POST-MONARCHIC PERIOD

Coming out of what historians call the ages of confusion in the ANE (see Roberts 1980: 118–30) the story of ancient Israel is an obscure one. Little reliable historical data is available for historians to utilize with confidence. Apart from retellings of biblical stories—so-called histories of Israel—and hints gleaned from imperial annals, little may be asserted with any certitude about the relation of the Hebrew Bible to history. This state of affairs is especially true of the period between Cyrus of Pasargadae and Alexander of Macedon when Indo-European hegemony dominated the Near East (ca. 500–332 B.C.E.). The Persian period, as it may be called, was the first stage in the seven-centuries-long gestation period of what may now be regarded as the roots and origins of (orthodox) Judaism. Between the Babylonian destruction of the first Jerusalem temple (587/6 B.C.E.) and the Roman destruction of the second Jerusalem temple (70 C.E.) were created the formative elements of Judaism as a major religious system. These two demolitions focus attention on the centrality of the Jerusalem temple for the period and emphasize the importance of outside imperial powers in determining the shape of Jewish religion. Transformed by Babylonian and Persian influences, the fragments of Israelite religion which survived the devastations of land and culture were transfigured into a series of sectarian and diffused religious communities which dominated the period and provide what little we know about the early stages of the Second Temple era.

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A. Interpretive Ground Rules

1. Ideological Control. The problems of data and interpretation for the Persian period are such that it is necessary to delineate the limited terms of reference for handling the available biblical sources. Throughout the Hebrew Bible there is a tendency, which is virtually a principle, for the writers to retroject their material into the distant past. This is obvious in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History; but it is hardly less obvious in the collection of the prophetic texts which are prefaced by colophons placing them in a past determined by the DH (e.g., Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1–3; Amos 1:1; Hos 1:1). Setting the books in the past helps to conceal period and place of authorship as well as authorship itself. Attention is directed toward the text and not to the conditions or context of its production. If this artifice of concealment is also to be found in the writings set in the early Second Temple period, then it would be wise to read the literature traditionally assigned to that period as coming perhaps from a somewhat later time. This would help to explain the confusion of data and detail which abound in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah 40–66, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. It would acknowledge an ideology of concealment in the Second Temple period and alert the historian to the need to explain such constructions. James Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus talked about "silence, exile, and cunning," and an exploration of the litera-

The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary. 1996 (D. N. Freedman, G. A. Herion, D. F. Graf, J. D. Pleins & A. B. Beck, Ed.). New York: Doubleday.

ture of the Second Temple period, especially during the Persian era, would do well to keep those three elements of silence, exile, and cunning to the fore in analyzing this obscure period of the production of biblical texts. In the absence of reliable evidence for reconstructing the history of the period, the literature set in this period may not be the most reliable guide for a historical analysis; historical accuracy cannot be assumed in the absence of data to the contrary. Subtler forms of literary and ideological investigation are required to provide a properly historical account of the matter. Even then, hypothetical reconstructions of scholars will not necessarily bear much resemblance to actual events in the past. This acknowledgment of ignorance and, more importantly, of the consequences of such ignorance must be a fundamental ground rule for investigating the Persian period.

2. Obscurity of Data. If the ideological control of literature is an important datum of this period, the obscurity of the available data should also be recognized. Information is eclipsed by ignorance and obscurity, which makes every historical account of the period open to serious debate. It is easy enough to amalgamate a number of elements drawn from each literary source and so to form an idealized picture of the Jewish community in and around the Jerusalem of the 5th and 4th centuries. However, the sources really do not permit such a selective production. They are confused ideological constructs which often telescope characters and events (see Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL, 41–47) and which to some extent must be regarded as sectarian documents attempting to present a particular picture of the "past" as a legitimation of the present (i.e., the present of the writer). The interpretation of documents is far from straightforward and the nature of the documents is not easily determined. In the case of the Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles corpus (whether all from one or multiple authors) the very textuality of Ezra-Nehemiah (what Eskenazi happily called "the perpetuation of documents" [1988: 87]) puts the historian in a quandary about what textuality may indicate regarding the production of that strange work (there really is nothing else like Ezra-Nehemiah in the Hebrew Bible). Thus, the amalgamation approach is unacceptable because it only results in a form of "rationalizing paraphrase" of texts long recognized to be themselves partisan constructs of ideological groups in conflict with other groups.

While the texts presented as reflecting the Persian period may well be indispensable sources for our knowledge of the period (see Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL, 38 with reference to Ezra-Nehemiah), it is a compromised indispensability which they possess and one which undermines their reliability as historical resources. The precise amount of weight the historian should allow to this evidence is difficult to judge, but to ignore these inherent difficulties is to participate in the ideological distortion of the material rather than to practice historical reconstruction.

3. Tentativeness of Conclusions. Having acknowledged the difficulties of reconstructing the history of the Jewish communities in the Persian period, it becomes necessary to recognize that all accounts of the period and each scholar's account of it are open to question. It is also very important to avoid the tendency in biblical scholarship to equate textual exegesis with history. Repeating what is to be found in texts is not history writing. We lack the necessary extra-textual information to move from exegesis to historiography. Material remains of the period (as analyzed in Stern 1982) are remarkably unin-

formative in relation to biblical texts. Furthermore, archaeological data require interpretation and contextualization, so they cannot simply be assumed to bear on a specific text (just because the writer brings the two into conjunction). The many technical and substantive issues involved here cannot as yet be handled within biblical scholarship, which lacks a sound methodology for dealing with these matters. A properly theoretical account of how best to read the literature of the Second Temple period remains to be developed. In the absence of such important requirements, any attempt at delineating the history of the period is more likely to become an outline of the contents of the various pieces of literature associated with the period. There are too many serious gaps in our knowledge and the textual sources are too obscure, as well as ideologically compromised, adequately to write the history of the Persian period. See also PERSIAN EMPIRE. Therefore, this discussion must be regarded as a mere sketch of the main features of the period, which indicates areas where scholars struggle with the method and data available to write a history of the Persian era in relation to the different Jewish communities which developed then.

