An Exilic and a Post-exilic Reading of *ʿērev rav*(עֶרֶב רַב) in Exodus 12:38: A Boundary-Making Marker for the Israelites and "Others"

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Introduction

In this article, I examine the phrase *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 and related biblical texts to argue that it reflects ethnically diverse identities of the exodus group and its exilic and post-exilic reading reinforces a negative attitude toward the ethnic diversity in the exilic and the post-exilic community of the Israelites. In particular, this article sets its focus on how the cultural memory of the community impacted on the interpretation and the reception of the narrative in their own social setting.

The phrase *ʿērev rav* in Exodus 12:38 denotes a group of "others" distinguished from the Israelites without any further clarification whether the expression contains a negative or a positive connotation about the distinct group in the narrative. It is a crucial issue in that the exodus can be interpreted and understood in two opposite ways depending upon the embedded meaning in the phrase: the exodus as a religious, social, and political liberation for an ethnically diverse group, including the Israelites (*yisra'el*, Exod. 12:37) or as a portent of the ethnic separation between the Israelites and "others."

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The book of Exodus begins with the prologue that makes a transition from the conclusion of the book of Genesis to the Exodus narrative (Exod. 1:1-7). The prologue is followed by the description of the oppression of Pharaoh in the land of Egypt and the subsequent crisis of the Israelites (Exod. 1:8-22). Later, the narrative continues to describe how Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to set out their journey to "a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8)." In particular, it is described that the Israelites departed from the land of Egypt to Succoth (Exod. 12:33-42). When they departed from the land, "a mixed multitude (ʻērev rav) also went up with them (Exod. 12:38)."

For the study of the phrase ʻērev rav, I analyze an ideological aspect of the phrase regarding an ethnic identity for the Israelites and "others" in the sociopolitical contexts of the exilic and the post-exilic periods. First of all, I would like to introduce cultural memory and sociolinguistic theory for their application to the phrase. Second, this article surveys various or even contrasting interpretations of the phrase in biblical scholarship. Then, I would like to explicate an exilic and a post-exilic reading of the phrase in their own sociopolitical contexts.

1. Cultural Memory and Ideology

Regarding the relationship between memory and the past, Maurice Halwachs, a sociologist, suggests that collective memory reconstructs "an image of the past in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society."[1] He also clarifies the collective feature of memories in a society as quoted below:

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1) Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.

> What makes recent memories hang together is not that they
> are contiguous in time: it is rather that they are part of a
> totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people
> with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom
> we have had a relation on the preceding day of days.[2]

Based upon the collective memory theory, Jan Assmann
introduces a new term, which is called cultural memory.
According to him, "the collective memory is particularly
susceptible to politicized forms of remembering."[3] The collective
memory suggested by Halwachs is more focused on the social
and political aspect of memory in a society. Assmann argues
that memory about the past is constructed based upon "the
collective that wishes to remember" and "the individual who
remembers in order to belong."[4] Therefore, memory should
be considered as having a cultural basis including social and
individual aspects.[5]

Regarding the relationship between language and society,
Norman Fairclough sets focus on an ideological aspect of language
and the impact of language use upon the members of the society.[6]

He explains how language reflects ideology and power
relations of society as cited below:

> Ideologies are closely lined to power, because the nature of
> the ideological assumptions embedded in particular con-
> ventions, and so the nature of those conventions themselves,
> depends on the power relations which underlie the con-

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2) Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 52.
3) Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, Cultural Memory in
   the Present (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 7.
4) Ibid., 7.
5) Ibid., 7‒8.
6) Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (New York, NY: Longman, 1989),
   3.

ventions; and because they are a means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power, simply through the recurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving which take these relations and power differences for granted. Ideologies are closely lined to language, because using language is the commonest form of social behavior, and the form of social behavior where we rely most on 'common-sense' assumptions.[7]

Fairclough asserts that discourse or text should be understood within its social context because it is conditioned, shaped, and interpreted by society.[8] In particular, language conveys an ideology of a dominant group of a society for the maintenance of the unequal power relations.[9] In other words, a close analysis of language or discourse would reveal what kind of ideology is desirable and functionally constructive in the society or the community.

