judahite origin that were not taken to exile for the reasons already explained, as well as foreigners that had either survived the exile or that had drifted from areas north and south (and other areas) of the land of Judea (Clines 1984 p.119).

It is important to note from the previous chapters of this study, that the indigenous among these 'people of the land' believed that land was an in alienable right (1Kgs 21, cf. 2Kgs 9 vs 26). They identified with their land as the land of the ancestors (Vengeyi 2014 p.59).

The 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah are comparable to the 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe during the Land Reform exercise currently under study. The 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe also comprised of natives (mostly drawn from communal areas). Although in this case they identify as farm workers, they believed that this land was owned by their ancestors, which ownership naturally should have been passed down to them (Ecumenical Support Services 2000 p. 24). Despite eventually losing this land to colonialism, they still viewed it as their own land.

The Ezra-Nehemiah case also presents those 'people of the land' that were of foreign origin as previously stated. A similar scenario was observed among those on the Zimbabwean case. Apart from those that were indigenous, several had migrated into the country from different directions. They came from Mozambique (like Arajo Foromoz Chambalama, my father), Zambia and Malawi, (Sachikonye 2012 p59). While these were of foreign origin, a deeper study of their history could reveal that it was also possible not only for those in Zimbabwe but also for those in Judah to claim ancestral heritage of the same land.

The Samaritans for example used to be members of a united monarchy together with those that were resident in Judah, the Edomites are descendants of Jacob's brother Esau, and so on. Similarly, some Mozambicans are descendants of the Rozvi and Mutapa states that used to rule parts of Zimbabwe. African Post-colonial Studies, like I have highlighted earlier, aims to expose the colonial project in all its forms and then to decolonize those under colonialism (Mbuvi 2017 p. 164), in this case of this study, throwing fellow Africans off the land was typical colonial behavior.

An observation by Dube (2000 p. 23) earlier on suggested that, African post-colonial criticism is a reading of the Bible in which imperialist strategies are confronted, exposed, and arrested by post-colonial subjects. In the case of the above, the colonial thinking of diving people by national boundaries is observed isolating some from access to resources in Zimbabwe because they were considered 'foreign.' An African post-colonial biblical reading of the case of Judah also exposes the same concept as some are viewed as indigenous and other Judahites are isolated.

Over time, in both the scenario of Judah and that of Zimbabwe, there were intermarriages. In the case of Judah, the 'people of the land' married and intermarried. Some indigenous Jews married those that had migrated into Judea. Children of mixed parentage were born. These children, and their foreign parents, were not considered fully 'Judahite'. At the return of the exiles, they were required to migrate from the land. In the Zimbabwean case, many children were born of such marriages. I am one of them, the second pole of this study advised that my father was a Mozambican and my mother was a Zimbabwean. During the Land Reform in Zimbabwe, anyone of foreign origin, including their children, were not considered in land allocations. My father and other foreign farm workers and their families were not given an allocation of land.

To both groups, the land was important for agriculture (Government of Zimbabwe 2000 p.2); Lipschits (2015 p.237); Jeremiah 29 vs.5), accommodation and symbolic reasons. To the 'people of the land' in Judea, this land is presented as the space on which their ancestors had been buried. A similar thought is discernible in the lives of people of Hebrew origins. The Hebrew Bible presents the Hebrew people as a people group that valued the places where their loved ones were buried (Gen. 25:8; Gen. 25:17; Gen. 35:29; Gen. 49:33).

In the Zimbabwean context, farms often had a piece of land set aside as a grave yard. My own sister, the first born in my family, was buried at the farm where my father worked on arriving from Mozambique. As Africans at the farms, we generally believed in a strong connection between the living and dead loved ones. As a result of the fact that my sister was buried there, staying on the farm was very important for us. Thus, on both sides, being expelled from land was more than just being asked to leave a piece of ground. It also meant a separation from this very important tie with one's past life.

As African philosophers, Valentine Yves Mudimbe and Susan Kilonzo (2012 p. 42), suggested that, the process of Africanization is a post-colonial phenomenon concerned with adapting modalities of belief and rethinking of rituals. According to them, these beliefs and rituals faced an interruption during colonial times. I surmise here that this interruption did not end during colonial times. It is a post- colonial reality too, by being moved from land, as farm workers we were separated from important memories from our past lives. A post – colonial reading of the biblical portion (first pole) of this study also exposes the same, the 'people of the land' were separated from a land that was important to them for symbolic reasons.

Land is a very serious factor in African post-colonial biblical interpretation. One of the ways through which one could own land in Judah was through participation in the conquests (Joshua 13-19). After the conquest, as narrated in the Hebrew Bible, land was divided by lot among the tribes. Each tribe then divided the land further to clans and families. For this reason, land became an inalienable ancestral property kept within the blood line for generations.