B. The Period

1. Major Influences. The facts and relevant data have been rehearsed many times in the standard "History of Israel" volumes, which may be referred to for details and discussions of the most important issues (see especially *CHJ* 1; Widengren *IHJ* 489–538; *HAIJ*, 438–75; and particularly cognizant of the difficulties of writing the history of this period is Lemche 1988: 173–96). See also PALESTINE, PERSIAN ADMINISTRATION; EZRA-NEHEMIAH, BOOKS OF; and CHRONICLES, BOOK OF 1–2. The hegemony of the neo-Babylonian empire under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar and his family, a relatively short-lived empire (ca. 605–539), was brought to an end by the emergent Persian imperium under the leadership of Cyrus II of Pasargadae. In the space of a decade, Cyrus had conquered Media, Lydia, and Babylonia, and in 539 the city of Babylon fell to Gobryas "without a battle" (see the pro-Persian report cited in *HAIJ*, 439). Under neo-Babylonian domination the city of Jerusalem and the state of Judah had been devastated, the temple of the god Yahweh demolished, and some leading citizens deported to Babylonia (others had fled to Egypt). In an ideologically constructed account 2 Kings 17 posits a similar fate for the state of Israel in the 8th century at the hands of the Assyrians. With the Babylonian deportation of powerful families and the collapse of what remained of the Judean state (already a puppet state of the Egyptians until the emergence of the Babylonian power), the roots of what later became Jewish and Christian communities began to grow. For more than the next two-and-a-half millennia the Jewish communities would flourish more outside the region of Palestine than they would inside it. This diasporic nature of the community would be one of its most enduring qualities and must be traced to the 6th century and afterwards.

Babylonian and Persian (Iranian) influences would shape these communities and provide a cross-fertilization of religious, ideological, and social structures which would determine the matrix out of which came Jewish sectarian religion. A third major influence would be Egypt where refugee groups of Jews spread throughout the land after fleeing from the invading imperial powers. The two great areas of influence, Babylonia and Egypt, were embodied in the foundational myths of the communities as stories about

Abraham (Babylonia) and Moses (Egypt).

The Jews of Egypt and the Jews of Babylon told different stories but both stories have been incorporated into the Hebrew Bible in terms of the story of the Jews of Jerusalem (see Garbini 1988: 133–50). From the province of Judah/Judaea comes the epithet "Jew" (Heb *yĕhûd*) which describes the people who lived there and gave their allegiance to Jerusalem; yet the term is used indiscriminately of communities in Babylonia, Persia, and Egypt. A careful scrutiny must, therefore, be made of all the literature in order to allow for the ideological nature of the terms of reference which reflect the Jerusalem/Judaea center of influence. At the same time, note that the term "Jew" in this period was on the way to becoming a marker of religious ideology and practice, i.e., identity, and not simply an indicator of geophysical origin. In the Second Temple period groups in Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, and Palestine ("the holy land" as it came to be called in the literature of this period) developed many different strategies of religious affiliation which have tended to be lumped together by subsequent writers as if there had been a uniformity of ideology, praxis, and identity throughout the period. The extant literature of the period, including Qumran, the apocalypses, and early Christian literature, reveals a wide diversity of beliefs and practices. Terms derived from conciliar Christianity and the period of the Talmuds attempted to impose a false uniformity on what were many and diverse groups.

According to Stern (1982: 229), the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem had little effect on the culture of the Israelite period. Life continued as before and changes only began to appear with the emergence of the Persian hegemony. From a regional perspective, the collapse of the Jerusalem economy and the concomitant defeat of whatever state apparatus Judah possessed were not major features of the 6th century. Yet from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible the destruction of Jerusalem was a people-endangering catastrophe and the subsequent deportation of the leading citizens to Babylonia was a veritable emptying of the land. The contrast between the story of the material remains of the larger geophysical area and the ideological writings of a certain social stratum of the smaller territory is striking. In much of these writings the deportees are represented as superior to the people of the land who were not deported to Babylonia (e.g., Jer 24:29), and a good deal of the writing appears to support an ideology of control over the land on behalf of the deported group. The phrases "people of the land" (Heb *ʿam hāʾāreṣ*) and "people of the exile" (Heb *ʿam haggôlâ;* sometimes *bĕnê haggôlâ*) in the literature related to the period would appear to reflect an ideology of conflict, with special claims to status and land being made on behalf of the deported party. This claim to the land is one of the most fundamental features of the Second Temple period and is the basis of many of the foundational stories in Genesis 12–50 and the Tetrateuch (or the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History as some classifiers would label what is traditionally known as the Torah and the Former Prophets). Temple and land are the key concepts in the development of the Persian period and tend to subsume most of the literature of that time (including such books as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel which may owe their present form to the Greek period). That means the literature must be read primarily in ideological terms rather than in modern historical terms, though historical elements in the texts are not ruled out by this judgment. The myth of "the empty land" (2 Chr

36:21) is a good example of the difference between reading literature as ideology and reading it as history. At this juncture in history the land lost some people; very much a minority of people, even important people of status were deported. Most people lived on in the land as if nothing, except the burning of Jerusalem, had happened. But from an ideological point of view, the few who were deported were the cream of society and the nucleus of the future. The Persian party represented in the literature of Ezra-Nehemiah as the exiles (or the descendants of the original deportees) returned from Babylonia in order to occupy the "empty land" and to claim it as their divinely appointed territory. Much of what constitutes the Hebrew Bible is the myth of this claim—how much is a matter for debate.