The analysis of the cultural memory in the interpretation of the Exodus narrative would require the discourse analysis of the text itself. In particular, such an analysis would include the cultural setting and the prevailing ideologies of the readers in the society. The exilic and the post-exilic community projected their own social setting onto the interpretation and the understanding of the narrative of Exodus. Since the cultural memory includes social and individual aspects of memory, Fairclough's sociolinguistic theory can be used as a complementary theory for the clarification of the relationship between the social aspect and the individual aspect of the memory in the exilic and the post-exilic community. Furthermore, the shared cultural memory or the shared ideology of the members of a certain society would be a distinctive identity marker for the society

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7) Ibid., 2.
8) Ibid., 25.
9) Ibid., 43-47.

and its members. Such a marker would be used to distinguish or even separate a group from other groups.

Considering the interpretation of the phrase *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38, this seemingly abrupt phrase in the narrative can be understood as an addition of a topic of ethnic distinction to the exodus motif. In particular, the ethnic distinction means a separation between Israelites and other ethnic groups. When reading the phrase in the narrative of Exodus, its interpretation and understanding would be closely related to the readers in their own historical, social, and political contexts. Since the phrase *ʿērev rav* contains an ethnic meaning, the analysis on its reception by the exilic and the post-exilic communities would reveal the communities' own ideological aspects of ethnicity as well as their religious ideologies in the deliverance of YHWH from the land of Egypt.

Not only in Exodus 12:38, *ʿērev rav* and its related expressions can also be found in several biblical texts. In those texts, *ʿērev rav* or *ʿērev* denotes an existing heterogeneous group, which was distinguished and even separated from the Israelites. It is notable that this ethnic distinction and separation between others and the Israelites through the usage of *ʿērev rav* or *ʿērev* are found mainly in the exilic and the post-exilic biblical texts (Jer. 25:20, 50:37; Ezek. 30:5; Neh. 13:3).[10]

2. Interpretations of *ʿērev rav* in Exodus 12:38

The narrative of Exod. 12:33-42 describes the departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt to Succoth. After the tenth

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10) Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., "II/III 'rb II/III," trans. David E Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 332.

plague that was the death of the firstborn in Egypt, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave the land (Exod. 12:33). When the Israelites prepared for the departure, they even plundered the Egyptians (Exod. 12:36). When they finally left from Rameses to Succoth, "a mixed multitude (*ʿērev rav*)" joined the group (Exod. 12:38).

Regarding the phrase, *ʿērev* itself can be interpreted as "mixture or mixed company," that is, a "heterogeneous body attached to Israel."[11] The word seems to be derived from the verb "*ʿ-r-b*" which could mean "to mix." The Masora parva (Mp) notes that it occurs twice in the Masora text (Exod. 12:38; Neh. 13:3). *Targum Onkelos to Exodus* describes the group of *ʿērev rav* as "a large number of strangers (*nwkrʾyn sgʾyn*)."[12]

Other versions of the biblical text seem to employ words which has comparable meanings to *ʿērev*. In the Septuagint, the phrase is written as *epimiktos polus*, and it can be translated as "many mixed or blended (people)." In the Peshitta, the same phrase is written as *ʿarubā sagnā*, and its translation can be "many mixed (people)," or "a mixed multitude." Like the Septuagint, the Peshitta also assumes that the exodus group had those who were described as somehow different from Israelites.

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11) Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 786.

12) Israel Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Exodus: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary (Based on the A. Sperber and A. Berliner Editions)* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1990), 128‒29.

3. Identifications of *ʿērev rav*

3.1. *ʿērev rav* in Exodus 12:38

As written above, there have been various interpretations about *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38. The interpretations of the phrase resulted into the identifications of the group described as *ʿērev rav* in the verse. Most of the interpretations suggest that the word designates a heterogeneous group among the Israelites. Rabbi Hayyim Vital of Safed interprets the phrase "a mixed multitude" as referring to the *conversos* who were insiders of the Israelite community but excluded from the people of the Israelites within the community due to their conversion.[13] It is notable that he compared the status of the mixed multitude of the exodus to the *conversos* in the Jewish community in the 16th century. Through the interpretation of Exodus 12:38 and its comparison to the *conversos*, he suggests that the "excluded insider" group contributed to the fulfillment of the covenant of Sinai in that the excluded group returned to Judaism.[14]

Shaul Bar suggests that "a mixed multitude" in Exod. 12:38 refers to mercenaries who intermarried with the Israelites.[15] He also agrees with the idea that they were a heterogeneous group.[16] The ethnically heterogeneous group that accompanied the exodus group was distinguished from the ethnic group of the Israelites, but it became a part of the nation. Therefore, the nationality of Israel transcended ethnic identity. Bar describes that the

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13) Shaul Magid, "The Politics of (Un)Conversion: The 'Mixed Multitude' (ʿerev Rav) as Conversos in Rabbi Hayyim Vital's ʿEts Ha-Daʿat Tov," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:4 (2005), 625–66.