The history of pre – colonial Zimbabwe depicts land as having been owned by kings and chiefs. These then divided land to their subjects according to tribes and families. It is not surprising in Zimbabwean communal areas today for one to find a whole village with the same surname.

Before the colonial era in Zimbabwe, the above was the land ownership understanding even in areas that later would be turned into commercial farms. That is the reason why those that invaded land in Zimbabwe had the mantra that *Zimbabwe ndeye ropa Remadzibaba* (Zimbabwe belongs to the blood of the ancestors). Thus, some of the people groups that were forced off land in post-colonial Zimbabwe and in Judah had laid claim to the same land as ancestral land (Purvis 2002 p.154; Magaramombe and Chambati 2008 p. 232).

A close analysis of the land occupied by the returnees in Judah shows that they occupied mostly the highly productive portions of Judah. A key example being those areas in and around Benjamin as well as those areas associated with the family of Judah (areas such as the Rephaim Valley, Ramat Rahel, Mizpah etc.). It is also notable that those that took over farm land in Zimbabwe did not target vacant land, but rather the highly productive portions of the country in which large scale commercial farms were located, that is, in the highly productive agro-ecological zones.

As I have just highlighted, both areas taken over were not vacant. This means those that took over land, in both the case of Judah and that of Zimbabwe, did so through a displacement of those groups that were already resided there. This sounds almost like replaying the conquest narrative of the Hebrew Bible. How was this possible? One may ask.

It is key to realize that while the incoming groups were numerically fewer in both cases compared to those that were already resident on the farms, they were backed by powerful governments. The Persian government on the part of Judah (first pole of the study) and the government of Zimbabwe on the part of the social context (second pole) of the study. Thus, in both cases, the incoming groups had power beyond their number.

In the case of Judah, apart from backing from the Persian government, the returning Jews were largely Deuteronomists in terms of their ideology, Ben Zvi (p.163-68). This predisposed them to interpret the law of Moses in ways that allowed them additional power over those that did not go onto exile. Thus, despite their relatively lower number, it was not difficult for them to control the land of Judah.

On the other hand, those that took over land in Zimbabwe were largely ZANU PF. The government of Zimbabwe backed their actions by amending the constitution such that the law could be interpreted in ways that gave them power over those that were on the land (Gundani 2003 p.480). This study referred to several constitutional amendments that were made to facilitate the reoccupations of land by government sponsored groups (Ruswa Mupunga, Jekemu 2002 p. 49). For this reason, despite their relatively lower numbers, it was not difficult for them to take over and control commercial farming land in Zimbabwe in the year 2000.

A comparison of the two groups can also be made on the area of the economy. This study revealed that the 'people of the land' in Judah lost an economy they had had developed over many years to those groups that were returning from exile (Lipschits 2015 p.240). The same, as revealed in this study, was the experience with the 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe (Sachikonye 2003 p. 43).

It is notable that in both cases, the land that was taken over was largely agricultural land. While in Judah the popular crops were such crops as grapes, olives, wheat, barley among others (Walsh 2000:158-62), in the Zimbabwean context farming was mostly of maize, wheat, tobacco and so on. It is evident that the crops farmed in the two different contexts were very different; but the fact still remains that in both cases the major commercial activity was agriculture. This is a point of resemblance between the two groups. The points of similitude however do not end here. They can be found in other areas of the study too.

Those in Judah that were returning from exile took over the administration of the highly productive zones, including centers of commerce (Altmann 2015 p.104), (Neh. 13 vs.21 cf. Neh. 13 vs.15-16). This led farm workers and slaves on estates to lose not just the general farm economy but also their small economies that subsisted on the farms.

In Zimbabwe one also meets farm workers losing not just the general farm economy which included their salaries as well as their severance packages (Sachikonye 2003 p.47) but also small economies that depended on the farms, such as their market gardens, livestock, fishing activities and others that I have already enumerated. The 'people of the land' on both groups therefore suffered prejudice at the hands of incoming groups.

According to Mbuvi, one of the key contributions of the African Post-colonial Biblical interpretation is providing meaningful responses to concerns that are pertinent to African communities, (2017 p.149). The effects of the FTLRRP I have just highlighted above were a typical post-colonial concern in Zimbabwe. This study carried out such a reading of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah to give voice to such situations that are not clearly given audience in the biblical narrative. Giving voice to such situations, exposed their presence and may help addressing similar situations in Zimbabwe. The post-colonial theory therefore is a helpful tool in both texts of this study.

The returning elite in Judah also forced their religious, ritual, social and national views on the residence of the province leading to some people, especially those that were in and around Benjamin to migrate beyond the administrative limits of the province. This study reveals that they were forced to settle on the boarder. In the process, losing an economy they had built and sustained over a period of time. As I noted earlier in the study, many people in this area had been allocated land as an economic base and source of sustenance by Gedaliah. Being pushed from their land led to the loss of investments and markets.