Where ideology is concerned history has a habit of being subverted. The Babylonian control of the Judaean territory by the deportation of some of its leading citizens and powerful interests became the legitimation of a party takeover bid in the Persian period. Denunciations of the Jerusalem elite which appear in Jeremiah and Ezekiel have become, with time, justifications of a later foreign group's claim to control the Jerusalem economy and cult. The biblical literature primarily must be read from an ideological viewpoint and only secondarily from a historical perspective. The two are to some extent mingled (rather like a double helix) but the ideological predominates and determines how the history is read. Thus conventional biblical scholarship generally treats the Persian period under the terms "exile" and "restoration" (e.g., Ackroyd 1968; *BHI*); hence the traditional markers pre- and postexilic. The ideological perspective of the texts colors the attempt of modern scholarship to be historical. See, for example, Jer 24:29 where the deported citizens are treated as noble and good in contrast to the rubbish which inhabits Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 11:14–21). Similar attitudes may be found in the Ezra-Nehemiah corpus where the incoming foreigners impose their values and ideology on the people of Jerusalem. These key factors of ideology, conflict, and partisanship constitute the essence of the sectarianism which dominates the literature of the period. Thus sectarianism is the ideological key to understanding the whole period of the Second Temple and it must be regarded as having had its origins in the Persian period.

According to Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra-Nehemiah the (re)building of the temple in Jerusalem was the primary activity of the period immediately following the defeat of the Babylonians. Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are variously credited with the operation of rebuilding the temple and scholars differ in their attempts to reconcile the problems caused by this information (cf. Ackroyd *CHJ* 1: 136–43). Rationalization of awkward data is a standard procedure in biblical scholarship and tends to reflect particular ideological commitments within the guild. Whatever the facts may have been in the matter of the temple, it is clear from the biblical literature that claims about reestablishing the temple cult were an important aspect of constructing the story of the Persian period. The temple was the center of economic, ideological, and religious control in the community and control of it gave immense power in the province to the party which could acquire and maintain that control. It is impossible to determine whether the rebuilding of the temple actually took place between 539 and 516 (the dates deduced from the biblical literature) or whether these dates reflect an ideological presentation of the rebuilt temple coinciding with the new (Persian) era to legitimate the

party in control of the temple whenever the documents were written. In spite of the tendency of scholars to accept the text at face value it should be noted that it is characteristic of the biblical literature to retroject "facts" into the past.

2. Spheres of Activity. The fortunes of the various communities in Babylonia, Egypt, and Palestine are not easy to reconstruct for the Persian period. Material remains give little particular information and the general picture they afford of social life in the era is sketchy in the extreme. Aramaic papyri, parchments and ostraca from Egypt, especially from the border posts of Syene and its adjacent island of Elephantine, give some idea of life in a Jewish colony during the 5th century B.C.E. (see *ArchEleph*; *CHJ* 1: 376–400). The colony was a socio-military one under the command of Persians and the documentation from there reflects legal and contractual features of life in a Persian outpost. The presence of a temple of the god *YWH* there has surprised many biblical and Jewish scholars, but only because the Hebrew scriptures espouse the centrality of Yahwism in Jerusalem. Elephantine indicates that other shrines to the god Yahweh flourished and it may well be the case that Deuteronomistic ideology was only enforceable among the Jews of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period. So little is known about the social circumstances of the diasporic communities outside Palestine that, as with the perception of the Babylonian depopulation of the land, it is difficult to state what was normative and what otherwise. The religion of the cult in Elephantine suggests that the god Yahweh had a female consort (Anath), which reflects the normal type of Semitic religion in the ANE as opposed to the special ideology of Yahweh-alone religion constructed by the deuteronomists for the Jerusalem cult (see Smith 1971). Opposition to the Jewish communities in Egypt from Palestinian Jews (Jeremiah 44) may indicate social and political conflicts as well as ideological differences which developed in the Persian era. However, too much hard data should not be extrapolated from rare and isolated sources which are themselves open to various and disputed interpretations.

We know from much later periods that Jewish communities in Egypt (Alexandria) and Babylonia were important centers of Jewish religion and it is a reasonable assumption that the roots of these communities were put down in the Persian period. But documents which purport to be about that period only obscurely convey the information: e.g., in Jer 29:4–7, a letter attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, the image is presented of a free society in which Jews own land and may flourish as a community. This may well be an accurate depiction of the Jews of Babylon—but of what century? Can the letter really be dated to the period *immediately* after the deportation of 597? The chapter in Jeremiah where it appears is a complex and highly edited piece of writing which reflects ideological conflicts between the Jews of Babylon and the Jews of Jerusalem. What do they represent and what period do they reflect? The scholarly tendency to read the chapter at face value is bad exegesis and leads inevitably to misprisions of the text. But without controls on the text or extra-textual information the historian is forced back on exegesis and ceases to be a historian (the central problems of the literature of the period will be dealt with in the next section).

The exceptional wealth of written source material for the Persian period in Babylonian history affords much information on administrative, legal, and domestic affairs in the

province (Dandamayev *CHJ* 1: 330–42). Because Babylonia was one of the richest satrapies of the Persian empire it may be assumed that communities living there had ample opportunities for material development and the Jews there must have shared in this affluence. This is a reasonable assumption made in the absence of concrete evidence.

Jewish names appear in the documents (cuneiform tablets) from the archives of the business houses of Murashu found at Nippur and dated to the second half of the 5th century (Bickerman *CJH* 1: 344–48). The house of Murashu managed land property and acted as agents for the maintenance of the crown land by controlling tenure and collecting rents and taxes. Jews in the region of Nippur held land or military fiefs and could mortgage their land to the house of Murashu, renting it back under yearly terms. These Murashu archives depict a range of activities which included Jewish participants and thus a sketchy picture of Jewish life in Babylonia emerges from a careful scrutiny of the documents. Jews could become agents of the Persian government or could manage the canals which were the center of the great Babylonian irrigation economy. Some Jews named their sons *Shulum-babili* "welfare of Babylon" (a phrase which has echoes in Jer 29:7). There is some evidence that the banking family Egibi was Jewish and this would further indicate an integration of the Babylonian Jews into the structures of the administration of the Persian satrapy of Babylonia (Baron 1952: 109; Garbini 1988: 92, 192–93). Fictional aspects of this interpretation may be found in the books of Daniel, Esther, and Tobit. At the other end of the social spectrum the Murashu documents refer to a small number of Jewish slaves.