14) Ibid., 666.

15) Shaul Bar, "Who Were the 'Mixed Multitude'?" *Hebrew Studies* 49 (2008), 27.

16) Ibid, 29-31.

mercenaries in the ancient world received properties for their loyalties.[17] However, he suggests that the reason for the exodus of the mercenary group was the intermarriage with the Hebrew women.[18] The group later became part of David's army and was accepted as part of the Israelite nation.[19] In other words, he suggests that the exodus of the heterogeneous group was not for their economic benefit, but primarily for their loyalty to their Hebrew wives.

However, a possible question regarding his suggestion is to whom the mercenaries originally belonged. If the mercenaries had belonged to the Egyptians, he might need to provide some clear explanation about the reason why the mercenaries gave up their loyalty to Egypt and their accompanying economic benefits. There is no explicit evidence that the mercenaries gave up their benefits solely for their Hebrew wives. If the group had been mercenaries who were supposed to seek economic and social benefits, their exodus should also be related to the benefits, rather than only to their intermarriage.

Along with the ethnic diversity of the exodus group, some scholars suggest a sociopolitical motivation for the exodus as well as a religious aspect. Frank Gorman Jr. describes that the Exodus narrative is about YHWH's redemption to bring the Israelites out of oppression and slavery.[20] YHWH is engaged in the political conflict with Egypt as real-world involvement.[21] Through the power struggle, YHWH gave the oppressed people the sociopolitical freedom from the oppression and slavery of

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17) Ibid., 35.
18) Ibid., 38.
19) Ibid., 39.
20) Frank H. Gorman, Jr., "Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers," Marti J. Steussy, ed., *Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 54.
21) Ibid., 54.

Egypt. Therefore, the political liberation was for the oppressed including the heterogeneous group described as *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38.

Carol Meyers also suggests that the "mixed crowd" of Exod. 12:38 designates non-Israelites among those departing Egypt.[22] The ethnic diversity in the groups causes the story's theme of liberation to transcend the ethnic boundary of the Israelites. The exodus out of the land of Egypt resulted from the political power conflict with the Egyptian Empire. The power conflict is closely related to its military power conflict. Meyers suggests that Exod. 13:17-15:21 describes YWHW's victory over the military power of Egypt.[23] Therefore, the context of the exodus contains the sociopolitical aspect of liberation from the oppressor of Egypt. Although John J. Collins does not mention *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 in his explanation about the book of Exodus,[24] he describes that the liberation from slavery in Egypt has a sociopolitical dimension of the exodus event.[25]

Jon D. Levenson provides a different viewpoint from the previous opinions about the exodus. He suggests that the exodus was only for the religious liberation of the Israelites to serve YHWH.[26] He interprets the problematic phrase *ʿērev rav* as "mixed-blooded people" instead of the traditional interpretation which was "a mixed multitude."[27] The gentile slaves in Egypt were not involved in the exodus. He also claims that slavery

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22) Carol L Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 100.

23) Ibid., 110.

24) John Joseph Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MO: Fortress Press, 2007), 55‒63.

25) Ibid., 59.

26) Jon D. Levenson, "Liberation Theology and the Exodus," Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S Kaminsky, eds., *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 223.

27) Ibid., 223.

existed even in the Israelite community.[28] According to him, there was a social distinction among people, and there were chiefs, freemen, and slaves in the community.[29] The society of Israel after the exodus was neither egalitarian nor communistic.[30] They had their own structure of unequal social relations. The exodus was not a political redemption for ethnically diverse groups. Instead, it was to ensure religious freedom for the people of Israel to serve YHWH. Therefore, the exodus was only for the Israelites, and it was exclusively religious.