Comparable is the case in the Zimbabwean context. As white commercial farmers were forced off, many of their farm workers had to migrate beyond the administrative limits of those that were taking over the farms. In the process, they also lost an economy that they had sustained over a long period of time. Part of the loss included the small portions of land allocated to them by their white employers, as revealed earlier on in the second pole of this study. Just as Gedaliah had allocated land to the people of Judah, the commercial farmers had also allocated small pieces of land to their farm workers. Being forced to leave those pieces of land led to significant losses in terms of markets and investments.

As observed in the study, another area that had concurrence between the 'people of the land' in Judah and those in Zimbabwe was the effect of migration on both groups (Sachikonye 2012 p. 65). As I have defined earlier, voluntary migration refers to a situation when human groups make a collective decision to move. I wish to highlight here that migrations off the land on both the biblical context and the social context of the study were involuntary. The cost of this migration was heavy on both sides.

In the case of Judah in the first pole of the study; for those that believed in a strong connection with the burial places of their ancestors, this forced migration broke a significant connection between the past and the present. I could say the same also of the case of Zimbabwean farm workers in the second pole of the study. Movement from the farms created a separation between them and their dead that were buried on the farms. It was the tradition of most farms to designate a portion of the farm as a burial site. Leaving the farms meant also leaving the graves behind. At the farm where my father raised us, there was a designated burial place. It is at this place that my eldest sister was buried.

Forced migrations from the land also had other effects on the 'people of the land' (Tuton 2006 p.14-19; Rovira 2014 p.25). It resulted in significant stress on the part of the 'people of the land' in Judah as several writers have aptly put across in the first pole of this study. This stress was exacerbated by the several impoverishment risks that attended their path. These risks included, landlessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common services, social disarticulation and education loss, among a host of others.

In Zimbabwe many of the people that were forced to migrate from farms resorted to joining or forming squatter settlements. Here the risk of impoverishment was exceedingly great. Just like their counterparts in the case of Judah, they faced several risks. These included landlessness, crime, poor sanitation, starvation, sickness and many more. At a squatter camp near the farm at which we stayed, it was not uncommon to see human waste almost anywhere. The sanitary conditions were extremely bad.

For those of the 'people of the land' in Judah that were of a foreign origin, the forced migration was particularly difficult. As I have put across earlier, there were some among the 'people of the land' in Judah who had been brought in by Esarhaddon, others had drifted from the south, such as Edomites and Moabites as well as many other different groups of foreign origin. Having resided in Judah for a considerable length of time, many of them had lost connection with their former homelands. Thus, being forced to leave the land left them destitute.

It was equally so in the case of the 'people of the land' in Zimbabwe. Those groups that had migrated from Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi lost connection with their former lands over time. My father was one such individual. He and many like him also had no communal land to fall back on. They had nowhere to take their families after expulsion from the farms. Some had to live by the roadsides for several weeks before finding a squatter camp to reside in. In our case though, we were temporarily commended to leave the farm before being allowed to stay on.

On migrating from the farms of Judea, the migrants could not carry much. They carried the little they could carry by head or cart. Valuable property was left behind, especially what was heavy and could not easily be carried. Times were particularly difficult for the very young, very old and the sick. These people needed help themselves and could not carry much of what they owned. Women with babies went through distressful times. This study has established that some had to pause to breastfeed after having traveled for long distances on foot. This exposed them to disease and distress.

In the second pole, the study established that government sponsored groups were very violent and non-negotiating. Maudeni Zibani (2004p.174) particularly shared very insightful thoughts in this study. He shared that groups of war veterans and others descended on the farms with guns, machetes and other weapons. In some cases, they gave the farm workers a very short time to pack their goods and leave. As has been revealed in the study, the farm workers carried what they could. Some decided to carry the old and the sick instead of their property. Those that were there carried much and the absent had to leave their belongings. Overall, many important belongings were left behind, just as the study has shown in the case of the 'people of the land' in Judah I the first pole of this study.

Even in the Zimbabwean case (the second pole), as in the case of Judah (first pole), pregnant women suffered distress, sickness and injury during this difficult time. Those that were breast feeding had to try and sustain their babies even though they did not have sufficient milk to sustain breast feeding. The study revealed that it was common in cases of forced migrations for such vulnerable individuals to go through depression (Bob et al 2010 p. 231-234; Magaramombe 2002 p.19).

As commented on in the study, one of the reasons why the 'people of the land' in Judeah were forced to move is that they were considered to be foreign. The returning Jews therefore saw no reason to share land with those that were not Jewish. This same case has a direct congruence with what the study shows of Zimbabwe. Government authorities accused farm workers of being foreigners who should not be considered in any way during land allocations. Those that were carrying out the Land Reform felt no obligation towards the foreigners. Thus, many farm workers were forced to leave.