According to Ezra-Nehemiah the reconstruction of Jerusalem in the 5th century was undertaken by agents of the Persian authorities who came from the imperial city of Susa (Nehemiah) and from Babylonia (Ezra), and who imposed on the Palestinian community Persian structures. There are enormous difficulties of doing history from this ideological biblical material. In addressing the issue of Ezra's existence, the majority of scholars tend to affirm that he did, while an important minority of scholars says "no" (Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL does not debate the question; see also Garbini 1988 and Smith 1971). Commentators on the Ezra-Nehemiah corpus readily recognize the difficulties of the literature and its tendency to stitch events and persons together in a curiously fictional mode and yet without Ezra-Nehemiah there is no account of the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Once more "silence, exile, and cunning" best determine the matter.

Ezra-Nehemiah traces the founding of the Second Temple to the decree of Cyrus which permitted the repatriation of the Jews of Babylonia and the return of some fifty thousand Jews to Jerusalem led by Sheshbazzar with the ancient vessels of the previous Jerusalem temple. The foundations of the temple were subsequently laid in a context of the correct liturgical observances. Throughout the reigns of Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, sustained local opposition disrupted the community, though the temple was completed by 516 in the reign of Darius under Zerubbabel and Joshua (see Haggai; Zechariah 1–8). In the time of Artaxerxes (I or II—which is not certain), Ezra the scribe arrived with further repatriates and imposed on the Jerusalem community a Persian injunction to follow traditional laws. Confiscation of land and the breaking up of marriages contracted with the local Palestinian people followed the imposition of Ezra's law

with the support of prominent pietistic laymen in the community. At least that is what appears to have happened, but the Ezra text breaks off in mid-sentence and is continued by the story of Nehemiah. By order of the Persian king, Nehemiah made two delegated visits to Jerusalem, assisted in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, opposed Palestinian involvement in the project, and broke up various marriages of the kind which Ezra had previously broken up. He also imposed strict Sabbath regulations on the work economy of the city (Neh 13:15–22; cf. Jer 17:19–27). There are sufficient similarities between the functions of Ezra and Nehemiah to make the competent reader of the biblical text wonder to what extent they represent the same story told with variations, and to what extent the stories are a patchwork quilt of social and ideological movements of the Second Temple period reflecting dimly discerned historical events. Every writer on the subject offers a different opinion and one of the most dominant views in 20th century biblical scholarship insists on treating Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem as occurring *before* that of Ezra's. Placing Ezra's visit in 458 (traditional view) or 399 (revised view), with Nehemiah's visit assigned to 445 (with a second visit some years later), avoids having the two working together as appears to be the case in Nehemiah 8, but it must be freely admitted that the corpus abounds in problems which are not easily rationalized.

There are glimpses of a struggling community in and around Jerusalem in parts of Nehemiah which would fit with what little we know about the period from the Murashu documents. Neh 5:1–5 provides a good example of people having mortgaged their land to pay their taxes and complaining about the enslavement of their children and the loss of their property. As Blenkinsopp says of this section, "The traditional agrarian economy was thereby slowly undermined, holdings which had stayed in the same family for generations were enclosed, and we begin to see the emergence of the great estates which flourished during the Hellenistic period" (*Ezra* OTL, 67). This creation of latifundia in the Second Temple period can be found reflected in a number of texts which have been assigned conventionally by biblical scholarship to the wrong period. Thus 1 Kings 21 in its treatment of Naboth's vineyard (cf. what may be the older story of the Naboth murder in 2 Kgs 9:21–26) is more likely a reflection of the 5th–4th centuries than of the 9th–8th centuries (see Rofé 1988b). Also, the standard references to similar practices in Isa 5:8–10 and the so-called 8th century prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Hosea) should be treated as observations on developments in the Persian and Greek periods. While this view of the matter runs counter to most commentators on these prophets, it seems to be a better account of property relations, especially in the light of Leviticus 25–27, in biblical times than is posited otherwise. It is also a good example of that misdirection in texts which leads to their misprisions. The acquisition and exchange of land in biblical times remains a topic on which little definitive knowledge is as yet available. If the Ezra-Nehemiah corpus contains reliable historical information, then the material in Nehemiah 9 suggests that land was one of the most fundamental issues in the Persian period.

3. From Ezra-Nehemiah to Alexander of Macedon. Practically nothing is known about the period between Ezra-Nehemiah and the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander of Macedon as far as the Jewish communities are concerned. The protracted Persian-Egyptian wars, the Tennes rebellion,

and other events of the period appear to have left no identifiable impression on any surviving literature. At this point historians often have recourse to Josephus (*Ant* 11) or to Diodorus Siculus (Dio. 16) for incidents in the reign of Artaxerxes III which may have had some bearing on the life of the Jerusalem community (see *IHJ,* 474–75). With the transition of power from Persian authority to the Greeks little changed for the Jewish communities throughout the empire. Time would eventually bring about the Hellenization of some of the communities and this transformation in turn would contribute greatly to the eventual development of later Jerusalem.

C. The Literature

In a very real sense any history of the Persian period must also be a treatment of the Jewish literature of the period because the material remains do not afford sufficient data to construct a proper history. Yet the literary aspects of the Jewish communities in this period are fraught with interpretative difficulties as well as the general principle of misdirected periodization. In conventional biblical scholarship a good deal of the Hebrew Bible is assigned to a production period before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (e.g., the Yahwist or J writer, the bulk of the DH, the original material in the 8th century prophets) and only the lesser material is thought of as having come from the Persian period. One consequence of this judgment is that the pre-catastrophe period is regarded as the great age of Hebrew literature and religion and the so-called postexilic era as a period of degeneration and poor literary production. This approach to the Hebrew Bible needs a radical rethinking and a complete transformation in the evaluation of literary and religious matters. There are clear signs of such a transformation in current biblical scholarship.