3.2. *ʿērev* in other related biblical texts

The word *ʿērev* can also be found in other biblical narratives than in Exod. 12:38. In the case of 1Kgs. 10:15, it is suggested that *ʿērev* is a homophone used to designate "steppe-dwellers of N. Arabia."[31] The narrative of 1Kgs. 10 describes the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. The queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and he came to test him with hard questions (1Kgs. 10:1). When Solomon answered all of her questions, she gave gifts of gold, spices and precious stones to him (1Kgs. 10:3-10). King Solomon also gave her his gifts that he received from others (1Kgs. 10:13). The following verses of 1Kgs. 10:14-15 describe the amount and the source of the gold sent to him. In 1Kgs. 10:15, it is described that all the kings of Arabia (*ʿērev*) and the governors of the land sent gold to Solomon.

As Exod. 12:38 quite likely refers to the "non-Israelites who

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28) Ibid., 219‒22.

29) Ibid., 220.

30) Ibid.

31) Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 786.

joined the Israelites at the time of Exodus," it is suggested that the phrase could be related to "*hā'sapsup*" in Num. 11:4.[32)] In the narrative of Num. 11, it is described the complaints of the Israelites and the non-Israelite group against YHWH. According to Num. 11:4, the "rabble (*hā'sapsup*)" had "a craving (*ta'awah*)" for meat rather than manna from YHWH.[33)] Along with them, the Israelites also wept again to complain against YHWH regarding their food (Num. 11:4). This complaint caused the anger of YHWH (Num. 11:10). The negative description of the non-Israelite group in the narrative reveals that the redactor of the narrative puts the responsibility of the grave sin upon "others" rather than on the Israelites.[34)] The "rabble (*hā'sapsup*)" stirred and led the Israelites to complain against YHWH.[35)] Therefore, the blame should be placed upon the non-Israelite group, but not upon the Israelites.

Considering the interrelatedness between *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 and *hā'sapsup* in Num. 11:4, it is possible that there was a common editor whose composition covers several books.[36)] In particular, Rainer Albertz suggests that the books of Exodus and Numbers are included in the D-Composition (D-Komposition), which covers from Genesis to Deuteronomy.[37)] Regarding the expression "rabble (*hā'sapsup*)" in Num. 11:4, Heinz-Josef Fabry suggests that their denigration becomes clear.[38)] In other words, a negative attitude toward "others" in Num.

32) Ludwig Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1999), 878.

33) David L. Stubbs, *Numbers, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 116.

34) Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, trans. James Martin (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1968), 85.

35) Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, MO: John Knox Press, 1996), 64.

36) Rainer Albertz, *Exodus 1-18* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2012), 217.

37) Ibid.

11:4 becomes more explicit than in Exod. 12:38 within the D-Composition.

A concept of the ethnic distinction through the use of *ʿērev* can be found in the exilic and the post-exilic texts such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Nehemiah, as well as in the work of the D-editor (D-Redaktor). The expression "all the mingled people/every mixed person (*kol hāʿerev*)" is written in Jer. 25:20. In this post-exilic narrative, the group of the "mixed people" designates the same group as in Exod. 12:38.[39] While the mixed group was briefly described without any further details in Exod. 12:38, they became one of the targets of the wrath of YHWH in Jer. 25:20.

Meanwhile, *kol hāʿerev* in Jer. 50:37 designates "all the mixed people in Babylon." In particular, the group can be understood as the mercenaries of the Babylonian Empire.[40] Jer. 50:37 describes that the whole empire including *kol hāʿerev* would fall under the judgment of YHWH represented by "a sword (*ḥerev*)." With the judgment, it is described that they would become "women (*lə-nāšîm*)." Therefore, it seems to be clear that the word, "others," maintains a negative connotation in the verse.

In Ezek. 30, Ezekiel makes a prophecy about the day of YHWH. In the prophecy, the destructive disaster would fall not only upon Egypt but also upon others including Ethiopia, Put, Lud, and "all the mingled people/every mixed person (*kol hāʿerev*, Ezek. 30:5[41])."[42] Once again, *ʿērev* is used here as a

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38) Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "II/III ʾrb II/III," 332.

39) Ibid.

40) J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 744.

41) Cf. Arabia (*ʿărāv*) or Arabian (*ʿarvi*).

42) Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1970), 414.

derogatory term to designate those who are not genuine Jewish descendants.[43]

The word *ērev* in Neh. 13:3 is interpreted as "people of foreign origin in post-exilic Judah."[44] The narrative of Nehemiah consistently describes the distinction or the separation of Israelites from the mixed-blooded people, foreigners, or those of foreign descent (Neh. 13:3).[45] According to Neh. 13, the group of *ērev* could not enter "the assembly of God (*qəhal ʾelōhīm*)" (Neh. 13:1). Therefore, the Israelites separated themselves from foreigners after they heard the law from the book of Moses (Neh. 13:3). In this verse, *ērev* was used to designate "persons who were not Jews of pure lineage and were therefore excluded for Judah by Nehemiah."[46] Pixley suggests that Moses and his followers accepted "others" in their journey out of the land of Egypt.[47] The group represented by *ērev* came to be ethnically distinct from the Israelites. Furthermore, the group of "others" was religiously separated from the Israelites. The mixed marriages were even condemned (Neh. 13:23-31).

Considering the usage of *ērev* in the biblical texts including 1Kings, Numbers (D-Composition), Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Nehemiah, *ērev* was not used to imply the acceptance of "others" by the Israelites. On the contrary, it implies the exclusion of "others" from the Israelites. It also functions as a portent of the fall of the Israelites, or even as an excuse for the Israelites in their fall to be blamed.

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43) Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "II/III ʾrb II/III," 332.

44) Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 878.

45) Cf. Neh. 9:2 (*nēkār*).

46) Jorge V. Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 67.

47) Ibid.

4. *'ērev rav* as Ethnic Distinction in the Exilic and Post-exilic Community

The interpretation and the reception of *'ērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 in the exilic and the post-exilic communities would call for the attention to the cultural memory of the communities. First of all, it is possible that the described presence of *'ērev rav* in the Exodus narrative became a part of the cultural memory about the past among the people of the exilic and the post-exilic communities. The memory was (re-)produced, maintained, changed, and shared among the people. Now, the memory about the past was linked to the contemporary social context of multi-ethnicity during and after the Babylonian exile.

As well as the social aspect, the individual aspect of the memory of the exilic and the post-exilic communities was affected by the phrase *'ērev rav* in the Exodus narrative. It is very possible that the individual members of the communities were experiencing multi-ethnicity in their own *Sitz im Leben*. In that sense, their reading and understanding of *'ērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 was not a memory about past but a memory colored, influenced and even reconstructed by their own contemporary social setting.

Therefore, the cultural memory about *'ērev rav* in the exilic and the post-exilic communities makes an impact on the interpretation and the understanding of the phrase. The memory does not remain as "memory" in the society or the members of the society. Instead, the "memory" gives a motivation or momentum in the social and the individual realms exilic and the post-exilic communities. More specifically, the "memory" about the past regarding the presence of *'ērev rav* in the Israelites gives an impact on the community regarding how to react to the multi-ethnic social setting after the Babylonian exile.

As for the relationship between the cultural memory and the society including the individual members of the society, it is necessary to think about how the memory is communicated in the society and among the individuals in the society. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Fairclough emphasizes the contextual influence of the society upon the production and the interpretation of the text.[48] In particular, he argues that language reflects unequal power relations in society.[49] When there happens any type of social inequality of power among social groups, it can create social conflicts among those groups. Fairclough claims that the dominant group manipulates their language to control society and maintain controlling power over the dominated class.[50] In other words, discourse, as a social practice of language, would contribute to the maintenance of the existing ideology or power relations in the society. Social and political ideology in language is embedded and implicit so that it is difficult to point out the ideology of the ruling class in language.[51] While using language in everyday life in the society, people tend to accept the hidden ideology without recognition. An essential aspect of the analysis of discourse is that it would reveal any hidden ideology of the dominant group of society.

Fairclough's sociolinguistic view on the relationship between language and ideology can shed some light on any possible exilic or post-exilic perspective or ideology about ethnicity in their interpretation of *ʿērev* found in Exod. 12:38 and other related biblical texts. The book of Exodus has been considered as being redacted in major part in the exilic period, and it seems to have layers of materials produced by multiple authors.[52]

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48) Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 25.
49) Ibid., 32-34.
50) Ibid., 33.
51) Ibid.

Therefore, it seems to be difficult to fully explicate any political or social background of the text. However, it is still possible that exilic and post-exilic redactors of the text were familiar with specific ideologies or perspectives of their community. Also, it is possible that the phrase *'ērev rav* was interpreted and understood according to the social and political ideologies of the exilic and the post-exilic communities. Moreover, it is feasible that the interpretation of the phrase made an impact on the attitude or the reaction of the community to the multi-ethnic social context after exile.