According to the study, the tenth chapter of the book of Ezra documents the expulsion of women and children considered to be foreign. During the confession ceremony conducted by Ezra, according to the study, every family man who was alleged to have married the said foreign women was required to separate not just from the women but also from the children born of such a union. Many complied and sent the women and children away. I note here from the study that many children dropped out of school, lost the security of their fathers and wandered in desperation.

While the study does not speak of a directive for divorce on the part of the 'people of the land' in the second pole (Zimbabwe) it does show that many women and children had to vacate the farm compound houses and wander to lands none of them had planned for. In this case also, the children dropped out of school and were exposed to vagaries such as prostitution, theft and drugs. The potential for them to lead successful lives was vastly diminished.

It has also been shown in the study both on the biblical and the Zimbabwean social context that there was no consideration for compensation on lost land for the 'people of the land'. While in the case of Zimbabwe the government did issue a directive for the farmers to pay severance packages to all their employees, this did not include compensation on lost land. It is also clear from the study that both political leaderships did not want to assume any responsibility for compensation of any sort.

An interesting discovery in the study is that in both contexts of the study some of the people groups that migrated into the lands were products of some political conflict. Those that migrated from the north into Judea were a direct product of Assyrian conquests. An interesting resonance of this case in Zimbabwe is that most of the Mozambicans that came into Zimbabwe were looking for safer ground after prolonged conflict in their own country. As I have shown in the study, my own father was a refugee. He fled to Zimbabwe after his home in Mozambique was bombed. Thus, the two groups on both sides (first pole and second pole) of the study share some similarity in this regard.

Migration is a key post-colonial reality in Africa. It is beyond the scope of my study here to comment in detail about migration trends in Africa, however, I highlight here that in this study the post-colonial theory helped to exposes its effect both on the text of ancient Judah and also on the Zimbabwean text. Its effect in post-colonial Zimbabwe as the reader would have noted was more severe on those that were of foreign origin than on native farm workers. The same can also be said about the case of the 'people of the land' in Judaea after the exile.

The 'people of the land' in both the biblical text and the Zimbabwean case are shown in this study to have appealed for arbitration on their cases. Unfortunately, in both cases the appeals did not yield the desired result. The 'people of the land' in Judea appealed to the Persian Empire. Letters written by Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah to the Persian court did not result in overall victory (Brenman 1993, p.25-26, 31). As in the case of Zimbabwe, one who had the support of the political leadership had power.

In Zimbabwe, the farm workers were not empowered enough to appeal through the courts. GAPWUZ did appeal on their behalf but the court cases did not yield much (International Trade Union Confederation, 3 December 2012). The only significant court appeals made during the Land Reform were not made by farm workers but by the farmers themselves. Those cases that were won by the farmers however just fell by the wayside. There was no one to enforce the judgements as the law enforcement arms of government were reported to be complicit on several occasions.

While the migrations from land were shown in this study to have been instigated and sponsored by the political leadership, the study shows that there was no evidence in both contexts (first pole and second pole) of planning in terms of what would become of the 'people of the land' upon being forced to move. No social security net mechanism was put in place. It is evident from the study that the elders did not budget for what would happen to the people upon being replaced on land. There is no evidence in this study that there was any consideration to minimize risk both on the masses being forced to move and on the areas that were to receive these displaced masses.

5.2 Differences Between the Peoples of the Lands: A snapshot

What the reader has come across in this chapter so far are resemblances between the two texts being compared. I wish however to point out as I wind down this chapter that there are also significant differences between the two scenes compared above. A sample of some of the key differences will suffice.

The story of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah is largely religion driven. The story unfolds within a faith community. Most if not all of the decisions by the leaders of the returning community are a product of religious conviction. They acted on the belief that they were doing what their God would have them do. This is not the case on the Zimbabwean scene. The scene here is political in nature. Decisions are made more from the view of political rather than religious convictions, although ancestors were here and there mentioned as giving instructions to reclaim land. In this the two scenes become different.

It is also discernable from the study that many of the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah were resident land owners who actually had a direct claim on the land on which they lived. They held power, property, and established community roots thus prompting the returning elite to view them as a distinct, competing threat to their sovereignty.

The farm workers in Zimbabwe were mostly marginalized laborers on commercial estates who lacked direct ownership of the land they occupied. These occupied the lowest economic tier. They were dependent employees who owned no land and held no political sway during farm occupations. Thus, on this important regard, these two groups were actually different.

The 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah were defined by their continuous, permanent habitation on the soil of Judah, considering the region as their own ancestral and legal domain. On the other hand, the farm workers in Zimbabwe lived on land owned by others, thus their right to live on the land was directly tied to their employment contracts, no wonder the invading groups considered them more loyal to their white employers than to the government of Zimbabwe.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter forms the third pole of this study. It is a record of an interaction between the biblical text of this study (first pole) and the social text (second or contextual pole) of the same. The reader witnessed in this chapter that there are several similarities between the 'people of the land' of Ezra-Nehemiah and the 'people of the land' of the years 2000-2002 in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The dialogue I carried out in this chapter bases itself on the theoretical frame of African Post Colonial Biblical interpretation.