The Hebrew Bible was the product of the Second Temple period, though how much of it was produced in the Persian era cannot be determined. If this literature is to be taken seriously, then its production reflects on the creativity and importance of the Second Temple period as the foundational matrix of the roots of Judaism—matched only, perhaps, by the post-70 C.E. rabbinic period which produced the Talmuds. Elements of the Hebrew Bible may have been produced in writing before the Persian era, but there is no concrete evidence for this presupposition nor is it possible to say which parts existed in writing before the destruction of the temple. It is logical to locate the framing of the various scrolls and the production of the bulk of the biblical books in the period of the Second Temple because one of the most dominant traits of that period is the production of writings which later became scripture for many religious communities. Temple and texts are therefore two of the key elements in the understanding of the period. This period has traditionally taken back seat to the so-called classical ages of religious thought and the great "writing" prophets, which has resulted in little valuable investigation that can help us understand the era. This consistent underevaluation of the Persian and Greek periods skews the whole history of the roots of Judaism and renders much scholarly work irrelevant as an assessment of the productions of the period. A thorough revision of theories about the origins and significant processes of the creation of the Hebrew Bible is urgently required in biblical scholarship, after which it should be possible to reevaluate the true importance of the Second Temple period.

Here it is only possible to note the productions of Genesis and the primary narrative about Israel's origins, the DH and the vari-

ous writings incorporating anthologies of prophetic material, wisdom sayings and discourses, and the Psalms. What became the Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) ends with the death of the greatest of all prophets, Moses, and the DH ends with the death of the last Judean king. An eschatologizing hermeneutic can be detected in the production of Isaiah, Jeremiah (only to a very limited extent), Ezekiel, and the book of the Twelve (prophets). This is especially apparent in the book of the Twelve, in particular in the appendices to Zechariah 1–8 (Zech 9–14; Malachi). No specific date can be given to these productions but the period of the 4th–3d centuries would make sense for the prophetic collections (along with Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and possibly a good deal of the DH and elements of Torah). Conventional scholarship favors an earlier dating for Torah but mainly because it insists on viewing Ezra's lawbook as some form of the Pentateuch. There is little or no hard evidence for this claim and its only force is as a commonplace of traditional scholarship. Our ignorance of these matters is almost total, and it is part of the problem of reconstructing the history of the Second Temple period that we know next to nothing about how, when, or why these writings were produced. That they were produced is self-evident, but no *reliable* information is available which would take the matter beyond the level of scholarly hypotheses. From Ezra-Nehemiah to the Qumran scrolls we have a family resemblance of the production of scrolls imposing regulations of purity on the community and differentiating between various groups in a fundamentally sectarian way. A key to understanding this phenomenon is the (lay) interpretation of texts, and reflections of this practice are to be found in many of the writings of the period (e.g., Isa 29:9–14; 30:8–14; Jer 36; Dan 9:2).

A brief treatment of the Persian period cannot become an investigation of the production of the Hebrew Bible and the periodization of the Second Temple era into Persian, Greek, and Roman is at best a convention rather than a reflection of substantive differences in the development of the various Jewish communities in the empires. Yet the student of the period ought to be aware of the fact that the biblical books were put together in the Second Temple period and that this process was part of the structural developments which constituted the communities of the time. This makes the presentation of Ezra with his imposition of a document (possibly Iranian) on the Jerusalem community regulating its identity and behavior a very important reflection of the period. And this remains the case whether Ezra is regarded as a historical or a fictional character and whether he is assigned a date in the 5th or 2nd century (see Garbini 1988: 151–69 for this second option). The Temple Scroll of Qumran, the Priestly Writing incorporated into the Pentateuch, Ezekiel 40–48, and other ritual texts indicate various moves to impose regulatory ritual character on the communities of Jews living in the Second Temple period and allow us to characterize the period in terms of its emphasis on ritual purity and identity. Elements of this character are also to be found in the NT Gospels and some of the writings of Paul, thus indicating a continuity of concern with halakic interpretation and ritual prescription throughout the whole period of the Second Temple.

The book of Ezekiel apart, most of the writings which later formed the prophetic collection appear to be less concerned with ritual purity (Haggai and Malachi belong more with the halakic mode) than with ethics and

expectations. However, the colophons introducing many of these scrolls suggest that a final stage of the editing made them supplementary to the DH (i.e., to be read in the light of that collection as a kind of *Ergänzungstext*). Later rabbinic understanding of these texts read them as commentary on Torah, but in the Second Temple period it is unknown how they functioned or what relationship they may have had to whatever constituted Torah. Here our ignorance of the period is part of the problem for historical reconstruction. The Qumran texts' use of the prophetic texts (Dan 9:24–27) may represent a common understanding of them in the 2d century which maintained earlier uses of them, but we do not know what was normative and what innovative in the communities of the period. The collections of prophetic texts may have functioned as revitalization movements throughout the period or may have supported oppositional groups in conflict with the urban centers or may even have opposed the cult centers in the name of inspired individuals (see Blenkinsopp 1977 for a very good treatment of the opposition between prophecy and Torah). What is urgently needed in (professional) biblical scholarship is a good theoretical treatment of the prophetic literature which would contextualize it in the period of its production as writing rather than the usual historicist treatment which reads it as the expositions of its colophons.