During the exilic period, ethnicity became important in the identity of ancient Israel. Sparks suggests that ethnicity was one of the criteria for Israelite identity, but non-Israelites could still assimilate into the Israelite community during the Judean monarchy.[53] The primary concern for the membership of the community was religious, but not ethnic.[54] Ethnicity was a secondary factor. During the exilic period, however, ethnicity also became important for the identity of the Israelite community.[55] Furthermore, Sparks suggests a possibility that the ethnic traditions of the Pentateuch are later than they were previously supposed.[56]

The relationship between ethnicity and identity proposed by Sparks seems to explicate a possible exilic and post-exilic ideology about ethnically heterogeneous groups in relation to *'ērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 and its similar expressions in other biblical texts. First of all, the narrative of Exod. 12:38 does

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52) Meyers, *Exodus*, 16-17.
53) Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 91.
54) Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 283.
55) Ibid., 285.
56) Ibid., 320.

not clearly describe why and how the *ērev rav* joined in the exodus of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. Instead, the narrative seems to set its focus on the emancipation from the oppression of Egypt. At this point, the exodus can be considered as a religious, social, and even political emancipation for various ethnic groups.

However, the distinction between the group of *ērev rav* and the Israelites including their descendants became clear throughout the biblical narrative. After the narrative of Exodus, the so-called "others" still remained outside of the boundary set by the Israelites. This ethnic group of "others" was even described as having a sacrilegious attitude against YHWH. They became the reason for the defilement of the Israelites before YHWH (Num. 11). They also became the target of the wrath of YHWH in Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25). Similarly, Ezekiel proclaimed that they would face a destructive fate by YHWH (Ezek. 30). They were even separated from Israelites (Neh. 13). It is not clear whether "others" wanted to assimilate to the Israelites. At least, the Israelites wanted to set a distinct boundary based upon ethnicity. In other words, the distinction between the Israelites and "others" in the book of Exodus becomes intensified in the ensuing biblical narrative. In this respect, the motif of liberation and emancipation for multi-ethnic groups in Exod. 12:38 becomes weak. Instead, the motif of ethnic separation becomes clear in further biblical narrative.

Considering the social context of the exilic and the post-exilic communities of the Israelites, it is possible that they aimed at the formation of their own national identity through the ethnic distinction and exclusion of "others" represented by 'ērev. Regarding the relationship between cultural memory and identity, Jan Assmann suggests as cited below:

What justifies us, and indeed compels us, to speak of a form

of memory is the much more loose and expanded, but never-
theless real, link with the structures of collective and in-
dividual identity.[57]

In other words, cultural memory is closely related to the
identity of the group of a specific society. In the case of the
exilic and the post-exilic communities, their interpretation and
understanding of *'ērev rav* in the biblical narrative should be
related to their identity. As the phrase contains ethnic
connotation, it is possible that the cultural memory about it
would be related to the ethnic aspect of their own identity.

John McLeod suggests that ethnicity contributes to the setting
of "the 'norms and limits' of the nation's imagined community
."[58] He also suggests that ethnicity involves social practices,
rituals, and traditions as an identification marker for the "different
collective groups."[59] His suggestion is applicable to the exilic
and the post-exilic communities of ancient Israel. In particular,
the Israelites separated "ethnically different" groups, which was
'ērev, in terms of the religious practice for YHWH. Since the
Israelites separated *'ērev* within their own community, Israel can
be considered "internal racists."[60] In other words, the exclusive
identity of the Israelites was the exclusion of the already coexisting
groups in the same community.

The preservation of identity, in particular, the awareness of
the ethnic identity, had been an important issue since the exile
of the Israelites. The exile was a time of crisis and upheaval
for the community of Judah. It was also a time of intercultural
contact for the people of the community. Intercultural contact
of the exilic and the post-exilic communities with other peoples

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57) Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 27.
58) John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester, NY: Manchester University
    Press, 2010), 131.
59) Ibid., 132.
60) Ibid., 133.

or "others" meant that it would have been very possible for the Israelites to mix with "others." In the midst of such a crisis, the issue of identity was raised among the group.[61] Ethnicity was one of the crucial factors for boundary maintenance during the time of intercultural contact.[62]

Ethnic identity of the exilic and the post-exilic communities was closely related to their religious identity. When *ʿērev rav* as ethnic distinction in Exodus 12:38 recurs in biblical narrative, it seems that the phrase implies religious differences between the Israelites who believed in YHWH and "others" who did not. Mark G. Brett suggests that Yahwism became an entity of a new "Israelite" identity.[63] In other words, religious difference was used as one of ethnic diacritics between the Israelites and "others."[64] The phrase *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 is about ethnicity, and it is later connected to the cultural realm of religion. Unlike the ethnicity, religious belief, practice or culture could have been adopted by "religious others." However, it is described that "religious others" did not adopt the Yahwistic belief. Rather, they were described as being against YHWH (Num. 11:4).