This third pole exposes the very close similarity between the way the Persian government acts in Ezra-Nehemiah and the way in which the government of Zimbabwe works during the years of the FTLRRP. As shown in the chapter, the Persian government bankrolls the returning Judahite community and empowers them to act as they are recorded to have done. A similar trend is observable on the social text of the study. Here the Zimbabwean government sponsors war veterans and other people groups to take over land previously under the control of largely white commercial farmers.

The chapter also records that when the Judahites returning from exile got to the land of Judeah, they took over control of the land and economy of Judah, they also forced some of the people that had not gone into exile to migrate from the land. This forced migration is recorded to have resulted in several complications on the part of the 'people of the land', in particular those that were of a foreign origin. These particularly suffered because among other travel complications, some of them had lost contact with their former lands and had nowhere to fall back on. Such was in particular, the case of my father Arajo Foromoz Chambalama.

The chapter paints a similar picture of the situation in Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP. During this time in Zimbabwe, government sponsored groups took over land, the general farm economy and forced most of the farm workers to vacate the farms. On this scene, just as in the case of the 'people of the land' in Judea, there were a good number who were of foreign origin. These suffered comparable challenges to those that were of foreign origin in Judaea in the times documented in Ezra-Nhemiah.

Those among these farm workers that were forced to travel faced a lot of challenges, including death, sickness, loss of wealth among other ills. According to the information shared in this chapter, these losses and sufferings compare directly to the challenges faced by the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah.

These challenges that occur on both texts on the 'people of the land' are symptomatic of lack of planning on the part of those that were in leadership in the two scenes. Planning would have mitigated against the loss of land, loss of an economy as well as the complications that were associated with migration. The lack of planning for these challenges plays out in almost similar fashion on both texts of the study.

Chapter 6: Final Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

In the introductory chapter of this study, I asked a set of questions that this study has been attempting to provide answers for. In this chapter I give a general conclusion. This conclusion will provide the reader with an overview of how I have attempted to give satisfactory responses to these questions asked in the general introduction. I admit however that there are some questions that I may not have addressed to the fullest, as well as some gaps in knowledge that may have been created in the process of my responding to the questions in the introductory chapter. These I will recommend for further research. In what follows, the reader will meet a summarized overview of this study.

In this overview, I pay particular attention to the role played by the tripolar theory in providing coherence to the study. I also attempt to show how the post-colonial theory shapes the study from the beginning to the end but especially in the second pole which talks about the situation of farm workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe. I will also do the same with the autobiographical method, which method created the opportunity for me to share my father's as well as my story. The chapter concludes by suggesting areas for further study.

6.1 Summarized Overview of the Study

There is dynamic resemblance between the 'people of the land' in the book of Ezra–Nehemiah and the farm workers in Zimbabwe during the 2000 to 2002 Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (FTLRRP). The first pole of this study shows the reader that the 'people of the land' of Ezra-Nehemiah suffered exclusion from land (Grabbe 2004 p. 134-154), loss of an economy they had built during the years of the exile (586-538 B.C.E.) and faced traumatic migration complications at the hands of the groups returning from exile, Rovira (2014 p.25).

An almost direct image of this situation is mirrored in the second pole of this study. In this second pole, my father, Arajo Foromoz Chambalama, and other farm workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe also experienced exclusion from land at the hands of government sponsored groups that implemented the FTLRRP. This exclusion brought about the loss of an economy that had sustained my family and fellow farm workers families in our day-to-day farm life. We as farm worker families had to vacate the farms to make way for the new occupants. This resulted in serious migration complications as our farm worker communities sought alternative abord.

In the first and second poles of this study this work unpacked and exposed the areas of resemblance between the two scenes I have just described. The process of unpacking and exposing these areas of resemblance could only come out clearly through the use of the tripolar theory, post-colonial theory, a socio-historical reading as well as the autobiographical method. Following the tripolar theory, the study is divided into three parts; The first pole which gives details of the 'people of the land in Judea', followed by the second pole which discusses the case of farm workers in Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP and then concluding with the third pole which mediates between the first and second poles detailing areas of congruence between these two. In this process, the tripolar model brought coherence in the whole study and fostered a connectedness between ideas.

The first pole of this study is divided into two chapters. These chapters are a socio-historical reading of the biblical section of this study. The autobiographical method is also present in these chapters, allowing me to share my personal experiences. the first of these two chapters explored the controversy concerning the people who remained in Israel after the deportees went into Babylonian captivity. The chapter established the people who can be characterized as the 'people of the land' and in the process helped establish the land architecture in Judea during and after the returnees came from exile.