The production of the literature of the past (which is how most of the biblical literature is presented, cf. the introductions to Proverbs, Qoheleth, Jonah, and especially Ben Sira) in the Second Temple period may reflect a movement to differentiate between past and present in terms of warranting authorities, as well as a concealment of ideological controls on the receiving communities. At the same time such literature facilitated the role of the authoritative (and authorized) interpreter who could lead the community in the correct interpretation of the texts. Nehemiah might be regarded as the classical example of this activity which seems to have bypassed priestly authority on issues of purity and temple regulation (see Smith 1971: 101–2); the "correct/legitimate teacher" of Qumran may be seen as an equivalent interpreter of texts. Here then are to be found the roots of the scriptural interpreter figure so important in the development of post-Second Temple Judaism, one element of which was Christianity.

The problematics of the literature of the Second Temple period are formidable. The Ezra-Nehemiah corpus is complicated by its association with Chronicles. Some scholars identify the Chronicler as the producer of the two works, while a small group of scholars insists that the Chronicler is *not* the author of Ezra-Nehemiah (e.g., Eskenazi 1988; Williamson *Ezra* WBC; Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL 47–53, opposes this latter view). The difficulty of determining such issues directly relates to the diversity of evidence deemed relevant to it. Individual scholars must decide questions like the historicity of Ezra by relying on the weight they give to extratextual considerations.

Some biblical literature, such as Job or Lamentations, may have been produced in the Persian period, other pieces, such as Esther, Tobit, Judith, and Susanna, while set in the Assyrian-Babylonian-Persian periods were most probably produced in the Greek period. These variations of presentation and production illustrate further difficulties in dealing with Jewish literature of the Second Temple period. The tendency to set a story in the (distant) past is so prevalent that it must indicate some ideological value reflect-

ing the past as authoritative. It certainly conceals the period of (and reason for) production and misdirects the attention of the historian who may be tempted to use the work for historical reconstruction. Beautiful women of immense power flourish in these novellas (e.g., Esther, Judith, Susanna), Jewish figures run the empire and guide the thoughts of the pagan emperor (e.g., Mordecai and Daniel), and various shrewd stratagems save the Jewish people from annihilation (see the books of Esther and Judith). While the books have a certain lyrical and romantic charm, it is difficult to credit them with any historical or social value which would illuminate either the Persian or the Greek period. They may be used to construct a sense of fantasy or aspiration among various Jewish groups of the period, or be thought of as reflecting teaching aids inculcating loyalty to group identity and religious affiliation (cf. the Maccabean literature of the Greek period). In many cases they illustrate in story form the (moral) principles behind Torah and as such may be seen as typifying the piety of various Jewish communities in the Second Temple period. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that the tales of Jewish pietists flourishing in the corridors of power (Babylonian, Persian, Greek) may reflect the political and social integration of Jews (individual or in groups) in the structures of power or may represent the internalization of imperial values as a result of being a low-status group among the communities of the empire (cf. the story of Joseph in Egypt).

D. The Roots of Sectarian Judaism

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian influences on the development of Judaism in the Second Temple period. It may be rather difficult to itemize them or to separate them into coherent strands, but the foreign context of much of the ideological influence on the Jerusalem community cannot be denied. Whatever the historical truth behind the stories in the literature of the period (especially Jeremiah, Ezra-Nehemiah), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that a Persian instrument of control was used to construct in Jerusalem an ideologically defined elite group commanding the regulation of temple purity and religious identity. The subsequent production of apocalypses also points in the direction of Persian influences, especially the Gathic teachings about fate after death in Zoroastrianism (see Boyce *CHJ* 1: 298–301). If an elite from the Persian satrapy of Babylonia did travel to Jerusalem in order to restructure temple and community in ways quite contrary to what previously had obtained there, then it must be admitted that a Persian shaping of Jewish thought was one of the most fundamentally creative forces in determining the roots of Second Temple Judaism. Behind the complex textuality of Ezra-Nehemiah may be discerned the creation of a sect distinct from the general populace of Jerusalem and its environs. The later community of Qumran may afford perfect parallels to this emergent sectarianism in 5th–4th century Jerusalem. In fact, it might be a sound methodological principle to treat the whole period of the Second Temple as a single period dominated by sectarian ideology and struggles and to read *all* the literature as bearing on different aspects of these ideological struggles (including a good deal of the Gospels and Paul in the NT).

A history of the different Jewish communities in Babylonia, Egypt, and Palestine cannot be written because of a lack of data, so the argument here must be based on an attempt to read what data there are in the light of how the communities developed in

the Roman period. A reading of the book of Isaiah will show some evidence of sectarian pressures in the Second Temple period (small wonder that the Isaiah scroll should feature so much at Qumran). Conflict over the temple is obvious in Isa 65:1–7; 66:1–6, and the closing chapters of Isaiah sharply differentiate between the servants of Yahweh and their opposers (65:13–16). Reference to those "who tremble at his word" (66:5; cf. Ezra 9:4; 10:3) in contrast to an unnamed group which shares certain Yahwistic beliefs in common indicates some inner-community conflict which is best described as sectarian (see Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL for a good analysis of the sectarian tendencies of the Second Temple period; see also Rofé 1988a). Conflicts of interpretation have always been a major feature of sectarian readings of texts and the use of controlling documents in Ezra-Nehemiah to enforce purity and identity points to sectarian aspects at the root of the developing Jewish community in Jerusalem. The long history of argument about texts and their meanings which has characterized Jewish and Christian communities (so quintessentially sectarian are these religions) has its beginnings in the Second Temple period when documents and texts were produced in order to shape, regulate, and control religious parties in contradistinction to the larger populace occupying the territory.