Regarding the identity and the boundary issue of the exilic and the post-exilic communities, one more aspect to consider is a (post-) colonial perspective of the communities. Benny Liew suggests that race and ethnicity are related to the (post-) colonialism.[65] Considering the history of the exilic and the

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61) Daniel L Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: A Sociology of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989), 63.

62) Ibid., 56–58.

63) Mark G Brett, "Israel's Indigenous Origins: Cultural Hybridity and the Formation of Israelite Ethnicity," *Biblical Interpretation* 11:3/4 (2003), 411, https://doi.org/10.1163/156851503322566796.

64) Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998), 35.

65) Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Margins and (Cutting-) Edges: On the (Il)Legitimacy and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism," in *Postcolonial Biblical*

post-exilic periods, the *golah* community experienced a certain "trans-colonial" period. After the exile under the rule of the Babylonian Empire, the community was finally freed from the empire, which can be considered "post-colonial" in a sense. However, the community was not free from imperial rule in a strict sense. Instead, they became to be ruled by the Persian Empire after the fall of the Babylonian Empire. In that sense, the *golah* community can be considered "still colonial." In such political and social situations of colonial and post-colonial overlaps with the change of the imperial powers, the exilic and the post-exilic communities remained as a subject which was being affected by the ruling empires. In their time of exile and return from their exile, the communities began to raise ethnicity and religion to build up their identity boundary, which was also their national boundary between their neighboring peoples.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it is very possible that an exilic and post-exilic reading of the phrase *'ērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 reinforced the negative attitude of the exilic and the post-exilic communities against the multi-ethnicity. Ethnicity was an important factor for the identity of the Israelite community during the time of crisis. For the community, their multi-ethnic issue was one of the major threats to their identity maintenance or build-up. Therefore, they were in need to find any possible support to stand against inclusion of multi-ethnicity into their identity boundary.

In that sense, the community would give a close attention

Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia (London, UK: T & T Clark International, 2005), 121-27.

to the ethnic diversity or the existence of a heterogeneous group among the Israelites in their way out from the land of Egypt while reading Exod. 12:38. Based upon the narrative, the exodus was primarily for the Israelites, but Exod. 12:38 abruptly describes that an ethnically different group joined the journey out of the land. Although there was no further explanation about this heterogeneous group in the book of Exodus, it became clear that the ethnically distinct group represented by *ʿērev rav* or *ʿērev* did not assimilate to the Israelites according to other biblical texts. Rather, they were later distinguished and even separated from the Israelites. This ethnic separation is described as being closely connected to a religious aspect in which *ʿērev rav* did not follow YHWH. In other words, the described presence of *ʿērev rav* among the Israelites did not mean that they were assimilated to the society or accepted by the Israelites in the narrative. The exclusive boundary of identity of the Israelite community based upon ethnicity became even clearer.

From the perspective of the exilic and the post-exilic communities, *ʿērev rav* in Exod. 12:38 was not written to describe the exodus as a religious, social, and political emancipation for the ethnically diverse groups from the oppression. The exodus did not lead to the conglomerated identification of the Israelites and *ʿērev rav*. Rather, the existence of the *ʿērev rav* resulted into an ethnic separation for the exclusive identity of the Israelites distinct from "others" according to the related biblical texts ranging from Numbers to Nehemiah. Therefore, it is highly possible that an exilic and post-exilic reading of *ʿērev rav* led to the interpretation of the phrase as a heuristic marker for the necessity of the ethnic boundary between the Israelites and "others."