These 'people of the land' were identified as those Jews who did not go into exile, the Samaritans who drifted from the north into Judea, people groups who drifted into Judea from the south such as Arabs and Idumeans, as well as some people groups who were deported and resettled near Judea by various Assyrian Kings including Esarhaddon. These people are mentioned in various portions of Ezra-Nehemiah (cf. Ezr. 2vs.59-63; 4vs.1-3; Neh. 2vs.20;10vs.28-39;13vs.1-9, 15-29). As shown in the first pole of this study, the extent to which these people were present in Judea has for years been a subject of great debate.

The first pole shows that this debate brought with it another argument as to whether there was a total exile which left the land desolate or only a partial exile which took mostly the elite and left a functioning economy. In the process of interrogating these debates, the study was able to prove the existence, origins and extent of the presence of the 'people of the land' in Judea when Jews that went to exile returned.

The idea of people remaining in Judah after the Babylonian conquest of the 6th century B.C.E. has, as the first pole of this study displayed, received a lot of discussion among scholars. For many scholars, the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E., cf. Jeremiah 10vs.29) marked the end of the monarchy in Judah, the end of the Iron age, and the beginning of the of the exilic period. (Faust 2005, p.158). The first pole of this study exposed two major schools of thought that engage with this subject.

The first school of thought, which is supported by scholars such as North (1960 p.269) and Bright (1972, p.343-344) among others, views the 6th century B.C.E. as generally a period of great demographic and cultural decline, and states further that the land of Judah was almost completely desolate during the exile and if there were any people that remained, they were few, sparsely spread and very insignificant.

The second school which strongly criticizes the first, observes that only a small percentage, comprised mostly of nobles and elites, were the ones taken to exile and for most of the population life went on just as it had before 586 B.C.E. (Caroll, 1992, p.79-93; Bastard 2002, p.37-8; Blenkinsop, 2002, p.169-87; Finkelstein and Silberman 2000, p.305-307). These, as was shown in the first pole of the study, base part of their argument on the fact that most of the Judaean population lived in rural settings which were not harmed by war or the exiles that followed 586 B.C.E. The first pole of the study argued that the canonical narrative of the conquest seems to be close to the first view.

It was the view of the first pole that the canonical narrative gives the impression that there are some who remained in the land after Babylonian conquests, but these were however few, poor and not very significant, (cf.2 Kgs 24vs.14; 2 Kgs 25vs.12; Jer. 39vs.vs.3-10). While the Bible and the first view suggested above seem to share resonances, I attempted, in the first pole of this study to give a different perspective as to why the narrative of the Bible comes out this way.

My reading from Ehud Ben Zvi (2010, pp. 155-166) suggests that, the Bible narrative and this first view are not the same at all, although some scholars of this first thought attempt to buttress their propositions using the canonical narrative. Both views are not supported after a closer look. My argument concerning the biblical narrative did not attempt to make it a third view, but sought to prove that it was not very different from the second. This study subscribed to the second school of thought which argues that Judah was not left desolate during the period of the exile.

Still as part of the first pole of this study, this work sought to prove that at the return of those that had gone into exile, the people that had remained in the land were negatively affected. As the second chapter showed, at the return from exile, the 'people of the land' suffered a loss not only of land but also of an economy which they had built over the years of the exile, these two loses led to and compounded the effects of migration complications as some of the 'people of the land' got displaced and had to seek alternative settlement.

To allow sufficient commentary on these challenges, I divided the third chapter into three sections; a section focusing on the returnees and land reoccupations, a second section focusing on the economic effect of the returnees on the structure of the economy in Judah and finally a section on the migration complications faced by the displaced 'people of the land'. I emphasize here again that all these sections I have just mentioned remained part of the first pole of my use of the tripolar theory.

Part of my task in this part of the first pole was to prove that the people who did not go into exile did indeed lose land when those that had gone into exile returned. An autobiographical reading of Ezra-Nehemiah in this first pole showed that this loss of land on the part of the 'people of the land' had similarities to our own loss of land as farm worker families in post-colonial Zimbabwe. This part was of particular importance to me because I personally relate to the sufferings that the 'people of the land' in Judea went through.

Post exile circumstances in Judah played out in almost a similar fashion as post-colonial situations in post-colonial African societies. For this reason, the post-colonial theory was a good fit in shaping this study as a complementary theory to the tripolar. It was particularly active in the second pole discussions on land in post-colonial Zimbabwe because Zimbabwe is a former British colony and like other colonies, the question of land allocation and reallocation was a contentious subject.

The second (contextual) pole of the study detailed our own experiences as farm workers communities in Zimbabwe during the years 2000-2002.As part of the process of achieving this, the study divided this pole into three sections. The first section provided an overview of the reality of the presence of farm workers on farms from periods before colonialism in present day Zimbabwe to the year 2002. The central foci was the period between the years 2000-2002, a period during which the FTLRRP is believed to have peaked.

In the first section, I gave general statistics on farm workers during the FTLRRP, paying a brief attention to their demography. I also shared information on the presence of some farm workers that were of a foreign origin which I also identified as migrant workers. This migrant worker group was of particular importance to me because it is from the same group that I trace my origins. Effects of the FTLRRP on this group formed my major motivation for pursuing this study.