The precondition of this sectarian development was the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians and the isolation of a deported elite in different cultural surroundings. The Babylonian deportation provided a radicalizing enculturation of Judean elements which helped to create the impetus toward change in a later period. Some of the impact of Babylonian culture on Judean religious thought may be seen in the polemic against idols in Isaiah (40–48) and in Isaiah's use of the hymns to Marduk as models for a Yahwistic rhetoric. Elements of Babylonian cosmogony also helped to transform the Canaanite mythology of pre-catastrophe Israelite thought in the direction of the myth of Yahweh the creator (here Isaiah 40–66 and Genesis 1 are rather different examples of Babylonian influence). While the general outlines of Babylonian and Persian influences on Jewish thought may be straightforward, it is far from clear how the dynamics of these transformations worked. In superficial terms what went into the Babylonian deportation were elements of polytheistic Yahwism and what, some centuries later, came back from Babylonia was a transformed Yahwism capable of reshaping Palestinian culture effectively. The controlling ideological myth of the Hebrew Bible produced in the Second Temple period (i.e., that Yahwism was as old as Abraham) needs to be read as a direct indication of the fact that Yahwism came from Mesopotamia, but not in the distant past of the Bronze age. Rather, it came out of Babylonia as a direct consequence of an elite's experiences arising out of the deportation. Only the Jerusalem territory in Palestine, however, afforded the Persian group the opportunity to impose their ideology on whatever factions would support them.

This account of what may have taken place during the Persian period would account for the priority of Genesis over Exodus in the Hebrew Bible (see Garbini 1988). The Egyptian Jewish communities had a rather different myth which made Egypt the source of the nation and Moses the revealer of Yahwism and creator of the community. Much of the Hebrew Bible (especially the deuteronomistically influenced sections) is very hostile to Egypt and all things Egyptian

and yet the story of Moses and the people in Egypt remains the central feature of the Bible. The denunciations of the Egyptian Jews in Jeremiah 44 are typical of such sectarian fervor and the DH is extremely hostile to most Israelite involvements with Egypt. Yet the basic myth of the Exodus is required to give legitimation to the Jews of Egypt and is only put into perspective from a Babylonian point of view by having Abraham precede the period of the Exodus and function as the "father" of the nation. Second Isaiah is an important reflection of the emergence of Abraham as a founding feature of the nation's history (Isa 41:8; 51:1–2), but the traditional dating of this part of Isaiah by scholars to the 6th century is undoubtedly rather early (see Torrey 1928 for a late 5th century date; see ISAIAH, BOOK OF).

The Babylonian ideology which shaped parts of the Bible has deformed the record in a number of ways by creating the myth of an "exile and return." This may be seen in the Ezra-Nehemiah volume, also in part of Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (cf. Zech 1). From this perspective (i.e., the production of the ˓*am haggôlâ* party) the Babylonian deportation was a *temporary* taking into exile of a favored group of people (see Jer 24; 29: 10–14) which eventually returned in triumph to Jerusalem after seventy years (or at least their descendants returned some generations later). From the Babylonian perspective, those who had remained behind and who had survived the Babylonian depradations of Jerusalem counted for nothing (note how this reverses the ideological force of 2 Kings 17). In fact, the myth of the "empty land" (2 Chronicles 36; Leviticus 26) simply wrote these survivors out of existence. Thus the triumphal procession which went back from Babylonia to Jerusalem (Ezra 1) took over an empty land, rebuilt the temple, and constituted the official inheritors of all the sacred traditions. This is the Babylonian myth enabling a sectarian takeover of Jerusalem by an elite which determined identity and purity in accordance with its ideological regulations. A squalid deportation of disruptive elements has been thereby transformed into a significant exile of leadership elements awaiting the work of Yahweh in restoration. As an enabling myth it has certain charms and a good deal of power. Unfortunately it has misled generations of biblical scholars into taking it seriously as if it were a historical account without ideological factors. Jewish history is dated by reference to it, (e.g., preexilic, postexilic, etc.). But there are very important contrary elements in the Hebrew Bible which need to be taken into account to provide a balance to this myth.

These other elements also probably represent sectarian movements in the Second Temple period and therefore should be noted as evidence for the complexity of sectarian Judaism in that period. Jeremiah 42 indicated a different and distinctive Palestinian perspective on the period after the fall of Jerusalem. The flourishing of Jewish communities in Egypt throughout the period points to an alternative account of things. Diasporic communities in the empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome also indicate a nonrecognition (or acceptance) of the myth of exile and return in the specific terms of the Jerusalem sectarian elite. In fact, the diffused diasporic communities are evidence for rather different perspectives on the deportations of the Babylonian period. Jer 29:4–7 counsels permanent residence in Babylonia (the supplementation of the text by 29:10–14 attempts to deconstruct the sound counsel of permanence). That some Jewish communities regard themselves in exile and looked forward to an eventual return to Palestine

need not be denied, but whether this view was normative for *all* Jewish communities cannot be determined. The myth of a return belongs to a particular set of sectarian beliefs and values which was probably not shared by all (perhaps not even many) Jewish communities.

A more important distinction should be made with reference to the motif of "exile and return." Much of the literature of the Second Temple period recognizes a category of exile after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/86, but it does not recognize any return in subsequent centuries. This literature (usefully surveyed by Knibb 1976) represents Israel as being in exile for centuries; virtually in permanent exile. (See the interpretation of the seventy *weeks* of years in Dan 9:24 which replaces the seventy years of other texts.) Exile becomes a symbol in this literature; a symbol for the alienation of the group (or sect) from power in Jerusalem, or one related to messianic expectations which alone would restore the people to their land. Here the Qumran literature has a rather different understanding of exile from that represented by Ezra-Nehemiah and one wonders if these differences do not indicate a clash of ideological and sectarian holdings. If the origins of Qumran were to be traced to Babylonian reform groups which only arrived in Palestine during the Maccabean period, this would account for its nonrecognition and for its belief that the exile as punishment of Israel's sins had continued unbroken to its own time (see CD 3:10–14, and the discussion in Davies 1983: 119–25). Whatever the origins of Qumran may have been, the community clearly believed in exile as a continuing experience, even though it might be regarded as living in its own land. The books of *1–3 Enoch,* Baruch, *4 Ezra, 2 Baruch,* the Qumran *Damascus Document,* and the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* all represent exile as a permanent state of the community and recognize no restoration or return from exile. All this literature may be no earlier than the 2d century B.C.E. but it puts the biblical material which focuses on "exile and return" into perspective by suggesting that there is a preponderance of one type of literature on the subject included in the Hebrew Bible. If this is a correct judgment, then we must recognize the sectarian nature of the biblical material as being one-sided in its emphasis. The claim that the exile had ended with a restoration to Jerusalem would inevitably empower those running the cult center in Jerusalem. other voices can be heard in different texts, and a much greater divergency of opinion has to be allowed for in the Second Temple period. It is important that developments in the Persian period should not be narrowed down to an uncritical acceptance of the ideology behind Ezra-Nehemiah.