<주제어>
에레브 라브(수많은 잡족들), 출애굽, 바빌론 유수, 바빌론 유수 이후,
문화 기억, 사회 언어학, 민족성, 정체성

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<Abstract>

출애굽기 12장 38절에 등장하는 에레브 라브(עֵרֶב רַב)에 대한 바빌론 포로기 및 포로기 이후 시대의 공동체 읽기

-이스라엘과 이방 민족에 대한 구분점-

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본 연구는 출애굽기 12:38에 등장하는 'ērev rav(수많은 잡족들,『개역개정』)에 대한 바빌론 유수 및 유수 이후 이스라엘 공동체의 해석이 이스라엘과 다른 민족을 구별하고 이스라엘만의 정체성 확립에 정당성을 부여하고 이를 강화한다고 주장한다. 본 연구는 모리스 알박스의 집단 기억 이론, 얀 아스만의 문화 기억 이론과 노만 페어클로프의 사회 언어학 이론을 출애굽기 12:38절의 'ērev rav와 함께 동일하거나 유사한 구절에 적용하였다. 얀 아스만의 이론은 알박스의 이론에 근거하여 'ērev rav 구절이 과거에 대한 기억이면서 동시에 바빌론 유수 및 유수 이후 이스라엘 공동체의 상황을 내포할 수 있는 가능성을 제시하는데 도움을 준다. 이와 함께, 페어클로프의 사회 언어학 이론은 'ērev rav 구절의 이데올로기적 측면과 바빌론 유수 및 유수 이후 이스라엘 공동체의 상호 관련성에 대한 이론적 근거를 제시한다. 바빌론 유수 이후 다민족, 다문화의 사회적 상황에서 출애굽기의 'ērev rav 구절은 출애굽이 다민족을 위한 자유보다는 이스라엘 민족과 이방 민족이 구별되고 나누는 징조로 이해되었을 가능성이 높다. 더 나아가, 이러한 이해는 바빌론 유수 및 유수 이후 공동체로 하여금 자신들의 정체성을 확립하기 위해서

이방 민족을 구별하거나 배타적으로 대하고 심지어는 차별하는 태도를 강화
시켰을 가능성이 높다. 출애굽기 12:38에 대한 분석과 함께 본 연구는 출애굽
기 외에 다른 성경 구절에서도 등장하는 *'ērev rav* 구절에 대한 비교 및
분석을 포함하여 야훼에 대한 이스라엘 민족의 타락에 대한 책임을 다른
민족들에게 돌리거나 (민수기 11:4), 바빌론 유수 이후 이스라엘 민족과
다른 민족들의 구별을 확연히 드러내거나 차별적인 모습을 드러내는 구절들
을 살펴보고자 한다 (예레미야 25:20; 50:37; 느헤미야 13:1; 에스겔 30:5).

<Abstract>

An Exilic and Post-exilic Reading of *'ērev rav*(עֵרֶב רַב) in Exodus 12:38: A Boundary-Making Marker for the Israelites and "Others"

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In this article, I argue that an exilic and post-exilic reading of *'ērev rav* in Exodus 12:38 justified and even reinforced ethnic separation for an identity boundary between the Israelites and "a mixed multitude" or "others." For the study, this article applied Maurice Halbwachs' collective memory theory, Jan Assmann's cultural memory theory, and Norman Fairclough's sociolinguistic theory to the historical and literary analysis of the phrase in Exodus 12:38 and other related biblical passages. Halbwachs' theory became a foundation for further development of other related theories including Assmann's cultural memory theory. The cultural memory theory contributes to the analysis and the understanding of *'ērev rav* in that the phrase would be a key word related not only to the exilic and the post-exilic memories about the past but also to their contemporary socio-political setting after exile. Furthermore, Fairclough's theory can shed some light on the interrelationship between the ideological aspect of the phrase *'ērev rav* and the exilic and the post-exilic communities. In a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural social context during the exilic and the post-exilic period, it is possible that the exilic and the post-exilic communities understood the phrase *'ērev rav* in the Exodus narrative as a portent of the ethnic tension and the subsequent separation between Israelites and "others" rather than as a liberation for the multi-ethnic group as a whole.

In the other way around, the phrase *ʿērev rav* would reinforce the Israelite ideology of ethnic distinction, separation, and even discrimination to establish the identity of the exilic and the post-exilic community in their own social situation. This study also includes other related biblical texts in which the group of "others" represented by *ʿērev rav* became a target to blame for the religious defilement of the Israelites against YHWH (Numbers 11:4) or the separation between the Israelites and other ethnic groups seems to be clear in the exilic and the post-exilic documents (Jeremiah 25:20; 50:37; Nehemiah 13:3; Ezekiel 30:5).