In the second section, I looked at the effects of the FTLRRP on the farm workers in the area of access to land. I considered in this section, whether or not farm workers benefited from land allocations following take overs by government sponsored groups. I also looked at the implications of not receiving land on farm workers, using autobiography to pay particular attention to the case of my father and his family. As shown in the second pole of this study, farm workers highly depended on the farm land for almost every aspect of their lives; I also discussed the effects of the acquisition of farms on social infrastructure and services such as schools and health centers that had been set up on farms.

In the third section I looked at the impact of the reform on farm workers' economy. Drawing extensively on field data from the provinces; I assessed how the decline of commercial farms that were fully functional led to a large slump in employment. I discussed how this slump in employment impacted the livelihoods of farm workers as it led to a termination of regular incomes. Apart from this loss of incomes, I also discussed the loss of other incomes that my father and other farm workers suffered. These sources of income included unpaid severance packages, income from the sale of fire wood, vegetables, fish and part-time work among others.

While these effects were specific to the farms I was exposed to, they also reflect a general situation in post-colonial communities in Africa. The problem of land allocation or reallocation is major concern in African post-colonial communities. The post-colonial theory came in handy in shaping my discussions around this serious post-independence reality in Zimbabwe.

I concluded the second pole of the study by discussing migration complications that resulted from the forced displacement of farm workers from farms by the new owners. Again, the post-colonial theory was critical in shaping discussions around migration. This is because migration, like the land concern is a major post-colonial concern. This is because during colonialism, several communities got displaced and forced to move, post-colonially, in an attempt to bring redress, there was again movement of communities and individuals, voluntarily and otherwise.

In this final section, I paid particular attention among others to the migrations of one of the most vulnerable people groups among the farm workers, those of foreign origin, of which my father (Arajo Foromoz Chambalama) was part. I also discussed the effects of the forced displacement on women, the sick and the elderly. The FTLRRP being an occurrence that came after Zimbabwe got its independence, my theoretical orientation as I studied this subject in this second pole was deliberately post-colonial. It was also autobiographical in that I also discussed the case of my father and myself.

The third pole of this study was a record of an interaction between the biblical text of this study (first pole) and the social text (second or contextual pole) of the same. The reader witnessed in this chapter that there are several similarities between the 'people of the land' of Ezra-Nehemiah and the 'people of the land' of the years 2000-2002 in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The dialogue I carried out in this chapter based itself on the theoretical frame of African Post Colonial Biblical interpretation. I should also mention that for the aspects I was particularly interested in to come out clearly in the second pole of the study, I read this section from a socio-historical perspective, with the autobiographical method being a complimentary method.

This third pole exposed the very close similarity between the way the Persian government acts in Ezra-Nehemiah and the way in which the government of Zimbabwe worked during the years of the FTLRRP as part of its efforts to address colonial imbalances. As I sought to show in the third pole, the Persian government bankrolled the returning Judahite community and empowered them to act as they are recorded to have done. A similar trend was observable in the second pole of the study where the Zimbabwean government sponsored war veterans and other people groups to take over land previously under the control of largely white commercial farmers.

The third pole also recorded that when the Judahites returning from exile got to the land of Judeah, they took over control of the land and economy of Judah, they also forced some of the people that had not gone into exile to migrate from the land. This forced migration is recorded to have resulted in several complications on the part of the 'people of the land', in particular those that were of a foreign origin. These particularly suffered because among other travel complications, some of them had lost contact with their former lands and had nowhere to fall back on. Such was in particular, the case of my father Arajo Foromoz Chambalama and an autobiographical reading of this passage drew out many similarities.

The third pole painted a similar picture of the situation in Zimbabwe during the FTLRRP. During this time in Zimbabwe, government sponsored groups took over land, the general farm economy and went on to force most of the farm workers to vacate the farms. On this scene, just as in the case of the 'people of the land' in Judea, there were a good number who were of foreign origin. These suffered comparable challenges to those that were of foreign origin in Judaea in the times documented in Ezra-Nhemiah. Colonization and exile always created a mixing of nationalities. Post exile, or post-colonialism foreignness always would become a concern as depicted in this study.

Those among these farm workers that were forced to travel faced a lot of challenges, including death, sickness, loss of wealth among other ills. According to the information shared in the third pole, these losses and sufferings compared directly to the challenges faced by the 'people of the land' in Ezra-Nehemiah.