Other factors which contributed to the sectarian developments of Jewish communities in the Persian period included the transformation of circumcision into a symbol of group identity in religious (rather than tribal) terms. This was facilitated by the deportation of Judeans to Babylon where a normal cultural trait became something special by virtue of a new social context. Many scholars also see in the disruptions caused by the Babylonian deportations the acceleration of institutions such as the sabbath into significant religious occasions. So little historical information is known about the sabbath (outside the ideological texts contained in the Pentateuch which have little intrinsic historical value, there is not much in the Hebrew Bible which is informative about it) that it would be unwise to turn the 6th century into a "pandora's box" of cultural creations. Indeed, a reliable historical account of

the sabbath has yet to be written and until one is produced it would be better to recognize the sabbath as a sectarian element in the Second Temple period reflecting the sectarian literature generated by the ideological movements of that period. Scholarly speculation also claims to find in the deported communities in Babylon the beginnings of the creation of the synagogue. No evidence exists for this claim and the lack of data for life in Babylonia is such that we do not know how the deportees constructed the institutional aspects of their religious life. Sabbath and synagogue may have come out of Babylonia in the Greek period but we know nothing of a definitive nature about either institution.

What the Persian period may have given to the Palestinian Jews was the beginnings of a temple sectarian party. A temple community was created in Jerusalem which was to determine the shape of nondiasporic Jewish communities for centuries and, in many cases, to create the terminology with which Jewish history has been written ever since. Comparative work on temple communities (what Weinberg 1976 terms *Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde;* cf. Blenkinsopp *Ezra* OTL, 69) suggests a model for describing the Jerusalem community as a cult with high social and economic status in the land. Control of the temple is a wealth-creating operation which endows the party in charge with powerful opportunities for shaping and controlling the community. Temple taxes, maintenance of the expiatory rites, control of the temple lands and herds, collection and disbursement of funds, enforcement of sabbath prescriptions, regulation of trade and merchandising, and the oversight of purity rules and membership of the cult would afford enormous power to those in charge of the temple. As the economic center of ancient cities, the temple afforded virtually unlimited power to the families controlling it. The history of the Second Temple period is very much one of control of the temple and conflict between sectarian parties vying for that control, with a variety of regulatory documents and visionary programs relating to the cult center constituting a dominant element of what eventually became the Jewish scriptures of a later period.

E. Conclusion

According to Ezra 9:1–4, the "holy race" (i.e., the deportees who had returned from Babylonia) had corrupted itself by mixing with the peoples of the lands and a great divorcing ceremony was imposed on all those who wished to purify themselves from such assimilation with the godless of Palestine. Whether historical or ideological (conceivably both) the material in Ezra 9–10 epitomizes the sectarian spirit of the Second Temple period with its drive to create a sacred enclave of "pure" returned deportees (and their descendants). Purity of people, of priesthood, of temple and correct interpretation of texts became the guiding principles of the period, though it is arguable that the Chronicler had a broader view of things. The paucity of data and the complexity of interpreting what data exist do not make the historian's task an easy one. The material is capable of being interpreted in a number of ways and the reading of it followed in this article is very much informed by how the Jewish communities developed in the post-Persian period (hindsight is inevitable given the obscurity of the period and the indeterminacy of the documents). The appearance of Cyrus in Isa 44:28; 45:1 (whether as gloss or genuine element in the text is disputable and immaterial to the point being made here) indicates an interpretation of the period which wished to make the Persian emperor

the key to understanding the reconstruction of Jerusalem. It is a historicizing of the text which makes the foundational element in the community's existence an event in the (distant) past and has the same ideological profile as the statement in Ezra 6:14, "They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia." Such imperial authorities gave the temple a pedigree which was unimpeachable in the community.

The Persian imperial power gave way to the irresistible conquests of Alexander of Macedon in the late 4th century, though biblical literature hardly reflects anything of the transition from one empire to the other. A summary of the transition appears in 1 Macc 1:1–9 as the background to the Maccabean struggle in the mid-2d century. This literature only appears in the Greek Alexandrian canon of the Bible (LXX), it is therefore obvious that the Hebrew canon maintains the principle of using only literature which directs the attention to the pre-Hellenistic period. Much of the literature usually associated with the Persian era most likely comes from the Greek period, but scholars have a great tendency to date biblical books according to the period in which they are set (Daniel being a notable exception here). More important than this academic tendency is the need to recognize the ideology of concealment behind the presentation of so much material as taking place in the Persian era. Portraying events in the distant past, the documents took on a legitimation of antiquity and shaped influence from past authorities. While biblical scholarship has tended to play down the importance of the Second Temple period, treating it as an age of decline in contrast to the period before the fall of Jerusalem, it is important to see that the real significance of the period is determined by the fact that it produced the Hebrew Bible and that therefore all our evaluations of different periods need to be modified by a serious reassessment of the period. Whether the Persian period was more significant than the Greek period must be left open to debate, because periodization is a category imposed by historians on the data which awkwardly maps the contours of an age without adequately representing them. Different accounts may be given of the period (see Cross 1975), but the reading which I have followed is intended to emphasize the fact that "the day of small things" (Zech 4:10) is not something to be despised.

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