Despite the fact that the challenges associated with the effects of exile or colonization were dire, there still remained an opportunity for mitigation through careful planning. These challenges that occur on both texts on the 'people of the land' were symptomatic of lack of planning on the part of those that were in leadership in the two scenes. Planning would have mitigated against the loss of land, loss of an economy as well as the complications that were associated with migration. The lack of planning for these challenges played out in almost similar fashion in the first and second poles of the study

6.2 Further Reflections

Issues of land, the economy and migration remain central in political, social and religious discourses in Africa today. A few examples here may help prove a point. This year (March 2026) in South Africa, there was an uprising by locals against foreigners from other parts of Africa. The locals could be heard shouting '*Abahambe'* meaning they must go. The accusation against those of foreign origin was that they had taken over jobs and the informal economy from the control of locals.

Some of the local groups claimed that the foreigners had also congested physical space for the for their families, thus the fight had a land dimension also. The result was a massive movement which saw hundreds of thousands of foreign workers and company owners displaced and forced to migrate. The situation was particularly difficult for workers as they had limited options.

Their process of migration was tedious, and often involved walking several kilometers on foot carrying whatever few belongings they could salvage. Some of them carried babies, some were sick and others were old. It was not an easy time. Buses owned by the state often bundled them and took them to border towns such as Musina and left them to see what to do from there.

The migration complications detailed in this study were discernible in this situation. People having to leave important valuables behind, carrying only that which they managed by the time of being chased out. The sick and the elderly failed to carry much and struggled to brave the long matches on foot to safer spaces. Some gathered at embassies and appealed for help from their home governments. Others just gathered in open spaces and hoped that someone would come to help. Here, well-wishers such as churches and companies often came and assisted with food.

Many of these foreign nationals left behind the economy they had helped to build as a result of xenophobia. The self employed left the informal economy they had help grow. This same economy had sustained them for many years. While in the foregoing I have detailed their sufferings, I should also attempt to answer the question on why and how they found themselves in South Africa in the first place. Simply put, the answer is, they were products of migration within Africa.

Their home economies had constrained many of them to leave. Thus, the argument of this thesis is still a contentious issue today. Migration, economy and land questions remain an ongoing conversation in present day Africa, particularly in the southern parts. Just like those in Judah that came from exile to reclaim Judah during the Persian period, natives in South Africa woke up one day to claim the same from fellow Africans.

Their difference is only that these had not first been taken to exile. These were present in the land but loosing it to those that had immigrated. An important question I ask here is; What would have been the best way to deal with the issue of immigration in South Africa? A study on this question could avail much. In this thesis I argued for a reading of the Bible that takes into consideration the plight and situations of those that are forced out like this. Those that are deemed illegal, having no citizenship of a particular country, who are considered foreign on the grounds of demarcations caused by national boundaries. Here, national binderies played a pivotal role as an identity marker. Pursuing this conversation further can yield much for a research enthusiast.

6.3 Areas for Further Study

In the process of studying the three poles of the work above, several opportunities for further study emerge. These areas include; Studies on the material culture of Judah during the Persian period. In this study, some of my conclusions on the 'people of the land' were drawn from information derived from studies on the material culture of Judah during the Persian period. Studies done on the material culture are however not exhaustive, gaps of missing information on the state of Judah during the Persian period can be satisfactorily bridged should an extensive study on the material culture of Judah be carried.

The above is not the only potential area of further study exposed in this study. In the first pole, I led a conversation on the economy of Judah before and during the Persian period. As part of the discussions on the economy was a conversation on the trade within Judah. A detailed study on the complicated trade route network between Judah and other surrounding nations presents a good opportunity for further study. Any interested scholar would find this very fertile ground for further studies, especially if one is to study this in comparison with trade networks within post-colonial Southern Africa.

Conversations around the economy of Judah before and during the Persian period also make mention of royal farms. It remains to be known however where exactly some of these farms were located and how large each of these farms may have been. This can help a modern mind to have a clearer view of how spread the monarchy and the leaders after them were spread in the area of crop farming and pastoralism.

Apart from the above, the study makes mention in the first pole of nations such as Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites and Moabites. It is common knowledge that we presently no longer have any nations under these names today. A study of what became of each of these nations and who could be their possible descendants can be a very enlightening exercise for a modern biblical scholar.

It is also very interesting to note that in this study, Gedaliah is recorded to have allocated land to the people that survived the exile. We are however not told in literature consulted in this study who those individual people groups were or which family line they came from, especially those that were of Judahite descent. Keen research into this area can provide a valuable opportunity to s student of biblical studies today.

One of the areas commented on in both the first and the second poles of this study is that of migration and its effects on affected communities. In the second pole, the study comments only on migration of evicted farm workers from farms as well as that of labour from other Sothern African countries into present day Zimbabwe. The subject of migration within Sothern Africa however can be studied in a broader sense. This can include general migration across Southern Africa for several reasons, including migration as a post war consequence as well as migration for labour related reasons. Modern day migrations within Southern Africa present an opportunity within academia.

The question of geographical boarders as identity markers comes out as an area that can be explored further. Given current trends in Africa especially the recent xenophobia in South Africa, this issue is a hot subject area. The relationship between exiles and remainees is also a relevant topic for further study.

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